



stuck on their farm. Gatsby managed to move away while still young, but George Wilson is older, poor and tired. His dream of a fresh start will not be realised.

Note that George Wilson's face looks 'green' in the sunlight. Elsewhere in the novel the colour green is associated with natural freshness and growth, but in Wilson's case it suggests that he is unwell or that he is green with envy of Tom's wealth and power. Nick tells us that Wilson has been made ill by the shock of discovering that Myrtle has 'some sort of life apart from him in another world'. He adds that Tom, for all his wealth and power, 'had made a parallel discovery less than an hour before'—that is, he had found out that Daisy had been seeing Gatsby.

### **Desire and the sense of purpose:**

Gatsby's greatness, for Nick Carraway, resides in his capacity for hope and the strength of his desire. Fitzgerald contrasts the energy of Gatsby's desire with the apathy and cynicism of those around him. Daisy, still in her early twenties, complains that she has 'been everywhere and seen everywhere and done everything'. She cannot imagine that the future holds any promise for her, and the prospect of having to devise ways to while away the years ahead appals her. Her social set shares this purposelessness. They drift, restless but without direction. The only desire they know is that which is generated by advertisements, a desire for objects which can readily afford. It is a trivial emotion and is soon extinguished or exhausted.

But it is a life that ends in tragedy. His energy is cancelled out by a murderer in a case of mistaken identity. We might conclude that such a life driven by hope is untenable in modern America, and decide that Gatsby was mistaken to pursue transcendence, especially as Daisy Buchanan was so obviously unworthy as an object of his devotion. But Nick's account shows a world of bored individuals, lacking any sense of purpose, and it emphasises the need for the kind of vision that might redeem this world from terminal apathy. Gatsby's desire sustains such

a vision. Nick, despite his dismay at being thirty years old with thinning hair and diminishing prospects, finds purpose in his own life and devotes himself to the creative task of writing the story of Jay Gatsby.