

Nothing makes my heart sing louder than a revisit to the good old classics. Since I was about to embark on teaching the original text to a Year 11 class for my first time, I thought it was sheer luck that this innovative adaptation hit the stands at exactly the same time. Greenberg has done a capital job, she remains true to the text but knows when and how to sculpt it to modern effect for a 'Now Gen' reader. None of the restless emotion is lost in this graphic novel, none of the angst or tragic heroism of Gatsby disappears in the sepia shades of abstract yet intriguing illustrations. The quasi - fantastical pictorial portrayals of Gatsby's world evoke a lingering curiosity...and promises lively discussion in class when you begin to analyse the reasons behind why Greenberg chose to depict Tom/Daisy/Nick/Gatsby the way she did. If anything this novel adds to enhancing a student's learning behind Fitzgerald's clever characterisations and associated imagery - it is a helpful aid in visualising his protagonists and antagonists. Whilst I have to admit I remain a traditionalist at heart and declare that nothing could ever replace Fitzgerald's masterpiece, I have to be honest and say that I don't think Greenberg was trying to do that in the first place. Rather, she succeeds in drawing together a timeless classic, literally - with great effect and surprise.

Sara Nigro, St Dominic's Priory College, SA

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is one of my favourite books, and as with any adaptations of books there is always a worry about how faithful it will be. I was especially concerned with this version as the characters are drawn as fantasy creatures, instead of people. Although initially hesitant, after I read a few pages I realised it was actually a very clever idea. Anyone who has read the original novel will have set ideas about what the characters look like. By not drawing them as people Greenberg is not damaging these preconceptions. She has stayed faithful to the story and includes the same language and all of the best lines (Tom and Daisy were careless; We beat on...born ceaselessly back into the past. etc). It has been presented as a photo album, which emphasizes the historical setting and the idea that Nick is recounting what happened to him.

After reading the graphic novel I passed it on to a couple of my Year Elevens who had recently finished the original. They enjoyed it but conceded that to really appreciate it you need to read Fitzgerald's as well. A couple of Year Elevens who had never read the novel enjoyed the graphic novel and I am hoping to encourage them to attempt the original.

Graphic novels are becoming more popular. I like them because they can be used to encourage reading and, although I know there are teachers (and probably politicians) who disagree with this, I feel they are a legitimate text to be studied. I would not use this as a class book because *The Great Gatsby* is a senior text and students should be able to read the original. However, I might use this in support of the book, discussing whether the characters fit our ideas etc. The book could also be used to study other novels and in teaching critical literacy. For example, compare the drawings and descriptions of the characters in the graphic and original novels. Students could then draw fantasy creatures which illustrate the characters from the books they are reading. They would need to explain why they drew the characters as they did. A section on Greenberg's website where she explains why she drew her characters could be useful in this activity.

Anne Fry, Grant High School, SA

Nicki Greenberg's text *The Great Gatsby* is a modern graphic adaptation, of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel of the same name. It cleverly uses Fitzgerald's plot, characters, setting, etc, but tells the tragedy of Gatsby via a predominantly visual media. This graphic novel is insightful and a pleasure to read.

For those unfamiliar with the original text by Fitzgerald, it is a story of the 1920s and the societal values and expectations within New York. Of the famous Gatsby and his opulent parties, but the mystery and isolation that surrounds him. It explores dreams and ambitions, loyalty and friendship.

Greenberg's graphic novel, with its attention to detail, retells this story in a photo album format. The layout resembles an old photo album with every page displaying a series of sepia toned photos. These white edged photos on a black background make it even more visually enhancing. The reader feels part of the process of piecing this mysterious and tragic narrative together. Not only do the visuals enhance

the storyline, they also provide insight in to the characters. The comic like figures add to the wry humour of the text.

Greenberg's graphic adaptation would suit a unit of work involving graphic novels. It could be studied as a stand-alone text in an independent study, or as part of a thematic unit. Unfortunately while this text would lend itself to a comparative study in the Stage 6 preliminary course with Fitzgerald's novel, the novel is on the Stage 6 HSC text list.

