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## The Basil and Josephine stories: Fitzgerald's incompatible worlds

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Professor Day

62:19P

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The Basil and Josephine Stories:  
Fitzgerald's Incompatible Worlds

Typically, members of the middle-class of American society are fascinated by the extremely wealthy people of the upper-class. One can spend hours lost in day-dreams about the lifestyles of the rich -- the intriguing and even famous people they encounter, the costly, luxurious garments they wear, or the delicacies they relish. To imagine such a life seems to lighten the drudgery of one's own, possibly acting as a stimulus and driving one towards seemingly unattainable goals. The lives of the extremely wealthy are virtually impossible for most middle-class people to imagine, and likewise life in middle America may be difficult for the wealthy to comprehend.

Few authors have been more interested in this relationship between the middle-class and the upper-

class of America than F. Scott Fitzgerald was. In virtually all of his works, whether in his novels, short stories, poetry, essays or letters, this author's fascination with the relationship between these two classes is ever-present.

Indeed, Fitzgerald's own biography shows how this concern played a major role in his life. Fitzgerald was born in 1896 and grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. His own life as a middle-class Midwesterner was colored by numerous encounters and relationships with men and women from America's high-class. Although from a middle-class background, he was educated in elite private schools and thus was exposed early to the way of life of the wealthy, the class whom he concerns himself with in his writing. In fact, Fitzgerald's concern for the rich is present in a famous conversation he had with Ernest Hemingway. Fitzgerald is quoted as saying, "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me." Hemingway answered simply, "Yes, they have more money" (Perosa 85). This response shows that not only did Hemingway fail to understand Fitzgerald's deep awareness of the social and psychological differences that wealth can bring, but that he also was less

affected and awed by the wealthy.

Fitzgerald studied at Princeton, but left before graduating. It was here that he experienced a deep but short-lived romance with Ginevra King, a popular Ivy League prep school girl. Fitzgerald turned out merely to be one of King's many conquests, yet he kept all her letters until his death, having them typed and bound into a 227 page volume (Bryer and Kuehl xxii). Although Fitzgerald's first romantic encounter with a truly upper-class woman had utterly gone sour, he kept the memory of the romance fresh and accessible.

In 1917 Fitzgerald joined the army, where he began his first novel, This Side of Paradise, published in 1920. Fitzgerald's stories soon became in great demand by both The Saturday Evening Post and Scribner's, as he became a voice of the rebellious and youthful twenties. In keeping with the tone of his stories, Fitzgerald became a character of the period, handsome, witty, and charming, living life as though it were one big party. His personal life, however, began to decline, as his wife Zelda suffered a nervous breakdown and Fitzgerald himself lost his own sense of security as he became sick, and he saw critical esteem and public reception

deteriorate (Oxford Companion to American Literature 251). He began to write entertaining but somewhat superficial short stories as a means of financial survival. This period in Fitzgerald's life caused him to experiment with new subjects and styles in his writing, almost as if he were trying to find a lucky path that would lead him towards financial prosperity as before.

It was during this time that Fitzgerald composed the Basil and Josephine stories. In the spring of 1928, he temporarily put aside his fourth novel and began to turn out magazine stories depicting the adventures of adolescent Basil Duke Lee, a character remarkably like Fitzgerald as a young man (Mancini 89). In both the Basil and Josephine stories, the experiences of Fitzgerald's younger years, including his relationship with Ginevra King, are used as a basis for his plots. In Basil Duke Lee one can see the cleverness and ambition of the adolescent Fitzgerald, as Basil thrives on upward social mobility, as well as attending an Eastern prep school and college. In Josephine Perry, Fitzgerald depicts the characteristics of his first love, as her shrewdness and worldly wiseness make her

head-strong and self-centered (Fahey 23).

Both sets of stories are set in the Midwest and supplied Fitzgerald with quick money from The Saturday Evening Post. It is possible that these stories, which depict the youth and energy of adolescence while dealing with the turmoil of the emerging self, helped Fitzgerald regain the vitality he was losing in his own person (Bryer 18). Regardless of their effect on their creator, the Basil and Josephine stories, although often not highly critically acclaimed, are still significant. In them Fitzgerald portrays two worlds: the world of middle-class society, with its aspirations of upward social and economic mobility and its quest to imitate its wealthy counterparts; and the world of the upper-class, with its parties, social functions, and money. Fitzgerald's portrayal of these two worlds depicts them in a discordant relationship, and through his characters' specific thoughts, actions, and aspirations Fitzgerald skillfully expands on his presentation of the two incompatible worlds.

