

***The Great Gatsby* Essay--High**

Symbols are seen everywhere throughout our daily lives. Little things that may seem insignificant might have a whole other meaning to someone else. This is seen in the novel *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Throughout the book, there are multiple notable symbols that directly correlate with the themes in the novel, as well as contribute to the dramatic power of the story. For example, the green light on Daisy's dock represents Gatsby's hope for love anew with Daisy, the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg represent God and the fact that secrets are only temporary because somebody knows and will eventually tell, and Gatsby's car represents death and destruction that are the results of jumping to conclusions and listening to rumors.

The green light on Daisy's dock is used to represent the distance between Gatsby and Daisy, as well as the hope of reuniting and for renewed love. The first time the green light is seen is before we know anything about Gatsby, or, really, Daisy. Gatsby appears to be just standing outside his house, gazing across the bay at this green light. Fitzgerald writes, "... I could have sworn he was trembling... I glanced seaward... distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock" (Fitzgerald 21). He appears to be somewhat transfixed by this single green light that is far away from him, for he is intent on staring at it. This is important because it symbolizes his hope for reuniting with Daisy. He is planning to attempt to repeat his past with his lover, and this green light represents his hope. He purposefully bought his house so that he would be across the bay from his beloved Daisy, with the hopes the maybe she might notice him and come running back into his arms. Jordan explains, "Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay" (Fitzgerald 78). Gatsby had been planning his reunion with Daisy for a long time, and him buying his house across the bay from Daisy only confirms this. Now that Daisy and Gatsby are reunited, the light -- a symbol of his hope -- is no longer needed: "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever... Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (Fitzgerald 93).

Now that Gatsby had Daisy again, his hope of renewed love is not needed, for he has it once again. The green light perfectly symbolizes the hope of relationship and love between Daisy and Gatsby.

The eyes of T.J. Eckleburg are another symbol in *The Great Gatsby*, which contribute to the dramatic power of the story. The eyes of T.J. Eckleburg are simply what is on a big billboard in the Valley of Ashes. They are "blue and gigantic -- their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose... his eyes... brood on over the solemn dumping ground" (Fitzgerald 23-24). This sign looks out over the city, seemingly just watching as the town gives up all its secrets. Others may not know everything that is going on, but T.J. Eckleburg does. After the accident that kills Myrtle Wilson, her husband George Wilson shares his suspicions about his wife and her affair because she came home one day with a broken nose. He, of course, did not know anything for sure, but he had his suspicions, and he is very upset because his wife is dead. Not only that, but he is also mad because he believed his wife cheated on him, and that the man she had been cheating with had killed her. George Wilson views the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg as God, in the way that he sees and knows everything. George Wilson reflects that he might be fooled, but "you can't fool God" (Fitzgerald 159). He spoke to Myrtle about what she had been doing, took her to the window where they were able to see the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg, told her that "God knows what she's been doing" (Fitzgerald 159). This billboard represents how secrets are temporary; the truth will come out because "God sees everything" (Fitzgerald 160), the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg being the representation of God. George Wilson is an extremely dramatic character in that he views an old billboard as God, and he jumps to conclusions too quickly, which is a common theme throughout the entire novel. The eyes of T.J. Eckleburg really contribute to the dramatic power of the story because it is just an old billboard in reality, but it symbolizes so much more than that.

Gatsby's car represents death and destruction. One of Gatsby's defining traits is his big, yellow car. He is very proud of it, and everyone knows that he owns it. In a way, his car also leads to his downfall. Daisy had been driving Gatsby's car with Gatsby in the passenger seat and she accidentally killed Myrtle Wilson by running her over. She did not stop to take responsibility, but

instead kept driving at alarming speeds. They had been going so fast that no one saw what car it was, except for one man: "It was a yellow car... big yellow car. New... passed me down the road, going faster'n forty. Going fifty, sixty" (Fitzgerald 139). Because of the witness, George Wilson now has a target, someone to go after for killing his wife. This sets his plan, to find the owner of the car, in motion. As soon as everyone finds out about Myrtle's murder, the newspapers publish a story and refer to his car as "the 'death car'" (Fitzgerald 137) because it "didn't stop; it came out of the gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a moment, then disappeared around the next bend" (Fitzgerald 137). The car had killed Myrtle and would later be the cause of Gatsby's death. Wilson had gone into hysterics after his wife had been killed. He began planning how to get revenge and finally "announced that he had a way of finding out whom the yellow car belonged to" (Fitzgerald 156). He went on a crazy hunt, jumping to the assumption that it must be the owner of this car that killed his beloved Myrtle, when in reality, the car did not belong to the murderer. He began searched all through New York, East Egg and West Egg and "by half-past two he was in West Egg... by that time he knew Gatsby's name" (Fitzgerald 160). Because of this yellow car, Gatsby was hunted down and killed. It represents so much more than just a fancy car; it is the car that brings with it a chain of destruction and death.

These symbols, of love, of the lack of secrecy, and of death and destruction all contribute to the incredible dramatic power that the story carries. The meaning of these symbols are actually part of major themes in the novel: love, temporary secrets, and the destruction that rumors bring. Just as these symbols are frequently used throughout *The Great Gatsby*, we can also see symbols of our own in our everyday lives.

Rationale for score: High

This essay received a score of 4 on the district rubric. While there are some oversimplified discussions about the symbols and their significance, it is important to note that the writer has a clear understanding of the text and of how symbolism works in the novel. The student exemplifies a consistent and clear development of ideas. The essay does lack transitions from one paragraph to the next, but each body paragraph is comprehensive in its evaluation of symbols. The writer also does an effective job of utilizing textual evidence to support his or her ideas. Excellent control of grammar and conventions are displayed as well.

Common Core All-Subject Writing Rubric

Writing Type(circle one): Argumentative Informative/Explanatory Narrative (ELA only)

CONTENT X4	The writing has a sharp focus and clarity of purpose. The ideas are developed with examples and specific details including textual evidence and are thoroughly elaborated. All elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a clear central idea and a clear focus. Ideas are developed with textual evidence, even though the development may be uneven. Information is relevant. Most elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a vague central idea; there are shifts in focus or digressions. Ideas are listed, information may be incomplete or irrelevant, textual evidence may be lacking, and there is little development. Some elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	The writing has unclear or confusing ideas. The ideas are missing relevant information, there is not enough information, or there is little or no development, and little textual evidence. Significant elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	X4
ORGANIZATION	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with strong transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and there is a sense of completion about the writing.	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with simple transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and the writing may have a weak ending.	There is a weak beginning, middle, and end with gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in random order, there may be significant repetition, and the writing may have no ending.	There is no beginning or end with severe gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in a random or repetitive order. There may be too little information to demonstrate organization.	
SPELLING & GRAMMAR (Conventions)	The writing exhibits superior control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits proper control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be a part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits weak control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors minimally affect the meaning of the writing.	The writing exhibits little to no control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors greatly affect the meaning of the writing.	
Teacher Feedback: {{Student Reflection on Back}}				Total Points Earned	
				Score	4