

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

America has been labeled "the land of opportunity", a place where it is possible to accomplish anything and everything. This state of mind is known as "The American Dream." The American Dream provides a sense of hope and faith that looks forward to the fulfillment of human wishes and desires.

McNamee and Miller (2004:1) in *The Meritocracy Myth*, define the American Dream as follows:

In the image of the American Dream, America is the land of opportunity. Presumably, if you work hard enough and are talented enough, you can overcome any obstacle and achieve success. No matter where you start out in life, the sky is ostensibly the limit. According to the promise implied by the American Dream, you can go as far as your talents and abilities can take you.

This dream, however, originates from a desire for spiritual and materialism that can also refer to a doctrine that material success and progress are the highest values in life. This doctrine appears to be prevalent in western society today and leads to the materialism.

Marx (1972:4) in the *Critique of Political Economy* defines materialism:

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness.

It means that materialistic values are associated with living someone's life in ways that do a relatively poor job of satisfying psychological needs to feel free, competent, and connected to other people. On the other hand, when people do not have their needs well-satisfied, they report lower levels of wellbeing and happiness, as well as more distress.

The phenomenon of materialism has been one of the subjects of attention from the authors to beautify their literary work. The initial purpose is to criticize reader or society because in order to show that materialistic behavior does not always lead to the happiness. The author wants to send the message to the reader that wealth is not the major possession that can make their lives happy; they think that with money they can get happiness forever whereas money is not the one makes people feel happy.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (known as F. Scott Fitzgerald) was a short story writer and novelist considered one of the pre-eminent authors in the history of American literature. The 1920s were an exciting and significant time in American History; the end of WWI fueled rapid social and financial change. The newly invented automobile provided people with freedom to suddenly come and go as they pleased. It was the era of prohibition, but America partied and celebrated as it embraced social change and the promise of the American Dream--the belief that all people, with enough hard work and determination, could achieve wealth and prosperity. Historically, it became known as the Jazz Age, a term coined by F. Scott Fitzgerald to describe his generation and the excesses and materialism that would precede The Great Depression.

Materialism inspired Fitzgerald to write the novel entitled *The Great Gatsby*. The condition in this era brought him into materialistic lifestyle in America in early twentieth century. *The Great Gatsby* is also considered work on the fallibility of the American dream. It focuses on a young man, Jay Gatsby, who makes a lot of money in an effort to win her love, after falling in love with a woman from the social elite.

In *The Great Gatsby*, money plays important role in the characters' relationships, motivations, and outcomes. The characters in this novel are too fixed on material things, losing sight of what is really important. It can be seen from the main character themselves, Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan.

Jay Gatsby was born poor and so had no social status to show off. Daisy, the woman he loves, was born wealthy, and so their social classes did not mingle very much. Gatsby aspire to win Daisy through his status and so had to work hard to create his own wealth. Despite this, she marries someone else, and Gatsby becomes obsessed with the idea that can win her away with little more than his wealth and new social status in the community. While, Daisy, despite the fact that she does not love Tom Buchanan, she still marries him because he comes from a wealthy family and is rich. Instead of marrying someone she loves, Daisy's decision is based on her financial security.

From this story, the influence of materialism toward both Gatsby and Daisy's character development will be found out. Character is an important element in a story. It is a messenger of author in conveying a message of the story.

Character development describes both how characters grow and change over the course of the novel and the approaches to how the author makes this happen. In other words, the term describes both the conscious effort of the writer and the effect that effort has on the novel or story.

Both characters, Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan, are improved during the story dealing with materialism. Gatsby comes from humble roots as his parents were poor farmers. The Gatsby who is being shown in the novel is a result of his single-minded pursuit of the American Dream and his desire to be wealthy. This leads to his involvement in a liquor selling activity, allowing him to gain wealth and throw luxurious parties. Besides, Daisy begins her affair with Gatsby after a very detailed display of his wealth through the mansion tour. The novel's tragic conclusion reveals Daisy's selfish, careless nature. Although it is Daisy who hits and kills Myrtle Wilson in Gatsby's car, she leaves Gatsby to take the blame. As Nick says, she and her husband hide in their money from damage they've done, unwilling to confront its effects on the other characters.

From the illustration above, the writer is interested in analyzing the influence of materialism toward characters' development in this novel.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In connection to the topic of discussion, the writer offers two research problems to be analyzed. The problems are:

1. How is materialism described in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*?
2. How are the character of Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan developed dealing with materialism?

1.3 Objective of the Study

There are two aims that are expected to be reached from this research, they are:

1. To figure out materialism described in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.
2. To learn the character development of Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan dealing with materialism in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

1.4 Scope of the Problem

The major discussion in this research focuses on the influence of materialism and Jay Gatsby's and Daisy Buchanan's character development in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* dealing with materialism. This research explores the way materialism changes Jay Gatsby's and Daisy Buchanan's behaviors and attitudes, also to understand what efforts that they did in the need to fulfill their desire of wealth.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand materialism and materialistic lifestyle in America in twentieth century. Besides, the readers also can find out the materialism behavior through representation of Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan as the main characters in this novel. The findings of this study are expected to provide a clear explanation about the influence of materialism toward character development in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

The writer also hopes that this study can contribute as a reference for the readers who want to know more about materialism especially in *The Great*

Gatsby. In addition, this research is hoped to be useful as a supplementary information and reference for other researchers in the same field or related to the materialism and character development in the future.