

Discuss Nick's presentation of Tom, Daisy and their marriage in pages 12-18

The beginning of *The Great Gatsby* is crucial for the rest of the book, because it lays down the main foundations of the book, and introduces us to the main characters and their personalities in a subtle way. We need to read between the lines of the first chapter so that we can grasp what is being said and make the book overall more enjoyable later on. One of these subtleties is how Nick shows us Tom, Daisy and their marriage. It is important we understand this; otherwise we may not see important events later on in the book.

Nick shows us what he thinks of these characters straight away. In this section of the book, Daisy is described first. She is described in many ways, such as her face as "sad and lovely with bright things in it" This simple explanation can tell us a lot about the character. It shows us that she is hiding her true self from the world, but it is still recognisable, however people do not recognise this part of her, as they are too preoccupied looking at her beauty. They assume that because she is beautiful she is also happy, which plays an integral part of this book. This is later justified when Daisy says to Nick about her daughter "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool – that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." This shows her view on the world for women greatly. She believes that a woman can be at peace the most when they are pretty and ignorant, which tells us about her own experiences, as well as that she does not fit into that stereotype. She may be pretty, but she isn't ignorant to the world's problems. This little piece of information is very important, as it shows us what she has been through and how she is most likely to act to things. It also links back to my previous quote; that deep down she is sad, but her beauty and charm hides that from people.

Nick portrays Tom very differently in this section, Nick see's him as someone who is trying to make himself look better than the next person, and put other people down at the same time. This is seen when Tom says "'Never heard of them' he remarked decisively". The word decisively is very important here, as it shows us an important part of Tom's character. He plays life like a game, and he feels that he must gain the upper hand at every point, and complete disregard to everyone else's thoughts and feelings. This may correlate to the football game he had which made him so famous, and he is trying to get the feel of that game

whenever he can, at any opportunity. Another key part of Tom's personality is that he believes himself and others like him are better than others. This is shown when he says "It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things" this shows the obvious white-supremacist attitude that he has and many white Americans had at the time, but also some traits that Tom has of his own. We can figure out that he does not want people to be better than him, and also that he is scared that someday someone may become better than him. This shows why he is always trying to prove his worth, in case someone forgets that he is in charge and they take over his position.

Nick shows us that Daisy and Tom's marriage is not very strong at many intervals. This is first shown when Daisy complains about Tom hurting her finger when she describes him as "hulking" he shouts at her saying "I hate that word hulking". This shows that Tom only cares about what is being said of him, and not the fact he hurt her wife. When the subject moves on to the fact Tom is having an affair, it doesn't seem to matter to Tom that other people know, and this shows his attitude to the situation and how much he cares towards his marriage and how Daisy feels. When Daisy talks about how romantic the garden is, Tom simply replies with "very romantic" dismissing what Daisy had intended completely. This further fortifies what Daisy says later about it being best for women to be ignorant to the prejudice in the world, as they would not pick up on insulting things like these, and they would be happier together. This may show that Daisy herself wishes she could be ignorant to Tom's shortcomings, so that she can feel happier with being with him.

Overall, Nick's presentation of Tom, Daisy and their marriage is very set in stone from the first impressions he receives here. Nick sees Daisy as someone who is very compelling, and hides many secrets from the world, many of them upsetting herself and other people. Tom is portrayed as very arrogant and always trying to prove himself. Their marriage is shown to be very flimsy, as Tom is cheating on Daisy, and she seems to know it, but doesn't want to recognize or accept it, and so this subject is ignored.