Fitzgerald's nine Basil stories craftfully depict the maturity of a boy through the ages of 11 to 17 as the narratives focus on the society and values of

Midwestern America and the middle-class. The hero of the stories is Basil Duke Lee, a youth full of imagination, energy, and hope, who thrives on the dream of heading East, attending prep school and Yale, and ultimately becoming rich and famous. Indeed, this character's name alone holds a sort of pretension, bringing to mind the idea of a noble "duke," yet the commonness and monosyllabic words that make up his name stick Basil in the middle-class of America.

Critics often note the Basil stories for their accurate description of Fitzgerald as a young man himself. The collection traces the ups and downs of young love, most likely reflecting Fitzgerald's relationship with Ginevra King, a woman of high society. Because of this personal insight and emotional attachment, Fitzgerald is able to take the precious and familiar memories of adolescence and weave them into a depiction of the process of growing up in middle America (Mancini 89).

Fitzgerald's five Josephine stories were written for The Saturday Evening Post and were published between January, 1930, and June, 1931. Although the Josephine and Basil stories were composed as separate collections

and written expressly to be magazine pieces, there was a time when Fitzgerald and his editor, Maxwell Perkins, thought of weaving them into a novel. However, Fitzgerald had second thoughts about the quality of these stories and preferred to pursue his reputation as a novelist, composing Tender Is the Night, which was published in 1934. A great deal of effort would have been required to organize the Josephine stories into a novel, especially since Fitzgerald regarded them as second rate material. Thus, his time and energy were better invested in his famed novel (Elstein 81).

The Josephine stories intimately relate the events of a wealthy Chicago girl's later adolescent years. Josephine's family is indeed well-off, for Fitzgerald explains that the Perrys "were Chicago Society, and almost very rich, and not uncultured as things went thereabouts in 1914" (188). Therefore, this collection of stories adds an interesting and valid contrast to the middle-class life led by Basil Duke Lee.

The protagonist of these stories is a fickle young woman, caught in the war between the sexes. She is described by one critic as the typical American girl, with the need to dominate men, to feel all important,



and to show off her emotional and social power (Perosa 91). Unlike Basil, Josephine is indifferent to her educational future or any career aspirations. In fact, it seems as though all she is interested in is finding and marrying "someone she can love more than he loves her" (Fitzgerald 226). The dilemmas of life in the upper-class present a contrast to the Basil stories. Throughout the five Josephine stories, Fitzgerald offers some perceptions and impressions of the wealthy and upper-class concerning the lower classes of American society and the game of life in general.

Although both the Basil Duke Lee stories and the Josephine Perry stories have been published under one cover, the characters of the stories represent strikingly different worlds. By examining characters of contrasting social and economic classes, Fitzgerald demonstrates how the adventures in the characters' daily lives differ from each other. Basil's rural hometown environment causes him to develop contrasting values and morals than Josephine's highly urban hometown of Chicago does. Perhaps one of the most obvious of these values is the importance the two different societies place on looks. Josephine's upper-class background

helps her to place a great deal of importance on beauty and good looks, while Basil eventually becomes less affected by such materialistic traits. The characters also differ in their relationships with both their families and peers, as Basil and Josephine's respect for others seems to be affected by the society each is a part of. As the two characters mature, their individual ambitions also differ, for Basil strives to acquire money, social status, and a life in the East, while Josephine seems more concerned with the status quo in her life. As Basil prepares for his climb up the social and economic ladder, Josephine does little to plan for her life after high school, and she is more concerned with her love-life. At the end of the stories, each of the two characters has been "educated" and has learned some lessons from the experiences in his or her life thus far. However, while Basil's lessons are significant and useful, and he realizes that self-respect is one of the most important things in life, Josephine seems to learn only that reckless and frequent love affairs will lead to emotional bankruptcy. Thus, Fitzgerald's portrayal of the Midwest, middle-class society seems superior to, as well as incompatible with,

the Eastern, upper-class society.

