

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is known primarily as a historian of the Jazz Age, and a short-story writer who wrote more than 150 short stories; many of the stories are about love between young people, written for the *Saturday Evening Post*, the mouthpiece of Middle America in the 1920s and 1930s (Mangun). Furthermore, Fitzgerald is also a novelist; most of his works were based on his life experience because he seems to have a brilliant understanding of lives that are corrupted by greed and that are incredibly sad and unfulfilled (Topham). He wrote five novels. *This Side of Paradise* (1920) is his first novel, and the last one is *The Love of the Last Tycoon* (1939). He is also the playwright of *The Vegetable* (1923). During his lifetime, none of Fitzgerald's works received anything more than modest commercial or critical success during his lifetime. However, since his death on December 21st, 1940 his works become more famous and he is regarded as one of the most

interesting, capable and insightful writers of the 20th century. Moreover he is also regarded as one of the truly great Americans storytellers (“F. Scott Fitzgerald. Biography Profile”).

In this thesis, I choose to analyze Fitzgerald’s most famous novel, *The Great Gatsby*, which was published in 1925. The novel takes place in the West Egg district of Long Island, New York, in the 1920s. It tells a story of an enigmatic and lonely millionaire named Jay Gatsby. He has been in love with the same woman, named Daisy, for years, and tries to win her back. He works hard to gain wealth to attract her attention, despite the fact that she has married another man, named Tom Buchanan. Interestingly, although Gatsby manages to gain much wealth, at the end of the story he gets nothing in his life. This novel is narrated by Nick Carraway, who is Gatsby’s neighbor as well as the cousin of Daisy Buchanan. *The Great Gatsby* is the perfect example of an American novel in the social history of the Jazz Age; this novel has become required reading for every American high school student (“F. Scott Fitzgerald. Biography Profile”).

As the portrayal of Gatsby has a close relationship with the theme of the story, I am going to analyze the theme of the novel through the portrayal of the protagonist. “The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight” (Perrine 102). A protagonist is “the main character in a play, film/movie or book (“Protagonist”). By analyzing the portrayal from the theme, I hope that readers can know the story of *The Great Gatsby* more clearly. Then the readers will be able to learn from the life of the protagonist, Jay Gatsby. The readers can also learn from the event of the death of the protagonist.

Statement of the Problems

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What is the theme of the novel *The Great Gatsby*?
2. How does the portrayal of the protagonist help in revealing the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To reveal what the theme of the novel *The Great Gatsby* is.
2. To show how the portrayal of the protagonist helps in revealing the theme.

Method of Research

In writing the thesis, I use library research. I began the study by reading the primary text, which is *The Great Gatsby*. Then I read several reference books and articles in the Internet which are relevant to the topic to support my analysis. I also read several books in the library to get some theories to complete the analysis. Finally, I draw conclusion from the research I have done.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of Theme through the Portrayal of the Protagonist of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Summary of *The Great Gatsby*, and the Biography of Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald.