The American Dream is a plague which silently devastates our great nation. The popular view of the American Dream is one of positivity, success, and happiness. It's all about living big, and achieving greatness and fortune. Though, this is exactly what makes it such a terrible thing. This dream slowly infects the mind, first creating greed. People become unhappy with what they currently have, and become envious of what others possess. Suddenly, everybody craves the newest, coolest, and most popular things on the market. It completely turned society into a battleground of achieving status above one's peers. Not only that, the Dream soon enough corrupts the soul, transforming people into selfish beasts obsessed with their own desires. The common person becomes ignorant to others' feelings, and how their actions may impact everybody else. Worst of all, the Dream invokes a full-hearted desire for control. It completely alters the host person's perception of reality, driving them to force the world around them to drum to the beat of of said host person's own selfish desires. Throughout history, we can see the impact the Dream has had on American culture. One prominent place is F. Scott Fitzgerald's, *"The Great Gatsby"*. This book holds the Dream close to its heart, the misery produced by this plague evident in several characters. The concept of the "American Dream" is surely the quintessential embodiment of greed and corruption.

As stated before, the American Dream inspires a relentless greed within the heart of the victim. The victim grows upset with what they possess, and begin to lust for more. Gatsby was a victim of the plague. This man truly had it all. He was one of the richest people on the planet, he owned an extraordinarily massive mansion on the bay in New York. He threw massive parties which the rich and famous traveled for miles to visit. Gatsby could do anything he wanted, he had power. He was not happy with it, though. What he wanted was a woman of his past, Daisy

Buchanan. Though he amassed a fortune great enough to keep any average man happy for several lifetimes, he himself was corrupted by that relentless greed. He made friends with her cousin, Nick, and used him to schedule a meeting with the woman he loved. He got to see her, and spend time with her, just as he wanted. It wasn't enough, however. Just having her there was not enough to make him happy. He needed her to love him again. He needed her to give up the life she created in his absence and run away with him. Gatsby was greedy in this fact, he had to have her and he wouldn't rest until he did. As the novel says, "He talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was…" (Page 117) This resonates with his greed for taking back Daisy. He had left her for five years, and magically he expected her to drop everything and come back to him after so long, after she had spent so much time developing a new life without him? His greed controlled him. He wasn't the only one, though. Tom is the other character infected by the plague of the American Dream. Tom was in a comparable position to Gatsby. Tom inherited a massive fortune, he owned a mansion on the bay, he had the money and power to do whatever he wanted, and he had a beautiful wife. He was in a great position. But, having this one wife was not enough to satisfy him. This is where we see Tom's greed displayed most prominently. He was constantly seeking other women. There are two women in the novel he was known to be having affairs with. The first, little information is provided. Tom's connection to the lady is mentioned once in a memory shared by Jordan during her tea date with Nick in chapter four. She said, "A week after I left Santa Barbara Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one night and ripped a front wheel off

his car. The girl who was with him got into the papers too because her arm was broken- she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel." (Page 82) This is only a minor show of Tom's greed. The other affair we know of, Myrtle Wilson, is where we really see his greed shine brightest. His relationship with Myrtle is the ultimate proof of exactly how terrible the American Dream had made him. Tom was happily married, he had a child, yet he insisted on screwing another woman, whom was also married to a different man. Tom would take Myrtle up to New York City and they would party like it was their last day alive. Myrtle was convinced the two of them would divorce their current spouses and marry each other. Myrtle's sister, Catherine, tells Nick in chapter two, "It's really Tom's wife that's keeping them apart. She's a catholic and they don't believe in divorce." (Page 38) After this, however, Nick shares a thought, "Daisy was not catholic and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie." (Page 38) This lie proves Tom intended to stay married to Daisy, while letting poor Myrtle believe they were destined to be wed. He used her for his own greedy desires. Tom and Gatsby truly had it all, but they lusted for more, as the greed of the American Dream overpowered them; they were completely consumed by the greed of the Dream.

It only gets worse, however, as this greed evolves in a much darker, malformed sin: egocentricity. Now that the plague has taken over the mind, it shoots to infect the heart of the host. It corrupts and changes he who it controls, making people ignorant of the feelings and well-being of their peers, and careless to the impact of their actions on everybody around them. We can see this in Gatsby, bright and clear as day. Five years prior to the story, he may have truly, purely loved Daisy, but since achieving fortune and corrupting himself with the American Dream, all he was was obsessed. He left her for *five years*. She spent that time building a new