Basil Duke Lee's strictly Midwestern background is present throughout all of his stories. Through specific passages Fitzgerald flawlessly describes several aspects of a middle-class family in the Midwest. For example, in the story "The Scandal Detectives" the author paints a remarkably vivid picture of a typical neighborhood yard where children gather to play:

The Wharton's own children had long grown up, but their yard was still one of those predestined places where young people gather in the afternoon. It had many advantages. It was large, open to other yards on both sides, and it could be entered upon skates or bicycles from the street. It contained an old seesaw, a swing and a pair of flying rings; but it had been a rendezvous before these were put up, for it had a child's quality - the thing that makes young people huddle inextricably on uncomfortable steps and desert the houses of their friends to herd on the obscure premises of "people nobody knows"

(Fitzgerald 19).

More of this Midwestern setting is described in the story "A Night at the Fair," where Fitzgerald tells of "immense exhibits of grain, livestock and farm machinery" (13). Basil has grown up in a rural, rather simple, atmosphere, and the East is a place which holds wonder and amazement for him. As Basil begins to experience the social differences between a small provincial town and an unfashionable prep school, and finally the universities and cities of the East, he reflects on his impressions of the East (Perosa 88). Fitzgerald relates these thoughts to the reader:

Yale was the faraway East, that he had loved with a vast nostalgia since he had first read books about great cities . . . Nothing needed to be imagined there, for it was all the very stuff of romance - life was as vivid and satisfactory as in books and dreams"

(147).

Basil's conceptions and impressions of the East are universal feelings that many people can relate to or have experienced themselves. Although life in the Midwest is simple and enjoyable, there is almost a nagging need to break into the upper-class of society

which seems to be continually present in Basil's mind.

In the story "The Freshest Boy," one can see the struggle Basil has as he tries to fit in with his upper-class peers at prep school. Early in the term, Basil writes home to his mother:

DEAR MOTHER: There is not much to say today, but I thought I would write you about my allowance. All the boys have a bigger allowance than me, because there are a lot of little things I have to get, such as shoe laces, etc.

(Fitzgerald 58).

Basil does not seem to notice the financial strain he has placed on his family by studying at an Eastern school, and the environment out East as compared to his Midwestern hometown is strikingly different.

Much to Basil's discontent, his Midwestern background has placed him in a setting where mediocrity is the norm. In fact, Basil is a symbol of mediocrity himself: He lives in the Midwest; he belongs to the middle-class; and he is only fairly popular with his classmates. His appreciation of the simple life, combined with a temptation and wonder of the Eastern

cities and their hustle and bustle, may be common among middle-class people who do not live in the upper-class societies of the East. Naturally, upper-class people from the East have different ideas about money, dress, and social standing than Basil.

Opposite of Basil is Josephine Perry of Chicago. Fitzgerald cleverly presents the opposition between her new, modern home and the high and long-standing social tradition of her family as he writes, "It was a new house, but the Perrys were far from being new people. They were Chicago Society" (188). He also describes Chicago as a city on the rise, boasting freshness and originality, much like the character of Josephine, as he writes, "There were a lot of new things in Chicago then, but . . . Josephine was the newest thing of all" (188). Such a description is a startling contrast to Basil's hometown, so it is only natural that the two characters' attitudes and perceptions differ accordingly.

Fitzgerald also interestingly presents Josephine's view of the middle-class. In the story "A Nice Quiet Place," Josephine spends her summer in Michigan. This setting is in stark contrast to her previous summers spent at the ritzy Lake Forest, and she protests to her

mother by saying, "I simply can't go to a horrible old farm with a lot of country jakes and no fun and no friends except a lot of hicks" (Fitzgerald 206). Her attitude may be reflective of urban residents' attitudes of rural Americans. The thought of lowering herself to spending the summer with "hicks" appalls Josephine, and she feels she is in for the worst summer of her life.

In the same story, Fitzgerald presents one of the most noticeable differences between the upper-class and middle-class of American society in the conversation between Josephine and her younger cousin Dick, from Michigan. Josephine begins:

"Why, at your age, most of the boys in Chicago have cars of their own."

"Too many," [Dick] responded.

"How do you mean?" Josephine flared up.

"I heard my aunt say there was too much of that there. That's why they made you come here. You're too much for that sort of thing."

Josephine flushed. "Couldn't you help being such a pill, if you honestly tried?"

"I don't know," admitted Dick. "I don't even think that maybe I am one"

(Fitzgerald 208).

Josephine's obvious annoyance with her cousin's blunt statement of opinion, his lack of comprehending her

urban dialect, and his Midwestern heritage present a humorous but revealing look at the incompatibility of the two societies. Josephine is disgusted with the simpleness of rural Michigan, while Dick is critical of the freedom and recklessness of the city.

Josephine's interest in a fast-paced lifestyle and a world framed by money and its influence is discordant with the values Basil has been raised to believe in. Unlike Basil, the wealthy are far from mediocre, for they have the most money, the best homes, the most expensive clothes, and the newest cars. Thus, Basil and Josephine's hometown environments alone offer contrasting settings which could greatly affect each one's perception of the important things in life and make the two atmospheres incompatible.

One of the truly important things in a person's life is one's beauty or appearance, or so Josephine and her high-class friends seem to think. Josephine reveals at one point, "A girl earned her popularity by being beautiful and charming. The more beautiful and charming she was, the more she could afford to disregard public opinion" (Fitzgerald 230). However, Basil does not seem even remotely interested in this trait until he prepares



to attend prep school. Then, he begins to feel long pants are a necessity and a sure sign of maturity. He becomes increasingly aware of the importance of looks once he has resided in the upper-class atmosphere of the East while in prep school. In the story "He Thinks He's Wonderful," Basil returns home and advises his hometown friend Joe on which ties to wear and where to go to school. As Fitzgerald describes it, "He built up Joe's life for him little by little, transformed him radiantly from what was little more than a Midwestern bumpkin to an Easterner bursting with savoir-faire and irresistible to girls" (85). It was not until Basil resided in the East with the wealthy boys of his prep school that he began to place such utter importance on one's looks and appearance. Thus, the two environments of the upper-class East and the middle-class Midwest have contrasting standards for appearance and thus seem incompatible in yet another way.

The two adolescents of Fitzgerald's stories also differ vastly in their relationships with their families and peers. Both of the main characters have a comrade or best friend, their side-kick in most of the stories. For Basil, this person is Riply Buckner, and for

Josephine, she is Lillian Hammel. Though both of these relationships appear to be lasting and true friendships, Basil and Josephine treat their peers in astoundingly different ways.

For Basil, Riply is his alter-ego. Riply is introduced by Fitzgerald in the first Basil story and remains Basil's constant companion through prep school. They have the same boyhood orneriness that allows them to play tricks on other people; they come from similar backgrounds and upbringings; and they share the same jealous disgust over the popular Hubert Blair. In the story "The Scandal Detectives," Basil and Riply cooperate in a joint effort to terrorize Hubert Blair, and then relish the hysteria Hubert causes when he exaggerates the events of the story, telling it over and over again, blowing the details more out of proportion each time he relates his adventure. Their youthful pranks and later theatricals were joint efforts, and the pleasures as well as the unavoidable pains of adolescence are shared between the two (Elstein 76).

Perhaps the most intimate aspect of their relationship is displayed in the story "A Night at the Fair." As Basil sits in the stands beside the lovely

Gladys Van Schellinger, he sees his companion Riply parading in front of the crowd, following Hubert Blair and several others. Riply is obviously ill at ease with the company he is keeping, for "at moments he would join in the general tone of the parade with a silly guffaw, at others a pained expression would flit across his face, as if he doubted that, after all, the evening was a success" (Fitzgerald 52). As Riply proceeds to make a fool of himself, Basil is sensitive to the situation and suffers himself as Riply suffers. Fitzgerald writes, "As long as Riply had been in sight, Basil had been in an agony of shame for him" (52). Clearly their friendship is one of loyalty and sincerity, for the two not only share the adventure and excitement of adolescence, but the suffering and embarrassment too.

Josephine's relationship with her close friend Lillian is quite different than Basil and Riply's. Lillian is also introduced in the first of the Josephine stories, and she is a friend of Josephine through the end of the collection. However, this relationship does not seem as sincere and as loyal as the one shared between Basil and Riply. The two young women come from the same economic background and social status, like

Basil and Riply, but they do not seem to have a high level of respect for one another. Although the two have been friends for years, Josephine risks throwing all of this away as she sneaks off with Lillian's boyfriend in the story "Emotional Bankruptcy" (Fitzgerald 274). She obviously cares more about finding personal pleasure than her relationship with her best friend.

