American Dream In Little Miss Sunshine And The Great Gatsby

The American Dream, an aspiration that America was built on and continues to brainwash and inspire immigrants and younger people to pursue happiness in the only country that we're told it exists.

The American Dream is a symbol of happiness. Guided by the need to fit in, millions of people go to work every day hoping that they will, in some part, get that bit closer to accessing the American Dream. However, due to the nature of class structure, where it is increasingly problematic to move classes, and the capitalist foundations that underpin our society, people are not likely to access the Dream any time soon. This concept of The American Dream is clearly shown in the 1925 novel, 'The Great Gatsby' and also in the 2006 movie, 'Little Miss Sunshine'. The American Dream is an idealised state of mind, which is set by the bourgeoisie and is reinforced through cultural hegemony. Therefore, leaving it inaccessible since the rich act as the gatekeepers.

The class structure is the hierarchical organisation in which a society is divided into classes (high class, middle class and the lower class). Class structure (Social Stratification) is significant to The American Dream because of the money, the respectable jobs and the good networks in which help people to receive the best medical care they can and to become better known to the people they live near and better known by a variety of more people. The movie The Great Gatsby, represents the three diverse classes- old money, new money and no money. Class structure in the movie was used to indicate the differences between new, old and no money. Class structure is portrayed in this novel by Myrtle, who is representing the poorer class, Gatsby who is represented by the new money, through illegally gaining success and his wealth, and lastly the Buchannan’s who are represented by the old money. The Great Gatsby shows just how both of the evolving classes exhibit the competition and all the struggles they face for both of Gatsby and Tom Buchannan over the lady they both love and want, Daisy.

In the movie Little Miss Sunshine, class structure is shown throughout, by the Hoover family. This movie has a storyline of the family who face a variety of obstacles along their journey yet support Olive Hoover’s Dream of competing in the Californian Beauty Pageant. Her mother is the most supportive towards her and allows her to be whoever she wants to be; her father is too absorbed into winning and is determined to win at everything he does, her brother doesn’t talk, and she has an uncle who is suicidal. This stereotypical family is a part of the middle-class in their society. This family’s desperation to follow their Dreams leads to the abandonment of their morals which are stealing the dead body and boot legging. Throughout this movie, this family crash into a boom gate, which is generalising that they’ve gate crashed the American Dream, and this was when this family had lost the pageant and had gone extremely crazy by them all getting up on stage and dancing crazy and were wanting to just leave the destination they were at. The Hoover family only finds out they can be happy, at the end of the movie, when they let go of themselves and not let what anyone thinks about them or someone else’s expectations towards the ways they act and how they are perceived by everyone else.

In The Great Gatsby, the author, Fitzgerald, has invented a world where money is the only one

object of everyone’s Dream and that everyone believes the world revolves around money. In The Great Gatsby novel, Jay Gatsby uses his wealth to succeed to his noble goal which is both Daisy, the women he wants, and he thinks she’s the only key to his heart, and also his loyalty he gives towards his friends and family. Gatsby’s not relatively the stereotypical self-centred capitalist who’s main and only goal is to use his wealth to obtain all the power he needs to drag in other people and to make them think he is something, when in reality that’s not actually the real him. Throughout the movie, all the characters are deeply dragged down into capitalism and this is then leaving them with the consequences of having their life’s taken away and destroyed. The rich, for example the Buchannan’s, who are the old money, are only able to access the American Dream seeing as they were born into this type of money and are used to it and this then holds back any other groups of people who wish to access the Dream and the money. However, old money only gained their money through slavery which is just as bad as the way that Jay Gatsby had suddenly gained all of his money and since he had received a heap of money, when the times had gotten to be very corrupt and rough. The dominant class set all the appropriate attitudes, values and beliefs in this move. Early on in chapter seven, Daisy’s husband Tom, suddenly finds out about Daisy and Gatsby’s affair. Daisy does this and compares Gatsby to Tom, a man of advertisement and this is then her way of her saying she loves and appreciates him. Also, during chapter eight, when Myrtle is run over and is killed, her husband who is Wilson, is extremely heartbroken and crushed with his Dream being no longer realistic and he feels as though he has got nothing left and has lost everything he cherished. The Roaring Twenties advanced conflict between the old money and the new money has also hurt him, and he can’t even really differentiate an advertisement from his God, and this is then a representation towards the Western World.

Both Little Miss Sunshine and The Great Gatsby describe how the author uses language features, the protagonists, attitudes, beliefs and values to convey the American Dream as an idea or unachievable goal in life. During both texts, the characters are continuously pushing themselves to pursue their Dreams by living the reality of The American Dream, but when they realise that in order to be happy and they do not need to live that ‘perfect’ life, they sit back and let everything go and to just be free.