

General Vision and Viewpoint | Sample answer

“Significant events in texts and the impact they have on readers often help to clarify the general vision & viewpoint of those texts”.

Compare the ways in which at least one significant event in each text, and its impact on you, helped to clarify the general vision & viewpoint of these texts. (2014)

General vision & viewpoint refers to the view of the world of the world offered by the author, as well as the view the reader obtains from studying the text. The vision portrayed by the authors in “The Great Gatsby” (TGG), a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, “I’m Not Scared” (INS), a crime, thriller, mystery film directed by Gabriele Salvatores and in “Foster”, a short story by Claire Keegan, all offer different, yet thought provoking views of the world. While for the most part I share the view offered by the author, on occasion I find that my opinion of the world portrayed differs to what the author intended it to be. In all three texts, the authors’ use of key moments to depict the general vision and viewpoint greatly impacts how the reader experiences the text and influences me to have certain views of the world portrayed. The general vision and viewpoint portrayed at momentous occasions throughout the texts helps me to understand the authors’ own thoughts and the vision they wished to bestow on me as a reader.

TGG is a novel set during the “Roaring 20’s” in an affluent New York suburb. The main character of Gatsby lives in a world which on the surface seems perfect, full of money, parties and fast cars. However, on further inspection it becomes strikingly clear to the reader that this world is not all it appears to be. Amidst the glitz and glamour, the author effectively portrays his view of a world of deceit and corruption. The immoral ways of society become evident when the narrator Nick attends a dinner in Daisy and Tom Buchannan’s house. It seems Nick is only there minutes when he is entrusted with news of Tom’s “secret” affair, that appears to be common knowledge in the household, “Tom’s got some woman in New York”. As a reader, I am shocked by the characters’, namely Daisy’s, acceptance of such infidelity. My initial view of a perfect world is instantly changed to one of disgust at the immorality of Tom’s actions. A world of deceit and corruption is also present in Aqua Traverse, the setting of the film INS. Michele, a young boy

growing up in 1970's Southern Italy, is exposed the brutality of his world from a young age. Unlike in TGG, the author portrays no hint of a glamour in his vision for the text. The author illustrates an impoverished world through the opening image of a barren landscape. Similarly, in TGG, the corruptness of the world and the lack of regard for women is evident from the beginning when a friend of Michele's tries to force a young girl to expose herself to a group of boys. Although Michele saves her from having to carry out such a horrendous dare, "I'll pay up. I came last", I am still horrified by the author's bleak vision of a world where women are powerless. In both TGG and INS, the opening scenes of the texts give me a pessimistic view of the world and leave me feeling uncomfortable and unhelpful for what is to come. On the other hand, I find the vision depicted at the beginning of Foster to be quite positive and uplifting. While the characters in both TGG and INS seem to face worsening circumstances, the girl in Foster's circumstances seem to change for the better. The rural setting of 1980's Ireland, which is illustrated in Foster, contributes to the warm and comforting vision of the world that the author initially portrays, due to it being a setting that I am familiar with. As a reader, I am drawn to the Kinsellas as soon as the girl is first introduced to them, "Come on in, a Leanbh", and I share in the author's vision of a warm and loving environment. The Kinsellas' interest in and affection towards children is evident, something which directly contrasts the lack of affection Daisy in TGG displays towards her own daughter at the dinner party, "I suppose she talks, and – eats, and everything". The way in which characters treat children reveals a lot to us about the general vision and viewpoint, and in the case of TGG, the obvious lack of interest in children gives me quite a dark and cold view of the world.

As the story of Gatsby in TGG progresses, the author's vision, as well as my own viewpoint, is enhanced through vulgar imagery of an immoral world, "house lit up like world's fair". The vision of a world "full of money" is further developed when Nick attends one of Gatsby's outrageous parties in his "colossal affair" of a house. The party serves as a classic example of everything that is wrong with this world. The guests who attend don't know Gatsby, and most of them weren't even invited, "I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited". Society's sole focus is on money and wealth, and this creates a very negative vision of the world. However, the world presented in INS drastically contrasts that of the world depicted in TGG, although the vision is no less dismal. The author shows the horrendous poverty that consumes Michele's family when all he has for dinner is a tomato. As a reader, I am heartbroken to see that this is all that two growing children have to eat,

and it is a lasting image in my mind. However, while the author's vision of the world is overall quite bleak, I obtain a positive view of Michele when he tries to make the best out of a bad situation by telling his sister to put salt on her tomato to make it taste nicer. While I view the characters in TGG as self-absorbed and greedy, the act of kindness Michele shows towards his sister gives me hope for the morality of the characters in INS. It is clear that a strong relationship exists between Michele and his sister, and this vision is heart-warming and endearing. The author of Foster presents a similar view of close and trusting relationships between characters. Although the girl barely knows the Kinsellas, they treat her as if she was their own. They are keen to look after her, as is seen when Edna gives her Weetabix to eat before bed because she is malnourished, "I eat five in all during the nine o'clock news". I believe the author's vision is to show a more nurturing home for the girl, but I however, find this moment quite distressing as it is awful to think that the child didn't have enough food in her own home, "All you need is minding". The authors of INS and Foster similarly portray positive visions of humanity and relationships, where characters look out for each other. On the contrary, the view of humanity given in TGG is nothing short of repulsive, as is strikingly evident at the first of Gatsby's parties that Nick attends. Rumours fly about Gatsby's background, "I heard he killed a man once", and where he made his money, "He's a bootlegger", yet none of his guests have the courage nor the courtesy to ask him themselves. Relationships are clearly fickle, and it is both my view and the author's vision that a person's value in this world is entirely dependent on the amount of money in their bank account. This vision is incredibly bleak and leaves me feeling somewhat dejected and angry.

As the texts progress, so too does the general vision and viewpoint of each. A significant event in TGG which helps to clarify the author's vision is when Tom and Gatsby fight over Daisy in a hotel room in New York. By setting the scene, the author creates tension and suspense to engage the reader, "The room was large and stifling". The creation of suspense prepares us for what lies ahead, as well as giving us a better insight into the atmosphere in the New York hotel room and allowing us to experience it as if we were there. Both Tom and Gatsby's ignorance is made clear to us when each refuse to believe that Daisy loves the other, "Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me". Amidst all this fighting, the author's vision seems to be that no amount of money can buy intelligence, nor make a person happy. The same could be said about the author's vision in INS when Michele overhears the adults discussing what to do with Filippo. Their desperate pursuit of money has led the people of Aqua Traverse to go against their morals and hatch a plan that is destined to fail. Similar to in TGG, the people of Aqua

Traverse fail to see that their pursuit of money has only added to their problems and has made them no happier. Both authors seem to portray the view that having money is not the solution to all our problems. In fact, more often than not, it is the cause. Despite his wealth and superior attitude, it appears that Tom in TGG is somewhat jealous of Gatsby, "I know I'm not very popular. I don't give big parties", just as Gatsby is of Tom for being married to Daisy. This petty jealousy and rivalry makes me pity the characters and portrays them in a negative light, giving me a bleak view of society. This envy that both Tom and Gatsby show in the New York hotel room is reminiscent of the jealousy Mildred displays towards the Kinsellas in Foster. After offering to take the girl home to her house after the wake, Mildred wastes no time in bombarding the poor child with questions and even goes as far to tell her about "The Kinsellas' young lad, you dope", who died after falling into a slurry tank. From the questions that Mildred ask the girl about the Kinsellas' home life, such as, "Is the freezer packed solid? Does she skimp on things or is she allowed to spend?", it becomes evident that she is jealous of their middle-class lifestyle and seeks to spite them. Mildred's rude curiosity portrays an unhopeful vision for the people in the community, which greatly contrasts my earlier beliefs that all people in this world must be kind and good like the Kinsellas. By introducing us to Mildred, the author effectively shows that there is good and bad in every society. Nobody lives in a perfect world. The author of INS portrays a similar vision of everyone's lives having imperfections when we see the adults of Aqua Traverse watching Filippo's mother on the news as they discuss her son's fate. While Michele's family and the other townspeople view the Carducci family as having the ideal life, it is clear that this is not the case from Filippo's mother's pleas, "You threatened to cut his ear off. I beg you not to do it". The author creates a vision of a world full of injustices, regardless of status or wealth. This vision is equally seen in the other two text, with Gatsby's failure to win over Daisy, and the Kinsellas' tragic loss of their son.