Josephine pulls a similar stunt on her classmate Adele Craw, when she recklessly flirts with Dudley Knowlton, Adele's boyfriend, in the story "A Woman with a Past" (Fitzgerald 232). Josephine is shallow in her relationships with her friends, willing to lose years of companionship for the sake of one moment of pleasure with a young man she is interested in. For Josephine, love that is worthwhile takes total commitment, thus leaving too little of herself to expend on friends (Elstein 77). Therefore, unlike Basil, Josephine is concerned more with herself and her personal satisfaction than her friends. Perhaps she believes money really can buy everything, even friends, as she neglects the real value of her relationships with Lillian and Adele. Josephine's relations with her close friends can not be compared to Basil's friendship with

Riply, for Josephine places herself as the center of attention, and Basil is willing to exist side by side with Riply. Thus, these two types of relationships stemming from two different societies are, like other aspects of the stories, also at odds.

The two characters in Fitzgerald's stories are also distinctly different in their relationships with their parents. Josephine regards herself as a mature, self-sufficient young woman, independent and unaffected by parental supervision (Elstein 72). She is able to keep this front as long as things are going her way. When circumstances change and her world begins to crumble, her father comes to her defense. The story "A Woman with a Past" tells of Josephine being expelled from school after she and a young man are discovered in a truly innocent but seemingly compromising position by Miss Brereton, head of her school (Fitzgerald 239). Josephine's father, though annoyed at the situation, takes her side in the matter, as most fathers would. When Miss Brereton allows Josephine to return to school, Mr. Perry denies the offer. In a speech to his daughter he shows his support for her:

Now, Jo, you keep your chin up - this is one of those times . . . if we hadn't made other plans we'd go back and face every old shrew and gossip in town right away. . . If anybody says anything to you, you tell them the truth - what I said to Miss Brereton. You tell them she said you could come back and I damn well wouldn't let you go back

(Fitzgerald 240).

Josephine, on the other hand, is quick to suspect her father of having an affair when she spots him dining innocently with an unfamiliar woman in the story "A Snobbish Story." She applies different standards to her own relationships with members of the opposite sex than she does to her father's relationships, for she becomes involved with a married man, John Bailey, and has few second thoughts about it (Elstein 73). There seems to be more taking than giving on Josephine's part in this father-daughter relationship, for she admires her father when he comes to her rescue but quickly abandons him when she suspects him of unscrupulous behavior. Josephine seems to feel a financial tie to her parents,

for without them she would have neither the luxuries she so explicitly enjoys nor the financial power they can so readily use when their precious Josephine needs to be rescued.

Like Josephine, Basil is also anxious to grow up and out of his family's grasp, as he moves East to attend prep school. However, Basil may have very different reasons for this than Josephine. He is anxious to pursue his dream of making a name for himself both at prep school and eventually Yale, but most importantly, he wishes to make it big in the East where members of the upper-class will eventually come to know him and respect him. This is both a personal and economic goal of Basil's, one that he has worked for most of his life and one that his family has struggled for financially over the years. On the other hand, Josephine seems more anxious to merely prove her maturity, showing to her family and peers that she is truly an independent young woman, with father's pocket-book to fall back on in case of emergency.

Although it takes Basil some time to develop an appreciation for the sacrifices his widowed mother made to send him to prep school, he seems to genuinely

respect his family's values and wishes. When Basil begs his mother for long pants, a luxury and an example of maturity among the boys at prep school, she finally gives in. However, Basil feels "a touch of guilt at having put his family to all the trouble and expense" (Fitzgerald 45). This young man recognizes the financial burden his mother must endure by sending her son to an Eastern school, and in the story "Forging Ahead" Basil is willing to work in order to pay his way through Yale. Although Basil asks a great deal of his family when he attends prep school and Yale, he realizes the limited nature of the family fortune and respects the hardships they encounter to meet his dream. Once again, this is a startling contrast to the way Josephine perceives her parents, and possibly reflects another difference between the middle-class and upper-class of American society. While Basil is anxious to make it on his own, both morally and financially, Josephine seems to want to declare her independence only half-heartedly, with her parents' financial support always there to back her up.