Jodie Webber, Hurlstone Agriculture High, NSW

Nicki Greenberg's graphic adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* is a delight. She depicts with wit and charm, the foibles of human nature, as intimately explored in F. Scott Fitzgerald's narrative of the relationship between Jay Gatz and Daisy Fay and the ramifications of their association on everyone they came into contact with. Greenberg's quirky characterisation of Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, Nick, Jordan and Mayor Wolfsheim adroitly captures their idiosyncrasies. The editing of Fitzgerald's original text allows the narrative to move seamlessly from frame to frame, recreating the sepia toned images of photographs against smooth black card remembered from family albums of the 1920s. There is an air of nostalgia, sharpened by the depiction of the brittle society that Daisy, Nick, Gatsby and Tom inhabit.

Greenberg's graphic novel is a fitting accompaniment to Fitzgerald's narrative, bringing images of the 1920s era to life in a way that older adolescent readers will appreciate. Daisy's voice is "full of money", her "fuzzy" head balances delicately on her elongated, serpentine neck. Nick, who harbours "infinite scorn" for everything he initially believes Gatsby represents, is fittingly aligned to a variety of slug and Gatsby, with his "extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person", is resplendent as a sea horse, vulnerable and beautiful in the fragile environment of his ostentatious mansion. The humour of Greenberg's art work is most effectively rendered through the depiction of Tom Buchanan, "one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven" as a boar.

Greenberg captures the way Gatsby's house, which he keeps "always full of interesting people, night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people", shimmers as "the whole front of it catches the light" just so that it might be visible from Daisy's house across the bay. "He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close he could hardly fail to grasp it."

Greenberg's captions convey the essence of Fitzgerald's wry indictment of his own society through meticulous editing, leaving readers unfamiliar with the original in no doubt that, "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..."

Ultimately, Greenberg has enhanced the accessibility of Fitzgerald's classic for a 21st Century older teenage audience in a way that lends itself to the classroom; she has maintained the integrity of the original, leaving us with Fitzgerald's powerful observation of human endeavour; "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Wendy Jackson, Healesville High School, VIC

This is truly a sensational book, which lifts the graphic novel genre to new heights. As a young child my parents introduced me to a number important works of literature through the "Classics Illustrated" series. This book, with its quirky and ironic character representations, is quite unlike that kind of comic-style book, but could help to ground a diffident older reader in the plotline of the Fitzgerald novel. However, while Nicki Greenberg closely follows the Fitzgerald text, I prefer to think of this as an opus in its own right, best appreciated in its distillation of theme and plot, against an already laid down knowledge of the original text.

The characters are all finely drawn, as such a work of course demands. The difference in reading a graphic novel is that the character is presented full and complete, and our reading of the text exonerates the artist, whereas in a text version we develop our own image of the characters gradually as the storyline

unfolds. By giving the characters temperamental and relational features right from the start, much word-based description is rendered gratuitous. Daisy, for example is portrayed from the start as fragile, vulnerable and spoiled, and Tom is big, gruff, selfish, cruel and scary.

It's as if the graphic presentation crystallises and makes emphatic the jewels of *Gatsby* and the facial expressions of the characters are just so perfect! The irony of Jordan's "I like large parties — they're so intimate," (p.62) for example is underscored by the way Greenberg has drawn her character. "[Gatsby] had become simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door" (p.83) would lack the force that Nick's cynical facial expression gives it. Nick's brief affair with a girl in the accounting department at his work comes to an end when her brother indicated family disquiet and Nick's "I let it blow quietly away" (p.76) is brilliantly communicated by a tearing away of most of the next frame! The sequence early in Chapter Six where Gatsby's evolution from James Gatz of North Dakota to the larger-than-life character of Jay Gatsby of Long Island New York is so much clearer and more contrastive in the graphic version. The layout of pages adds very significantly to the communication too: page 60, busily overlapped with material faces page 61, embracing just two images, gloriously emphasising the vacuous lifestyle and values of the people who gravitated to Gatsby's house.

This is not a book for young children, who are always keen (in our library anyway) to investigate any new graphic novel, but I think it will be enjoyed and revisited again and again by senior high school students and staff. I'm looking forward to Nicki Greenberg's next project, *Hamlet* as a graphic novel.

Julie Davies, Sutherland Shire Christian School, NSW