

Cheyenne McAllister

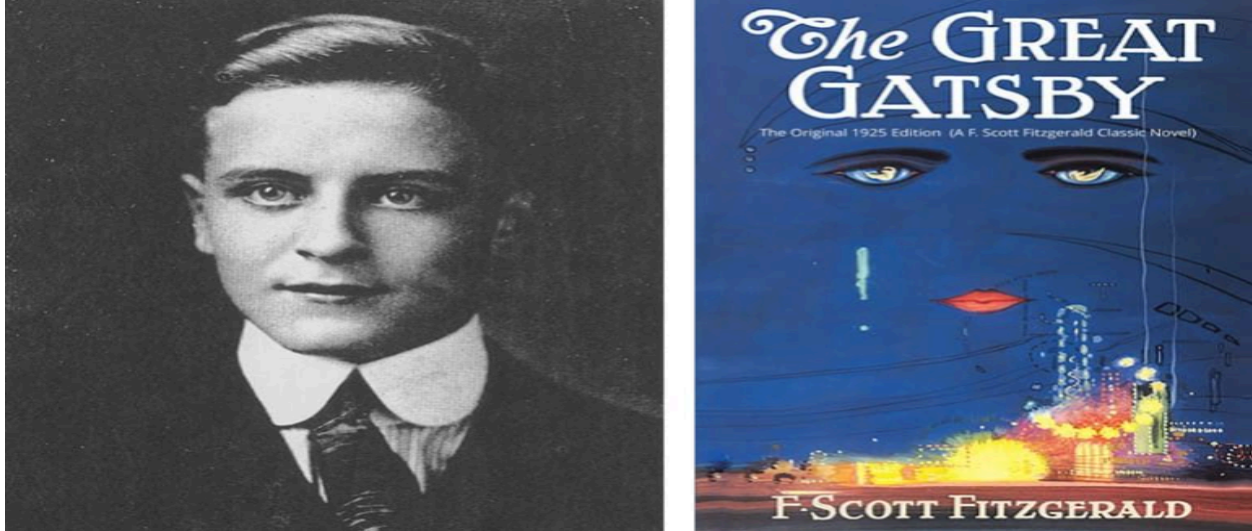
Professor Hüsing

English 3361

10 February 2026

### Gatsby's Light and I'm Not Talking About The Green One

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald was published on April 10th, 1925. With thematic elements of new versus old money of money that is hard earned or passed down throughout the generations, the failure of the American Dream, the past and the memories that come along with it, and the most well-known key symbolic structure of hope being represented by the green light- *The Great Gatsby* soon became a loved and treasured American classic over the following generations. Fitzgerald's novel is still notorious for being loved even just over 100 years later despite the years that have passed by. *The Great Gatsby* is a classic that takes place in Long Island, New York in the summer of 1922. Jay Gatz, later known as Jay Gatsby, is a wealthy man with nothing to lose considering he has already lost the love of his life Daisy Buchanan. Whenever Jay went off to the war, Daisy married her abusive husband Tom Buchanan who provided her with immediate wealth and stability. Daisy and Jay are reunited years later after he continuously throws elaborate parties in hopes to grab and gain her attention. In the midst of their affair, Tom's mistress, Myrtle Wilson, is killed in a car accident that is under the fault of Daisy who is driving Jay's yellow beetle. During this, Tom relates the information to Myrtle's husband, George Wilson, that Jay was driving the car and George shoots Jay at his West Egg mansion in Long Island. In this essay, I will be exploring the way that the before and after of Jay Gatsby's death affects the overall light and visuality of two specific scenes in the movie.



*Author F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940) next to his 1925 novel 'The Great Gatsby'*

The 2013 film adaptation directed by Baz Luhrman brought in 51 wins and 86 nominations between the 2013 and 2014 film awards season. The award titles ranged from Best Actress, Best Actor, Best Direction, Production Design, and the nomination for the 2014 “Visually Striking Film of the Year” in the Dorian Awards according to IMDB. Luhrman’s 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* is a film that is known for the vivid color palettes, bright intensity, and high-saturation of color from start to finish. While one of the most memorable things about *The Great Gatsby* is the everlasting hope that Jay Gatsby will one day be reunited with Daisy Buchanan, the green light is not the most important light in the film. “The intensity of action between the characters and others around them makes the lighting illuminate what is happening. In being used to establish the theme overall, the lighting part of a film is used to set a certain tone and have the audience feel a certain way about what is going on within the scene and relate to the mood of the characters.” (Tjoneswriter, 2014). Whenever Gatsby is faced with seeing the green light across the dock from his mansion, the entire surrounding area of the light is dark and gloomy, and through the mist we see a bright and vivid green in the midst of the

darkness that truly shows how intense the light will be represented in the rest of the movie.

“Standing between Daisy's mansion and the green light across the lake, Gatsby reflects his fantasies' elusiveness.” (Dai, 2013).