As one distinguishes between the characters of Basil and Josephine, it is difficult to ignore the differences in the goals and ambitions of each. While



Josephine's time is spent in a desperate, romantic search of finding someone she can love more than he loves her, Basil's goals revolve more around economic and social principles. Josephine seems wrought up and overcome with the fear that she has spent all of her emotions on foolish encounters of love, and she wonders if she will ever find someone who will capture her heart. She is in search of her knight in shining armor and believes "that boys and girls were made for nothing but each other, and as soon as possible" (Fitzgerald 229). Josephine has little room to advance in the economic world, for she is already touching the top. Therefore, she turns her ambitions toward love. Perhaps, like many wealthy people, Josephine has more time for the game of love than the average middle-class American does.

Basil is distinctly different from Josephine in his ambitions and his pursuit of them. As an adolescent boy, Basil has his life planned out: He will "go to Yale and be a great athlete, and after that - if his two dreams had fitted onto each other chronologically instead of existing independently side by side - he was due to become a gentleman burglar" (Fitzgerald 21).

In the story "Forging Ahead," Basil matures, and he never loses sight of his dream of attending Yale, even when his mother loses a considerable amount of money and suggests he attend the state university. As an American tradition, it is generally assumed that private, Eastern schools are superior to local state universities, and they are definitely more expensive. Part of Basil's dream is to attend an Eastern school, and even in financially tight times he is willing to work diligently to help his mother make his dream come true.

Basil also searches for fame and stardom. In the story "The Captured Shadow," he attempts to be successful as he produces a drama written by himself. He even dreams of becoming famous through the experience. Similar dreams may often embellish the minds of many people living in middle-class America. They search for some way to jump up into a more financially stable lifestyle, preferably one with fame and attention. Unlike members of the upper-class, Basil belongs to a more mediocre social and economic level, as he comes from the middle-class with a Midwestern history, and he has ample room to expand and advance.

Basil's goals and ambitions also seem to be morally

directed as the character matures. For example, in the story "The Perfect Life" he pledges to be "clean, upright, and decent." Saintlike, Basil takes it upon himself to change the morality and performance of others, and he begins his crusade for the perfect life. The young but driven disciple travels to New York with George Dorsey over Thanksgiving break, and his view of New York is a clear example of the impression the East coast may often make on Midwesterners. When Basil attends a party with George and his sister Jobena, he is astounded at the differences between the people of the Midwest and the East:

There were two stylish, anaemic girls of sixteen - one bore an impressive financial name - and two freshmen from Harvard who exchanged private jokes and were attentive only to Jobena Dorsey . . . The atmosphere was impersonal; he doubted if the other four guests knew his name. "In fact," he thought, "it's just as if everyone's waiting for some one else to make a fool of himself." Here again was something new and unrecognizable;

he guessed that it was a typical part of New York

(Fitzgerald 129).

By actually playing an active part in this upper-class life-style, some interesting traits are revealed to Basil and he is not fond of the effects. Basil begins to notice the difference between financial success and moral success.

Josephine, on the other hand, is in hot pursuit of a man who will sweep her away. She longs to find a man who will love her more than she loves him, and in the story "Emotional Bankruptcy" she seems to have met Mr. Right. She tells her young lover, "You're everything - you're everything I've always wanted" (Fitzgerald 287). However, when they kiss, she feels nothing. Josephine then realizes that she has always had all of her wishes met, especially material wishes. This spoiled young woman has never been challenged in life and has had nearly all of her whims and desires granted, regardless of the tricks she employed to get them. Thus, when she finally wishes to fall in love, she has no feelings left (Way 15). Now, at the age of almost

eighteen, Josephine longs for one lasting, true love that she fears she may never find. Her obsession with this particular goal seems quite frivolous to most middle-class Americans, for they often have other, more tangible or economic dreams to pursue. Although at one point in the story "Basil and Cleopatra" Basil reveals his deepest feelings for Minnie Bibble, and one of his goals in life seems to be to win her love, this is only temporary, for he soon realizes that his self-pride and respect are more important than any girl's attention. Again, Basil seems to opt for morality along with his desire for making it big in the East, and this is the part that Josephine fails to focus on. Therefore, this is another difference between the two characters in Fitzgerald's stories who come from unlike social and economic backgrounds.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the two characters is seen as each set of stories draws to a close. The lessons each character learns and the realizations each comes to vary in depth and maturity. Generally, both Basil and Josephine realize that they are not as sophisticated as they once thought themselves to be. However, the difference lies in the depth of

their realizations. While Josephine uses her experiences to develop an awareness of herself, her attitudes, and her disposition, Basil actually learns from his encounters and develops more towards maturity (Bryer & Kuehl xviii). He eventually develops into a confident, sincere, and moralistic man, while one is left with the feeling that Josephine will never really change and will always remain incredibly egocentric. In a sense, Basil learns his lesson and completes his "education" process, while Josephine does not.