As the texts draw to a close, my view of each of the three worlds is decided. The most prominent event at the end of TGG is Gatsby's funeral, a solemn affair attended by very few of his 'friends'. Despite his efforts to be someone and make something of his life, Gatsby dies a lonely man. The weather the day of Gatsby's funeral is bleak, "a thick drizzle", which perfectly captures the author's vision for this world. Even though Nick called on many of Gatsby's acquaintances to attend his funeral, none of them bothered to show up, "She didn't even send a flower". The people of this world took all they could from Gatsby – attended his parties, drank his wine, ate his food - and then left him for dust. It is glaringly obvious that the author's vision is of a

world where nothing triumphs money in terms of importance. The complete opposite is seen in the final scene of INS, when Michele's father Pino accidentally shoots his own son in the leg. Despite the shouts from his leader to leave Michele and pursue Filippo with the gun, Pino stays by his bleeding son. Up to this point I held no regard for Pino as a character, but this last scene changes my view entirely. The vision is hopeful as it shows that at the end of the day, Pino values his family above all else, which is a direct contrast to the final vision in TGG. I find this vision uplifting and I have great optimism for the future of Michele and his family. I have no doubt that the author intended to leave us feeling hopeful for humanity in this world. Elements of both this vision, and the more negative vision given in TGG, are portrayed in the final scene of Foster. The author of Foster leaves us with an ambiguous vision, which straddles between being both joyful and pessimistic. As the girl returns to her own family home, we are bereaved to see that nothing has changed "the house feels damp and cold. The lino is all tracked over with dirty footprints". This unhelpful vision is similar to that given at the end of TGG, when it becomes clear that Gatsby's passing hasn't awoken society to see the immorality of their lifestyles, "they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness". However, there is also an element of optimism at the end of Foster when the girl runs into Kinsella's arms, which appears to be the author's way of telling us that the girl sees the Kinsellas as her true family, "something deeper keeps me there in Kinsella's arms, holding on". This moment mirrors the end of INS, when Pino cradles the wounded Michele in his arms. The heart-warming endings of both texts show the power of love in the characters' worlds and leave us feeling safe in the knowledge that the characters in both texts understand what is really important in our lives – love. The authors of both INS and Foster portray the vision of a world where the characters understand the true meaning of family. Both worlds show that family doesn't necessarily have to be biological – Filippo becomes like a brother to Michele in INS, and the girl in Foster sees the Kinsellas as her true parents – to give us the love that we need. The author of TGG's vision is similar yet portrayed in a different manner. By showing us how lack of love and pursuit of money ultimately destroyed Gatsby, we can see how the author is eager to portray the vision that in Gatsby's world, love and stable relationships are the key to success, yet unfortunately Gatsby was grossly misled in his belief that money would solve all his problems.

I firmly believe that in all three texts significant events have a profound effect on the reader and help us to understand the general vision and viewpoint of the authors. While the texts of INS and Foster end with a somewhat positive view of the world, the ending of TGG gives an

undoubtedly bleak and bitter vision, and for this reason it is the general vision and viewpoint which I found most captivating. I believe it was the author's intention that I would like Gatsby, and pity his misfortune, yet I can't help with disagree with this vision entirely. In my opinion, Gatsby was a selfish character who failed to see the true meaning of success in his attempt to reach the top of the social ladder. However, my dislike for Gatsby contributes to my appreciation for the general vision of a materialistic society as it enables me to see the extent to which corruption is evident in this world. The grotesque vision of this world is both fascinating and shocking, and this contributes to making the text unforgettable. The general vision and viewpoint of TGG opened my eyes to the extent of the problems that money causes and continues to cause today. My view and the author's vision of TGG as a world that has been corrupted in its pursuit of wealth has led me to appreciate the value of family and love in our lives, and for this I commend the author.