Character Analysis Of Tom Buchanan Essay, Research Paper

Out of the five main characters in the Great Gatsby, I disliked Tom Buchanan the most ( however his wife Daisy was a close second). He just didn’t seem like he was a nice person, and he also seemed extremely self-absorbed. I don’t believe that he and I would choose the same values that we would consider important in guiding our lives.

One of Tom’s important values is wealth. He was very rich and thought that it made him superior to other people. He enjoys showing off his possessions, ” I’ve got a nice place here. It belonged to the Demaine oil man” (Great Gatsby, 12). In this case, Tom is showing Nick his house and obviously thinks that because it belonged to the Demaine oil man that it makes it a little more important. Tom thinks that poor people are inferior to him and he is quite the snob. He is from old money and often refers to the newly rich as ” bootleggers”, people who distributed alcohol during prohibition.Tom doesn’t think much of Gatsby , and claims that he pegged him as a bootlegger the moment he saw him. When Daisy tells Tom that she is leaving him for Gatsby he says, ” She’s not leaving me! Certainly not for a common swindler who’d have to steal the ring to put on her finger!” ( 140). Later, Tom even sends Daisy home with Gatsby , adding that his presumptous flirtation was over.

Power and control over people is something that Tom considers important in guiding his life. Throughout the novel he has shown, time and time again that he is the type of person who likes to control others and what they do. Sometimes he is nothing more than a bully and other times he is just cruel.He often talks to George Wilson, his mistress’ husband about selling him his car, which he never actually intends to do. He is simply toying with the man, but becomes angry when Wilson tries to talk to him about it: ” Very well then , I won’t sell you the car at all… I’m under no obligations to you at all…And as for your bothering me about it at lunch time I won’t stand for that at all!” (122). Tom was being extemely cruel at that moment because Wilson needed the money that would come from the car and Tom didn’t care. There are times when Tom loses his temper when people don’t obey him. When Myrtle Wilson started shouting Daisy’s name ( she said that she could say it whenever she wanted to), Tom broke her nose. Later in the novel Tom couldn’t stand it when he realizes that his wife and mistress were ” slipping precipitately from his control”. He confronts Gatsby in the hotel and says, ” I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea then you can count me out” (137). Tom couldn’t stand having control so he made a scene. After ridding Daisy of whatever courage she had, he ordered her to go home. That was how he handled the situation.

Tom also values aesthetics, which means ” tasteful or sensitive to beauty”. That is not to say that his actions are very tasteful, but that he acts like man of high class and good taste. He buys extravagant things such as a bunch of polo ponies or a $350 000 string of pearls for Daisy. He is concerned with what he sees as the loss of his own high status and is the perfect example of “old money”. He is extremely pompous : he married the girl that everyone wanted and when he did that he came from Chicago ” with a hundred people in four private cars and hired a whole floor of the Seelbach Hotel”. Tom values expensive things that are both beautiful and tasteful.

Tom also values knowlege, and considers himself to be an intellectual. He is obssessed with books: ” I’ve gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. have you ever read the ‘ The Rise of the Colored Empires’? It’s a fine book and everyone ought to read it. It’s scientific stuff, it’s all been proven” (17). Tom’s ” scientific” book claims that the colored races will submerge the white race eventually. Tom is obssessed with an inevitable downfall of society. He is very insecure and his attempts at intellectualism are rather fumbled.

There are some values that Tom preaches, but doesn’t practice. One of those values is morality. He condemns the affair between Daisy and Gatsby and even claims that it is a step toward the eventual collapse of society and inter-racial mariage: ” Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermariage between black and white”. Tom is the ultimate hypocrite : he condemns his wife’s affair but has no qualms about his own infidelity. He even admits, ” Once in a while I go off on a spree and make a fool out of myself, but I have always come back, and in my heart I love her all the time” . What kind of a person preaches about the decline of society , using his wife’s infidelity as proof and yet admits to having his own little “sprees” ?

Perhaps I dislike Tom so much because I find that his values are all so shallow and in his own self interest. Nick Carraway puts it best: ” 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 , and let other people clean up the mess they had made…”