

“To be young, gifted, and black”: Making *The Great Gatsby* Relevant to Students of Color

Due to a lack of racial representation, some students of color find themselves lost amidst the American pantheon of Great American Writers. While some educators debate whether these classic works are relevant to today’s modern scholars, it is still possible for novels, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, to remain accessible, pertinent, and engrossing.

In my many years of teaching Fitzgerald’s novel, one of the most profound questions asked by one of my students of color was: “Is Gatsby black?” The ensuing discussion will be highlighted in this paper and will explore how Jay Gatsby’s story is not only the story of America, but the story of the African-American experience of always being the outsider, never allowed “inside” privileged society.

The paper will also explore the connection between Gatsby’s story and minority narratives, and how to teach *The Great Gatsby* so it is relevant to modern school populations, especially as it relates to urban education in a high poverty area. The paper will examine how I have taught *Gatsby* through the use of immersive history; film representation, including Baz Luhrmann’s 2013 film adaptation *The Great Gatsby*; highlighting the importance of students’ identification with Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby; and modern interpretations, and critique, of the American Dream under Trump’s America. The presentation and analysis of *The Great Gatsby* through a racial justice lens is a powerful tool for scholars of color and how they connect with a seminal work that is soon approaching its 100th birthday.