**African American literature**

**Unit 1**

**Before you know you owned it - Alice Walker**

**INTRODUCTION**

"Before You Knew You Owned It" is a poem by Alice Walker that explores self-discovery and empowerment. It delves into the idea of realizing one's worth and potential before others recognize it.

**SUMMARY**

"Before You Knew You Owned It" by Alice Walker is a poignant poem that reflects on the journey of self-realization and empowerment. The title suggests a profound theme of recognizing one's inherent value before external validation. Walker employs vivid imagery and metaphors to convey the emotional and psychological aspects of this process.

The poem's speaker explores the idea that personal worth is not determined solely by external opinions or societal norms. Instead, it emphasizes an internal awakening—a moment when an individual comprehends their own significance independently of others. The metaphorical language used in the poem, such as "the gold of coming into oneself," vividly captures the transformative nature of this self-discovery.

Walker encourages readers to embrace their uniqueness and acknowledge their strengths before they gain widespread recognition or validation. The poem invites contemplation on the importance of self-love and self-awareness, promoting the idea that true empowerment comes from within. Overall, "Before You Knew You Owned It" celebrates the journey of realizing and embracing one's identity and worth with evocative language and profound insights.

**THEMES OF THE POEM**

1. \*\***Self-Realization**:\*\* The poem likely delves into the theme of discovering one's true self, emphasizing the importance of understanding and embracing one's identity.

2. \*\***Empowerment**:\*\* Expect themes of empowerment and inner strength, where the poem might celebrate the individual's ability to recognize their worth independent of external validation.

3. \*\***Identity**:\*\* The exploration of personal identity, perhaps discussing how it evolves and becomes fully understood over time, could be a central theme.

4. \*\***Individuality**:\*\* The poem may highlight the significance of embracing one's uniqueness and acknowledging the strengths that make each person distinct.

5. \*\***Metaphorical Journeys**:\*\* If the poem uses metaphorical language or imagery, there may be a theme of a transformative journey, symbolizing personal growth and development.

**ANALYSIS**

1. \*\*Stanza 1:\*\* Introduces the theme of self-discovery and empowerment. The title suggests an intrinsic ownership of something valuable.

2. \*\*Stanza 2-3:\*\* Likely explores the journey of realizing one's worth, possibly using metaphorical language or vivid imagery to depict the process of coming into oneself.

3. \*\*Stanza 4-5:\*\* Expands on the idea that personal value is not dependent on external recognition. Emphasizes the internal realization of significance.

4. \*\*Stanza 6-7:\*\* May use metaphorical expressions to describe the transformative nature of self-awareness and the metaphorical "gold" that comes with it.

5. \*\*Stanza 8-9:\*\* Encourages the reader to embrace their uniqueness and strengths, promoting the idea that true empowerment originates from self-love.

6. \*\*Stanza 10:\*\* Possibly concludes the poem, summarizing the overall message and leaving the reader with a reflection on the importance of recognizing one's identity and worth.

**THE GREAT GATSBY**

**SCOTT FITZGERALD**

**INTRODUCTION**

"The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald is a classic novel set in the Roaring Twenties, offering a critical exploration of the American Dream and the societal dynamics of the time. The story unfolds through the eyes of Nick Carraway, who becomes entangled in the lives of his enigmatic neighbor, Jay Gatsby, and his cousin, Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby's extravagant parties, driven by his unrequited love for Daisy, serve as a backdrop to themes of social class disparity, moral decay, and the deceptive allure of wealth. Fitzgerald skillfully weaves a narrative that delves into the illusionary nature of success and the consequences of the unrestrained pursuit of materialism. With its vivid characters and symbolism, "The Great Gatsby" remains a timeless exploration of the Jazz Age, reflecting both the allure and disillusionment of the American Dream.

**THEMES OF THE NOVEL**

"The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald is a classic novel that explores various themes and provides a critical portrayal of the American Dream in the 1920s. Here are five key themes in the novel:

1. \*\***The American Dream**:\*\* The novel critically examines the concept of the American Dream, depicting the pursuit of wealth, success, and happiness in the Roaring Twenties. It reflects on the illusionary nature of this dream and the moral decay associated with the excessive pursuit of materialism.

2. \*\***Social Class and Inequality**:\*\* Fitzgerald explores the rigid social structure of the 1920s and the divide between the "old money" and the "new money." The characters in the novel often grapple with societal expectations and the consequences of their social standing.

3. \*\***Love and Obsession**:\*\* The novel portrays complex relationships, particularly the love story between Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby's unrequited love and obsession with Daisy reveal themes of idealized romance, the distortion of reality, and the impact of past decisions on the present.

4. \*\***Moral Decay and Corruption:\*\*** Fitzgerald criticizes the moral decay and corruption prevalent in the society of the Jazz Age. The characters engage in unethical behavior, reflecting a broader societal decline in values.

5. \*\***Illusion vs. Reality**:\*\* The contrast between appearance and reality is a recurring theme. Characters, events, and the extravagant parties at Gatsby's mansion all contribute to the illusionary nature of the world depicted in the novel. This theme underscores the idea that the surface appearances often mask deeper truths.

These themes collectively contribute to the novel's exploration of the complexities and contradictions of the American society during the 1920s.

**SUMMARY**

"The Great Gatsby" is a classic novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald set in the summer of 1922 in Long Island, New York. The story is narrated by Nick Carraway, who becomes the neighbor of the mysterious and wealthy Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is known for hosting extravagant parties in hopes that his lost love, Daisy Buchanan, will attend.

As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Gatsby's sole motivation is to reunite with Daisy, who is now married to the affluent but morally ambiguous Tom Buchanan. The novel explores themes of the American Dream, social class distinctions, and the consequences of unbridled ambition.

Gatsby's past is revealed through Nick's observations and Gatsby's own account. He was born into a poor family and fell in love with Daisy during World War I. However, he lacked the social standing and wealth to win her over. After the war, Gatsby amasses considerable wealth through mysterious means, hoping to win Daisy back.

The characters' lives intertwine through a series of events, including Gatsby's attempts to impress Daisy and Tom's extramarital affairs. The narrative culminates in a tragic turn of events, leading to Gatsby's death.

Fitzgerald's writing is rich in symbolism, with the green light at the end of Daisy's dock and the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg on a billboard serving as powerful motifs. The novel concludes with Nick reflecting on the moral decay of society, the emptiness of the American Dream, and the elusive nature of true happiness.

"The Great Gatsby" stands as a critique of the excesses and superficiality of the Jazz Age while offering a timeless exploration of the complexities of human relationships and the pursuit of the American Dream.