**The Great Connection**

The fictional stories absorbed by the mind can take an entire new road than what was originally drove upon by the eyes. Literature can have a deeper meaning that is taken into many different perspectives by many different readers; Thomas C. Foster helps readers realize the other meanings a writer could have through his book, How to Read Literature Like a Professor.

Foster’s theories discussed in the book can be applied to many different pieces and types of literature which will help push the reader to think more analytically. While reading over Foster’s discussion on his top twenty-seven ways to critically look at a piece of literature, although dreadful, readers might have received flashbacks to past texts as to how Foster’s ideas applied to the writing, and it was quite accurate. Foster’s theses can be applied to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s classic—The Great Gatsby. During The Great Gatsby, Nick is acquainted with the famous Gatsby, who has a past with Nick’s cousin Daisy. Gatsby and Daisy are reunited and the sparks fly; Daisy begins cheating on her husband, although the deed is already being done to her by her husband Tom. Daisy is with Gatsby when Daisy hits Tom’s mistress and shortly after Tom’s mistress is killed, so is Daisy’s.

Fitzgerald sets his plot to begin in the late spring with things in bloom for summer, and ending in the fall—this isn’t just for funsies, and Thomas C. Foster proves so in How to Read Literature Like a Professor. One of Foster’s arguments is that seasons matter; every season withholds its own meaning. Foster discusses in his writing that, “happiness and dissatisfaction have their seasons” (Foster, 176), and anyone with a brain can tell that summer is the happy season, and well, winter would be filled with dissatisfaction. The Great Gatsby is featured in mostly the summer, which proves Foster’s theory because the book is about restoring an old love and creates an aura of happiness for the two characters, Daisy and Gatsby. Later on however, Foster also says that, “autumn [is] with decline and middle age and tiredness” (Foster, 178). Fitzgerald ends “the holocaust” (Fitzgerald, 162), at the end of summer and beginning of autumn because the, “leaves’ll start falling pretty soon” (Fitzgerald, 153). Fitzgerald chooses to end his novel at the beginning of autumn because this is when you start to see autumn’s traits show in Jay Gatsby—decline, middle age, and tiredness—due to his summer’s happenings. F. Scott Fitzgerald uses a wise time to air his classic novel.

You can see that Fitzgerald incorporates his seasons meaningfully, along with an exaggeration—or purpose—on weather effects for the season. Foster debates that sometimes, it’s more than just rain or snow—or in Gatsby’s case, heat. Foster shows that summer, although usually seen as a happy period, can be portrayed in a way as, “hot and dusty and stifling” (180). The key word there to follow Fitzgerald’s story would be hot. Heat can be used to show temper; what’s the immediate color to come into your head when you hear hot? Red. Red relates to anger, bingo! Fitzgerald uses his narrator—Nick Callaway—to inform his readers that the day, “was broiling…certainly the warmest of the summer” (Fitzgerald, 114), and on this day things became extremely out of control at the hotel in town when Nick says that, “angry as I was, as we all were” (Fitzgerald, 130). This line proves that everyone was angry, and on the hottest day of the summer, this was no coincidence on Fitzgerald’s part. In other parts of the novel, exaggerations become a huge symbol.

Now, Fitzgerald uses a random day—well, maybe not too random—to incorporate some rain. It was all on the day that Mr. Jay Gatsby and Ms. Daisy Buchanan meet again. Gatsby had been nervous about his setup to see his former lover, and Fitzgerald symbolizes his anxiety by having the narrator inform the audience that, “once more it was pouring” (Fitzgerald, 88), and after Gatsby talked with Daisy and realized how well things were, “half an hour later the sun shone again” (Fitzgerald, 88). Foster states that, “rain can be mysterious” (76), like Gatsby was feeling towards his meet with Daisy; Foster later states that, “Rain can bring the world back to life” (77), and that “rain can be restorative” (77). In this scene in The Great Gatsby, there is one major thing being restored and brought back to life—the love affair between Gatsby and Daisy. So here, the rain is providing so many ideas other than the basic idea of being anxious; it’s showing that things will be restored, and having the rain abruptly stop, adds to Fitzgerald’s complications.