life without him. She married Tom, had a child, and began writing her own story. One without Gatsby. The planted roots deep in her home. Then, Gatsby came back, and tried to rip her out. He expected her to abandon Tom and this life and this story all because he still loved her. Not once did Gatsby stop to consider how difficult of a thing this might be for her. He wanted her to abandon an entire lifetime of opportunity for a man she spent years learning to live without. Gatsby didn't care how hard it would be for her, he was ignorant to what she was abandoning. All he saw was a future with her, and that's all he cared about. However, Daisy was just as terrible. In her time with Tom, she had also become infected with the American Dream. In the words of Nick, "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together..." (Page 188) This is exactly what Daisy did. As we progress through the story, we see Daisy follow whoever is able to offer her the most. She starts five years prior, following Gatsby and his offer of a long life of love and happiness. Then, Gatsby leaves to go to war. She begins to follow Tom. Tom offers her a lifetime of happiness and fortune, which is certainly more than Gatsby offered. Then, Gatsby comes back. He offers her greater fortune, love, and a lifetime of happiness. She begins to follow Gatsby once again. After that, Tom exposed Gatsby for the illegal methods he used to obtain his fortune, the crimes he was currently involved in. Suddenly, Tom seemed to be able to offer more, as living with a fortune of crime money was dangerous. She followed Tom from that point on. To her, it didn't didn't matter at all how much these men loved her. She always ended up following the one who could provide for her the most. This was the selfishness, the egocentricity erected by the American Dream. All she cared about was the money, she didn't care how her constant changing of sides may hurt the

people around her. Because, the American dream is all about *you*, what you want, and what you think is best. It is this greedy, selfish, ignorant, and corruptness that makes the plague as terrible as we know it to be.

Finally, the American Dream corrodes the soul, taking away from the host any form of goodness they previously knew. The host becomes obsessive and power-hungry, craving to alter the desires of everybody else to parallel the corrupt lusts summoned by the plague. Gatsby coveted for Daisy to throw away the life she built so that he could have her all to himself. The novel says, "He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she go to Tom and say: *I never loved you*" (Page 116) It was all about what *he* wanted. *He* wanted Daisy to go to her husband and abandon five years of her life just because he loved her first. As mentioned before, he left her for five years, and expected her to just drop what she was doing and leave with him upon his reappearance. That was what she was going to do, because he said so. But, she didn't she married Tom, had a child, and began a new life without Gatsby. Gatsby was not ok with this. Now that he was back, she had to go tell Tom that she never loved him and that she only loved Gatsby. He was controlling her, he desired to make her operate the way he wished. He didn't care how hard or how painful it may be, he expected her to do it. She had to. In his eyes, he was so obsessed with that idea of recovering the relationship from the past, she had no other option. It was all about what he wanted on that point, what he thought was best. Once again, however, Tom was even worse than Gatsby. Everything had to go Tom's way at all times, no questions asked. He could have anything he wanted in life, so he did whatever he wanted. For example, his wife Daisy. She had to remain loyal, no matter what, because she was his wife. Tom, on the other hand, could do whatever he wanted. He could meet with as many other women as his

miserable heart desired. He had to have other women. Like Myrtle. Myrtle loved Tom, she wanted to be with him more than anything. But, even this love wasn't enough for Tom. He let Myrtle believe that someday they would be wed, but in all reality their entire relationship was a sham, and existed only for his own pleasure. Still, he manipulated her into believing what he wanted, and controlled her to his desires. She had to be the person he wanted her to be. In chapter two, Myrtle had a bit of fun and started taunting Tom, yelling "Daisy, Daisy, Daisy!" Out of anger that she was acting as someone other than she was supposed to be in his eyes, he struck her in the face and bloodied her nose. He would have control whether she like it or not. That's what it was like for those who achieved The American Dream. Though they had all the keys to happiness, what they had wasn't enough. The host had to have control of everybody around them, there was just no other way.

The American Dream is completely and utterly terrible. It transforms people into beasts of the worst kind of corrupt lust and greed. Tom and Gatsby were perfect examples of those poor, tainted souls malformed by the dream. Gatsby required Daisy live the life he envisioned. She had to do what he wanted, when he wanted it done. He wanted Daisy to abandon five years of her life she spent starting over to try to escape Gatsby, after Gatsby abandoned her. Yet, Gatsby didn't care how difficult it would be. She had to do it. There was no other way. Tom was the most ignorant and selfish of all. He was only concerned with doing what he wanted, when he wanted. Everybody had to live by his rules, under his reign. He used people like tools, careless to how his incomparable selfishness may impact them. He didn't care how others felt. It was the Dream which destroyed these men, which infected their minds and warped their thoughts and actions in the most uncharitable way possible. The American Dream is a terrible plague, and

made the lives of everyone around he who it infected, miserable. This Dream is undoubtedly the most quintessential example of corruption and sin in our nation's history, and continues to destroy the lives of each man and woman it infects to this day.