The following is a documentation of the life and work of foundational American author, F. Scott Fitzgerald. Through the work of Fitzgerald, readers are viewing - at a glimpse - the troubled life led by the man regarded as having a “natural talent for writing” (Martin). It is argued that Fitzgerald wrote himself into many of his works including The Great Gatsby and This Side of Paradise.

There exist varied criticisms of his life’s work which consists of four complete novels, one incomplete novel, a collection of short stories, plays, and a series of essays recounting his life’s experiences. Yet, the laundry list of works are and remain generally well received, preserving F. Scott Fitzgerald’s position as a noteworthy American author.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1...........................Timeline: A Chronological Account of the Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald

3.............................An Excerpt from the Journal and Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald

8..............................Journal and Letter Analysis

9..............................Book Review: Fitzgerald's Newest Work a Hit

10..............................Reflection on Critique

11............................Complete Collection of Fitzgerald Work; An Advertisement

12.............................You’re Invited; Mock Invitation to a Gatsby Party

13.............................Dartmouth College Guest Speaker; An Advertisement

14.............................Dartmouth College Guest Speaker; A Speech

15..............................Works Cited

“**You don’t write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say**”

- F. Scott Fitzgerald
1896
Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is born in St. Paul, Minnesota

1913
Fitzgerald enrolls in Princeton University

1917
Enlisted in the Army; Sells First Poem

1918
Meets Zelda, his future wife

1919
Discharged from the Army; begins work at an advertising agency; publishes “Babes in the Woods” his first short story

1920
This Side of Paradise is published; marries wife Zelda

1921
Daughter Frances Scott Fitzgerald is born

1922
The Beautiful and Damned is published

1925
The Great Gatsby is published

1929
Begins work on The Last Tycoon - it was never finished

1934
Tender is the Night is published

1940
Fitzgerald dies of a heart attack
July 1918
Montgomery, Alabama

I’ve been pent up in this Southern town for nearly a month now. Transferred is what they told me. I have a sense that the Army isn’t all too pleased with my performances. I’m not too pleased with my performances, and not only in the Army.

Last month I sent off my first complete draft, “The Romantic Egotist” I thought it had true potential, but how long does it take to say yes or no? I’ve been waiting around day after day. My future is lying in the hands of Scribner Publishing. My heart is lying in the hands of the young woman I met at the dance last night.

Zelda is her name. I know I don’t have a chance with her. I’m poor, a dropout from Princeton who enlisted in the Army because I had nowhere else to turn. I’m an unpublished author, which means I am not an author...yet.

Through the past three years I have heard a voice echoing through my head. The voice of my old girlfriend’s father saying “Poor boys shouldn’t think of marrying rich girls.” Part of my says why not, my parents have made it work, part of me says he’s right. I’m leaning towards this man is right...if I have any hope of having the sweet and beautiful Zelda in my life I must get published.

Scott
Dearest Mother and Father,

I am writing to you today to inform you of the most wonderful news, though you may not think it as wonderful as I. I’ve been working at Barron Collier for a bit of time now, not nearly a year. As you well know, I’ve been using this advertising job as a support for my writing. This position is no longer needed.

Your son, me, I am now a published author. Smart Set magazine published “Babes in the Woods.” I am going to be rich, and Zelda will have to marry me now!

The purpose of this letter was not to gloat, but rather to inform you of my resignation from Barron Collier and retirement from New York City for the present time. I am coming home to St. Paul, and anticipate your acceptance of your son into your home.

I am in desperate need of a space to write, free from distraction. If I have any chance of completing “This Side of Paradise” I need you to do this for me. With Love,

Scott

Scott,

You know your father and I would be delighted to welcome you back home. You’ve been gone for so long we didn’t quite know if we would be able to see you again.

I know it is less than ideal, but that attic of our house will make a beautifully quiet space for your work, and you are more than welcome to use it.

We look forward to your arrival. Give our best to Zelda.

With Love,

Mother
June 1930

My poor poor Zelda. We checked her into Prangins today. Our lives living as Jay Gatsby did have taken their toll on the both of us.

We traveled and lived lavishly in cities all over Europe. I have received the biggest blessings in life any man can wish for; a wonderful wife, a beautiful daughter, and success granted by my pen.

Unfortunately, as wonderful as it was, our fall from grace was a difficult one. I now find myself seeking a bottle to get through each and everyday. I don’t see my daughter, Scottie very much, she is ten years old now. Zelda, Zelda had the worst fall of all. She has completely unwound. Since her affair it has been difficult to live. It’s hard to say what has caused her undoing, there are many many possibilities. My only hope is that she recovers without relapse.

For now I will continue floating, somewhere between America and Europe, but not home. I don’t know that I will ever visit St. Paul again. Only time will tell.

