
FALLING FATALLY

Abiba Grant

Does death give more value and substance to the love characters share?

Jeanne Safer once said "It is a certainty that there will be a shattering involuntary separation. Death is the abandonment caused not by betrayal but by fidelity." For centuries humans have romanticised dying for love in fiction and reality. What we deem 'The greatest love stories' are always marked by the grim reaper from history's Cleopatra & Mark Antony to Hazel & Augustus in the Fault in our stars. Focusing on two classics, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby* we will explore relationships and if their fatal finales is why we regard them as significant?

Just under 500 years later in the age of Tinder, snapchat and Love Island I think it's safe to say romance has changed considerably since The Shakespearian era. Yet, we still idolise the relationship of teen lovers Romeo and Juliet. Well throughout time relationships are always riddled with interferences, betrayals, and uncertainty which we see in the play.



In the beginning Romeo is simping after Rosaline who'll 'not be hit With Cupid's arrow' while Juliet's parents intend to marry her off to some guy called Paris: 'A gentleman...with honourable parts Proportion'd as one's heart would wish a man' so neither are living their best life. Not to mention their families have more beef than a butchers. However, their proceeding love is stronger than all these obstacles and the audience repeatedly watch them choose one another to cement their devotion to another.

On the other hand, it is important to remember the play takes place over just 4 days (still longer than some celebrity marriages nowadays, Britney Spears we're looking at you) and that Juliet is 13 and Romeo is only a few years older. These elements are vital because though they are the immortal 'star crossed lovers' we never see if that love can stand the test of time.

What happens if Romeo, the Petrarchan lover, finds another girl that can 'teach the torches to burn bright.' or Juliet realises she still feels some type of way about her 'beautiful tyrant' husband killing her cousin. All this in addition to the fact they are literally children. I am sure many of you at that age wanted to marry Jacob from Twilight or Buffy the vampire slayer, **but** our tastes change as we reach adulthood, so it's highly unlikely the same wouldn't have happened to Romeo and Juliet, I mean being the killer of her cousin probably gets boring after 16.

I think we revere this couple so much because they call out to the hopeless romantic in all of us. They die in love meaning that love can't ever be changed, diminished, or become tainted by the complications it would have encountered in life.

Death stops the possibility of them ever falling out of love therefore their love is infinite and that is something we all crave regardless of the era. With today's society this is even more prominent with phones making cheating effortless, the law-making divorce easy and the internet giving access to a world of sex without emotion.

Alternatively, in *The Great Gatsby* we encounter a more realistic love

because this navigates real world issues that can destroy a relationship like, the passage of time, class, and money. Yet unlike the previous relationship the love between Daisy and Gatsby isn't equal in a number of ways. This couple is the 1920's version of Gossip Girl's Dan and Serena; she's old money he's new, she moves on from their past he can't help but hold on (to the point it's a bit creepy).

But most importantly is Gatsby's love for Daisy is unconditional and idealistic coupled with his 'romantic readiness such as I[Nick] have never found in any other person'. Which means he would do anything for her. Whereas, a woman living in a patriarchal society, who's best option is to be a 'beautiful little fool', and therefore Daisy doesn't have the luxury to put caution to the wind, her choices centre

maintaining a secure life of luxury and not love. Daisy's affections are more calculating and analytical, though she does seem to harbour genuine fondness for Gatsby (even after he ghosts her), she chooses a more lucrative option of Tom who's 'family were enormously wealthy' even though he is a certified f**k-boy.

When reunited with Gatsby, Daisy is done with Tom's cheating and yearns for a wild passionate affair of her own. Daisy gains that from Gatsby and his extravagant gestures. But as she has already proven once their love lacked endurance and while Gatsby wants to 'repeat the past' Daisy wants some no strings attached fun and when it becomes too real declares Gatsby 'wants too much' and flees. Although Daisy

lacks loyalty, the couple are still considered one of the greats.

Like Romeo and Juliet, I think this is because of Gatsby's premature demise: right till the end he loved Daisy even covering for her killing Myrtle (Spoiler Alert!). The 'greatness' both Nick and the reader see in him is his unyielding faithfulness to his lover even when she chooses the 'supercilious', 'arrogant' and straight up violent Tom. Over time maybe Gatsby could have moved on, but death prevents this option rendering his boundless love everlasting. Love like that is almost impossible to come by and somewhere deep down we all want a partner who will love us no matter what, despite our fuckups and flaws. In the end, Daisy was ultimately (and literally) Gatsby's ride or die and his death fortifies that till the end of time.

So, in short yes, the couples we venerate the most are the ones death touches because with this touch they become timeless and therefore unable to change. And as writer Milan Kundera said, 'At the end of true love is death, and only the love that ends in death is love'.

