

**Our initial impression of characters can be very important. What is your initial impression of Tom Buchanan? Do you find him to be an appealing character? You may refer to one or more key moments in support of your answer.**

**I do not think that Tom Buchanan is an appealing character. From my reading of The Great Gatsby, especially chapter one, I find him to be aggressive, hypocritical and racist.**

*(The opening sentence sets out the writer's opinion and signposts the layout of the rest of the essay.)*

Everything about Tom is tied up with his physical power and aggression. The first description of him by the narrator Nick emphasises his physical strength and power. Nick notes the 'enormous power' of his 'cruel' body, how he 'seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing'. There is nothing wrong with being physically strong but Tom uses his strength to dominate over everyone he meets in every situation. We can see this when he first greets Nick. While welcoming Nick to his house he physically moves him from place to place, controlling him like a piece on a chessboard. Nick recalls how in college he used his physical dominance to intimidate others and that consequently there were 'men at New Haven who had hated his guts'. Throughout the initial dinner party he constantly attempts to establish his dominance over the evening, interrupting and talking over any conversation that doesn't interest him. In the course of the evening we learn that he has hurt Daisy's knuckle, although we are told that he didn't mean to. This foreshadows the most shocking incident of physical aggression and dominance which comes later in the book when he strikes Myrtle, breaking her nose, just for saying Daisy's name.

*(The opening sentence again clearly states the writer's own opinion. The rest of the paragraph uses close reference to the key moment and short, easy to remember quotes to back up this opinion. Although based in the key moment it also draws upon incidents from later in the novel.)*

Aside from being aggressive and domineering Tom is also hypocritical. The above incident of assaulting Myrtle for saying Daisy's name is again one of the most blatant examples. He is willing to deceive and humiliate Daisy by having a very public affair but he won't allow his mistress to say his wife's name. This double standard is introduced in the first chapter when Tom constantly leaves the room to take phone calls from Myrtle yet criticises Jordan's family for letting her 'run around the country'. We learn from Daisy and Nick's chat that Tom didn't attend their child's birth and was 'God knows where'. Despite his infidelity Tom is happy to keep up appearances and pose as one of a happily married couple as he joins Daisy in questioning Nick about rumours of his engagement. From the start we see Tom as saying one thing and doing another, later incidents in the book confirm him as a hypocrite.

*(The opening sentence of this paragraph acts as a link between the first and second paragraph. Again it refers to an incident later in the book but is grounded in the key moment of the opening chapter.)*

**My final criticism of Tom is that he is a racist. Despite his own physical strength and power and his family being ‘enormously wealthy’ he still feels threatened by those who he feels are beneath him. Later this will include people like Gatsby with ‘new money’ who he dismisses as ‘gangsters and bootleggers’. However the ugliest example of his insecurity comes in the shape of his racist beliefs in the first chapter when he praises ‘The Rise of the Colored Empires’ which he describes as ‘scientific’ but in fact is just an excuse for the ‘dominant’ white race to keep other races down. Tom credits the Nordic race with ‘civilization, science and art’ despite the fact that he shows no interest in any of them. Again Tom displays his aggression and need for dominance, hypocrisy and racism, qualities which make him an unappealing character from the outset.**

*(The final paragraph makes a clear statement and backs it up with close reference and quotation. The final sentence sums up the answer and refers back to the opening sentence of the essay.)*