Journal and Letter Analysis

F. Scott Fitzgerald lived a life of glamour though he could not necessarily afford it. Before his publications, Fitzgerald was by no means a wealthy man. He truly internalized the idea that a woman as wonderful as Zelda could not marry a poor man. Their relationship is rocky for a few years before they get married. They survive at distance from one another while Fitzgerald left New York to move back home and continue writing his first novel, This Side of Paradise. Zelda eventually says yes, and they get married in April of 1920. The Fitzgerald's welcome their daughter and only child, Frances Scott “Scottie” Fitzgerald in October of 1921. The Fitzgerald's spend their time living the life of the rich and famous while traveling across Europe, living in different cities. Sources disagree on how much time Fitzgerald spent with his daughter. There are records of letters dating back to 1933, Scottie would have been 13. The letters remain fairly consistently exchanged until the time of F. Scott Fitzgerald's death. There are instances where he references recent visits they had with one another, many dated from locations around the world.

Nearing 1930 Zelda suffers a mental breakdown. Sources argue that Fitzgerald's fame had driven her mad. Fitzgerald becomes an alcoholic and suffers from the result of his Gatsby-like life until the time of his death.

Information for the excerpts of journal entries and letters provided by The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald, History Channel online, The New York Review of Books Elegy for F. Scott Fitzgerald, and American National Biography
Fitzgerald’s Newest Work a Hit!

F. Scott Fitzgerald had a bright career ahead of him when he began writing, and has continued to blossom since. His latest publication is a sensational novel.

It is far more than simply enjoyment. *The Great Gatsby* is a beautiful comment on the sought-after ideals of the lavish American lifestyle.

Main character, Jay Gatsby represents all that can be achieved in his pompous, over-the-top manner. Narrator, Nick Carroway can arguably be interpreted as an extension of Fitzgerald himself, considering their shared Midwestern homes.

Regardless of the representation of the characters, it is indisputable that Fitzgerald created a piece of literature that can realistically stand the test of time.

We, and I speak for other critics as well, are looking forward to future works written by this literary mastermind.

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**Reflection on Critique**

During his career Fitzgerald had mixed reviews. As time went on his works were more readily accepted for the literary value that they hold. Scholars have analyzed Fitzgerald’s major works and have determined that whether or not it was a conscious attempt, Fitzgerald was successful in making comments on the social situations of the 1920s. Additionally, scholars argue that Fitzgerald writes himself and/or aspects from his life into his works. Elements of his life’s experiences can be seen throughout a variety of his pieces. This is potentially a result of where he turned to for inspiration.

On Sale Now

The Complete Work of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Volumes Include:
- This Side of Paradise
- The Beautiful and the Damned
- The Great Gatsby
- Tender is the Night
- The Love of the Last Tycoon
- The Diamond as Big as the Ritz
- May Day
- Assorted Short Stories

Pick up your copy today
Dartmouth College Welcomes

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Join the Dartmouth College English Department in welcoming notable author F. Scott Fitzgerald while he discusses being an author, his work and his words of wisdom to aspiring writers.

Join us at 5 p.m. on February 3rd, 1939

Speech to Dartmouth Students

“I’m here today to talk to all of you about my work as an author, or that’s what I had planned on saying. Of course I will do my best to answer any questions you have for me, but I’d like to speak for a moment on my struggles both before becoming and author and my struggles as a result of my authorship.

I’m not some guy who had a terrible upbringing, I’m not a tortured artist who finally found an outlet through writing. Honestly, I wasn’t really great at anything else. I was not a good student growing up. I enrolled in Princeton and had to drop out. I re-enrolled but ended up enlisting in the Army. That was my escape from this academic world. I was about to fail out of college and knew there had to be something else.

I did my time in the Army. My story goes on and on until I finally got a major work published, and to my surprise, people actually liked it. Of course some people hated it.

Obviously published work meant money. Sure, I didn’t really know much about myself, and I wasn’t good at much of anything growing up, but as soon as I had some money in my pocket I was determined to live the life I had always dreamed about.

I kept writing, I identify myself as a writer now, though I didn’t always think that. I got published again and again. I got paid again and again. My wife and I lived far beyond our means. We romped through Europe leaving a slew of parties in our wake.

I suppose this is where I start imparting wisdom on you, our next generation of greats. Remain humble, no matter what you do, how great you are or how great you think you are. Remain humble. Keep a head on your shoulders. Never stop thinking. Thinking about what you are doing and the consequences.

I find that I am much better at giving advice than taking it. I give advice to my daughter all the time, and I like to think she takes that advice and that I have been a major part of the wonderful young lady she has become. I probably shouldn’t flatter myself that much.

I’ve had a wonderful life thus far, and I don’t know now, standing here in front of you, that I would have done it any differently, but I certainly would hate to see anyone suffer the consequences I’ve had to suffer. Now, what questions do you have about my work...”

The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald details that he visited Dartmouth in 1939, his purpose there is not indicated. Information for the speech was provided by History Channel online and American National Biography. His personal feelings are not discussed in these works, they are inferred.