The character of Basil matures through a series of painful but helpful experiences that educate him to the ways of the real world. Though extremely unpopular at St. Regis prep school, Basil makes a decision that allows him to win back the respect of his classmates in Fitzgerald's story "The Freshest Boy." He has the opportunity to run away from his problems and travel throughout Europe with his grandfather, but instead he realizes that he must overcome his unpopularity rather than run from it (Higgins 107). Basil also realizes that he is "one of the poorest boys in a rich boys' school" and slowly begins to appreciate the risks and sacrifices his family has made for him (Fitzgerald 59).

Basil's lesson in maturity takes another step forward in the story "He Thinks He's Wonderful," for his endless talk not only turns off his friends, but also ruins his chance of being a guest on a vacation with a girl he likes. As the stories progress, Basil pursues his "education" even more, and finally in the story "Basil and Cleopatra" he is able to realize his ideal of sentimental love is an obsession, and he gives up on the pursuit of a young woman and saves his self-respect (Perosa 90). Basil's education is still incomplete, as most people can always stand to learn more of the lessons life inevitably offers, but he has achieved a better awareness of himself and a deeper maturity. He has gone through a series of painful trials that have allowed him a clearer, better directed vision. As Fitzgerald puts it precisely, "life for everybody [is] a struggle, sometimes magnificent from a distance, but always difficult and surprisingly simple and a little sad" (74).

For Josephine, her education in the ways of the world is far from complete at the conclusion of her stories, for she does not seem to learn from the experiences she has suffered. As one critic states, she

is "born and remains a flapper" (Perosa 91). At the end of the last Josephine story, the young woman is aware of the fact that her wealth may separate her from true happiness, but the realization does not have an impact.

As the Josephine stories unfold, Josephine begins to see, in the story "A Nice Quiet Place," that maybe the rural life of Michigan's Island Farms is unique and enchanting, and she feels "a little ashamed of her desertion" of the place. Yet she returns to Michigan not to enjoy the setting, but rather to pursue a relationship with Sonny Dorrance. Similarly, in Fitzgerald's story "A Woman with a Past," Josephine realizes that "one couldn't go on forever kissing comparative strangers behind half-closed doors," but it seems that she will not heed the lesson to be learned (Fitzgerald 238). It would be too great a task for her to give up her flirtation merely to save her reputation. As her stories come to a close, Josephine is brought to emotional bankruptcy, but it is suspected that she will not mature any farther than that (Perosa 92). Although Josephine realizes that "one cannot both spend and have," it is likely she will continue to do both (Fitzgerald 287). Her education lacks the genuineness



and sincerity of Basil's, for Josephine is a more shallow character wrapped up in herself and her own pleasures. Her selfishness and ego are handicaps that drastically interfere with her acquiring a worthwhile "education."

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Fitzgerald's presentation of the two lively adolescents in the Basil and Josephine stories successfully demonstrates the contrasting value systems, ethical codes, and environments that exist between the middle and upper classes of America's social and economic systems. It is not merely money that distinguishes the two classes, but also the many effects money has on people's perceptions of dress, education, and other people within society. Although members of the middle-class often dream of moving up and breaking into the upper-class, the odds of this actually happening seem quite slim. If a person does by chance accomplish such a feat financially, the emotional and moral adjustments alone may be enough to bring one to personal ruin.

Fitzgerald is an expert on this subject, for he experienced the trials of upward mobility first-

hand, flourishing financially while deteriorating personally. This king of the Jazz Age learned of the differences between American classes and their incompatibility. The extremely wealthy are truly set apart from most of middle-class America, and few people detail this idea better than Fitzgerald:

Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different

(Stories 177).

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