Where you are and where you are going definitely matters, especially in a piece of literature. Gatsby’s location in accordance to Daisy’s is on purpose. In How to Read Literature Like a Professor, Foster says that, “geography can and frequently does play a plot role” (169), and that, “geography is setting, but it’s also (or can be) psychology” (166), and this is true in The Great Gatsby. Having Gatsby and Daisy’s homes be across the bay from one another, one living in East Egg and one in West Egg serves a purpose. In The Great Gatsby it states that, “Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be across the bay” (Fitzgerald, 78). This bay between the two is perfect geographic selection because having the bay separate the two helps symbolize that the two were never meant to be; the bay is symbolic of the space between them which can never be taken out, and how there is no physical gap between Daisy and Tom. The geography that Fitzgerald chose by placing the story in the New York area of West Egg and East Egg separated by being exactly across the bay from each other distinguishes what Foster argues—geography matters.

Eating with people shows a certain type of bond between two people. Communion. According to Foster, if you eat with someone it means that, “I’m with you, I like you, we form a community together” (8). Although at the end of the book this statement may not seem very true, Daisy and Tom do share a meal. After the tragic event of Daisy hitting and killing her husband’s mistress on her way home after a brutal battle between Gatsby, Tom and Daisy about who Daisy really loves, Daisy and Tom—her husband—are spotted at the kitchen table sharing a meal together; however, this meal is symbolic. Foster says in his discussion about communion that a writer incorporates characters eating together for one compelling reason, “and that reason has to do with how the characters are getting along. Or not getting along” (8). It’s obvious that Daisy and Tom aren’t getting along, but they’re eating together, and we all know this means something—the two “like each other” like Foster said earlier on. The two eating together shows that Daisy is going to stay with Tom; they are forming a bond. But, what **ARE** they eating? Fitzgerald adds in the story that the two are, “opposite each other at the kitchen table with a plate of cold fried chicken between them” (144-145). The fact that they are at opposite ends, and are eating cold food, shows the hesitation Daisy has and how she is “cold” towards her husband, but is willing to stay with him. The fact that Daisy and Tom form a communion after a major fight and death of Tom’s mistress sharing cold food, shows that the two are going to stay together, no matter how shady one is feeling towards the other.

One of Foster’s topics over rides everything, and that would be irony. Gatsby is almost baptized, and thanks to Foster it will, “make him a changed man” (157), but then his life is immediately taken for the troubles he is trying to forget. Towards the end of The Great Gatsby, it is the end of summer and Gatsby decides to take a swim before his servant closes the pool the next day. Fitzgerald says that, “Gatsby put on his bathing suit” (161), signifying that he was going to go in the water, and then when talking about Daisy calling, Nick says that, “Gatsby himself didn’t believe it (the phone call) would come” (161). When Gatsby dives into the water, this is where he shows that he is being baptized from depending on Daisy. Foster proves baptism by stating that, “it may signify birth [or] a new start” (Foster, 159). Gatsby’s baptism would be for a new start—a new start without Daisy; Gatsby is letting go of Daisy for the first real time, since he never really did. Gatsby came up from the water and this is where, “the holocaust was complete” (Fitzgerald, 162). Gatsby is shot when he comes out of the water and is laying in the pool—this is where irony plays its part. Gatsby is shot in the pool for killing Myrtle Wilson, the catch is, Daisy was the one who was driving the car when Myrtle was hit, not Gatsby. Gatsby says nights before his death after Myrtle is hit by Daisy driving, “but of course I’ll say I was” (Fitzgerald, 143). Gatsby takes the blame for Daisy, and by being killed for Daisy, the baptism because of her is destroyed. Foster states that, “irony trumps everything” (235). We will never really know seeing as to how Gatsby was killed if he really baptized himself of Daisy, but being that he was shot because of Daisy’s actions, it’s like the baptism never even happened. Gatsby’s baptized from Daisy, yet then is killed because of her, so the baptism is trumped, showing that Foster’s theory is true—irony trumps everything.

Foster’s book—How To Read Literature Like a Professor—teaches readers many things to become more critical about when reading a novel, or even looking back at a novel. At least five of Foster’s theories can be applied to The Great Gatsby, proving that Foster is accurate. His theories give much more complexity to Fitzgerald’s story, but give the reader a better idea of what exactly the writer was thinking and why the writer had things go the way he did. Having your eyes cruise down a novel on an analytical level, the mind can drive itself into a new place—one with much more depth than the original road itself.