

# The American Dream

The American Dream originated in the early days of the American settlement, with the mostly poor immigrants searching for opportunities. It was first manifested in the Declaration of Independence, which describes an attitude of hope. The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal and that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness". In *The Great Gatsby*, the American Dream plays a big role. The values have totally changed, instead of striving for equality, they just want to get as rich as they could.



So it is not surprising that the new kind of "American Dream" fails several times, which F. Scott Fitzgerald describes in his book. He shows that people are not yet treated equally and that social discrimination still exists, which is described in the scene where Tom and Wilson talk to each other in Chapter II. For the reader it is immediately clear that Tom sees himself as superior to Wilson. We can see that when Wilson wants to resell Tom's old car, Tom simply goes on with his game with Wilson since he wants to continue his affair with Wilson's wife, as a result of that he does not give the car to Wilson.

Most of the people appearing in *The Great Gatsby* are full of hope, especially Gatsby who is hoping to win Daisy back and he sacrifices himself to fulfill his dream. He struggles to get into the upper class. In the end his dream fails completely, and his life finds an abrupt end.

Nick Carraway does not share the American dream, but he is striving for something, he wants to be himself, as he sees himself, tolerant, objective and reliable. The money of the upper class is just a tiny bit of his dream together with his admiration for the rich East Eggers. Mainly, his dream consists of mental values, of a pursuit of honesty.

Daisy lives her American Dream with Tom as her husband, who has a lot of money. She does not have any long term aims in her life. Having that kind luxury around her, she lives for the moment, and does not think about the next one. Tom was born into his American Dream. He never had to work in his life, and got all his money from his parents. Since everything is perfect for his narrow-minded eyes, he does not want any changes. Losing Daisy would be a major change in his dream because he sees her as one of his possessions.

Wilson's dream is to earn enough money to move away with his wife and to start a new life some place beautiful. His wife, Myrtle, has also a dream; she wants to become a girl of the upper class. Having an affair with Tom, she acts as if she already belonged among those rich people. Tom is her key to the upper class and she would do everything for him. She hates Daisy, because Daisy is standing in her way, for her marriage with Tom.

# Themes – The American Dream

Use this sheet to collect quotations about the theme explored in the central box.



<p><b>The Failure of the American Dream – Key Quotations</b></p>	<p><b>The American Dream</b></p> <p>Fitzgerald's novel depicts a very particular moment of doubt in the America of the time: the high-minded and admirable ideals of the Declaration of Independence, for the first time, clashed with the realities of contemporary American life. The growing consumerism of 1920s America in which material objects came to supplant the value placed upon ideals and moral aspirations is one of the novel's central concerns.</p>	<p><b>The Characters' Views about the American Dream</b></p>