### *Jay Gatsby's green light of hope*

“One of the most important aspects of filmmaking is shot selection, which involves choosing specific frames to convey emotions and build a narrative.” (Dai, 2013). While the film shows many different aspects of how the film is shot with colorification being one of the main elements to display the emotion of the scenes– there are two in particular that stand out the most to those who have seen the movie. Two of the scenes in this adaptation that show just the level of saturation differences throughout different parts of the film are times where Jay Gatsby is alive in one and has been killed in the other. One of these scenes is whenever Daisy, Jay, and Nick are inside of Jay's bedroom. What starts as a fun and chaotic spur of the moment, very quickly turns into a moment where Daisy becomes emotional and mourns the time that she has lost with Jay– realizing that she lost the opportunity to have love and money, but settled for her abusive husband Tom, who only has money. In this scene, Jay still stands out despite whenever Daisy seems to blend in to the rest of the clothing and fabrics that are being strewn across on the

ground after the breakdown that her character has. “The magic (and advantage) of the film medium is its ability to capture movement, and Gatsby makes sure he will stand out on screen.” (Hawley, 2019).



*Daisy in the middle of Jay's clothes*

“Gatsby’s mansion was inspired by an old house called beacon towers.” (Fame Focus, 3:18). While Gatsby lived in a large and elaborate mansion, the colors and vivid color palettes of the parties came to a quick halt after Gatsby’s death. Once news circulated that Gatsby had been shot, every person who showed up to his parties, even without knowing his name, “Not a single one of the sparkling hundreds who had enjoyed his hospitality all summer, attended the funeral...After Gatsby's death, New York was haunted for me. That city, my once golden shimmering mirage, now made me sick.” (Luhrman, 2013, 02:07:00-02:08:00). In the scene after Gatsby is killed, we see a flower pot that has fallen over. The transitional period from what we see in Jay’s lively existence to after his passing is something that can only truly be shown by the cinematic and lighting elements that this film uses. The dissipation and deletion of the coloring and saturation with a bright color palette to a dull and gloomy scene is something that makes this

film one of the multimodal elements that uses coloration to show the thematic elements from what Fitzgerald's purpose for his novel was.



*A flower pot fallen over after Gatsby's funeral*

While the novelization of *The Great Gatsby* is a truly loved American classic, it will continue to go down in history as one of the best stories of hope, the American Dream, and the realization of the whirlwind that somebody can leave in your life. Luhrman's adaptation is something that will go down in cinematic history for not only being a beautiful retelling of a beloved classic, but will also be known as one of the films that shows how cinematic elements can push the overall theme, not just from the characters and script.

## Works Cited

- “The Great Gatsby (2013) - Awards - Imdb.” *IMDB*, [www.imdb.com/title/tt1343092/awards/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1343092/awards/). Accessed 10 Feb. 2026.
- “The Great Gatsby (2013) - The Green Light Scene (10/10) | Movieclips.” *YouTube*, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1-XFXX8rU4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1-XFXX8rU4). Accessed 11 Feb. 2026.
- “The Great Gatsby (2013).” Warner Home Video, 2013.
- “The Green Light.” *Eckleburg’s Eyes*, [eckleburgseyes.weebly.com/the-green-light.html](http://eckleburgseyes.weebly.com/the-green-light.html). Accessed 11 Feb. 2026.
- “How It Was REALLY Made: ‘The Great Gatsby’ VFX Breakdown.” *YouTube*, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUSakUWmvT4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUSakUWmvT4). Accessed 11 Feb. 2026.
- Kelly, Andrea. “Gatsby: Shirt Scene.” *Pinterest*, 23 Dec. 2014, [www.pinterest.com/pin/94646029644825197/](http://www.pinterest.com/pin/94646029644825197/).
- “Lights, Camera, Gatsby: Analyzing Cinematic Influence in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Greatest Work.” *Lights, Camera, Gatsby: Analyzing Cinematic Influence in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Greatest Work | Department of English*, [english.umd.edu/research-innovation/journals/paper-shell-review/paper-shell-review-spring-2019/lights-camera-gatsby](http://english.umd.edu/research-innovation/journals/paper-shell-review/paper-shell-review-spring-2019/lights-camera-gatsby). Accessed 10 Feb. 2026.
- “Multimodal Representations of the American Dream Theme: A Comparative Analysis of The Great Gatsby in Film and Novel.” *View of Multimodal Representations of the American Dream Theme: A Comparative Analysis of the Great Gatsby in Film and Novel*,

[tpls.academypublication.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/9050/7347](https://tpls.academypublication.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/9050/7347). Accessed 10 Feb. 2026.

New Jersey Monthly. "Celebrating 100 Years of 'The Great Gatsby' at Princeton, F. Scott Fitzgerald's Alma Mater." *New Jersey Monthly*, 13 Oct. 2025, [njmonthly.com/articles/arts-entertainment/the-great-gatsby-f-scott-fitzgerald-princeton-university-100th-anniversary/](https://njmonthly.com/articles/arts-entertainment/the-great-gatsby-f-scott-fitzgerald-princeton-university-100th-anniversary/).

Tjoneswriter. "Week 2 Blog: Lighting: The Great Gatsby." *Intro to Film Class Blogs*, 27 Nov. 2014, [creativethinker342.wordpress.com/2014/11/27/week-2-blog-lighting-great-gatsby/](https://creativethinker342.wordpress.com/2014/11/27/week-2-blog-lighting-great-gatsby/).