

William Faulkner once said, “The best literature is about the old universal truths, such as love, honor, pride, compassion, and sacrifice.” This means that literature revolving around a central theme of an old

universal truth is the best kind. I agree with the statement because the universal truths are the most important in life and readers can also apply them their lives more often. If the theme is abstract or unorthodox, then a reader will have a harder time connecting them to their life. Two works that best demonstrate this idea are The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck.

The Great Gatsby is about love in all its forms. It shows the ups, downs, and the tragic results of one man’s love. A literary element from the novel that goes along with the idea of old universal truths would be the symbolism. Throughout the story, Fitzgerald uses an array of symbols, but the most profound would be the green light. The green light is the most important symbol in the novel. It symbolizes Gatsby’s hopes and dreams for the future and his love for Daisy. The light can easily be compared to a guiding light, almost as if it is showing Gatsby the way to Daisy’s heart. This symbol, beyond doubt, relates back to the critical lens and the universal truth, love. When Gatsby reaches out toward the light, he is essentially reaching out for Daisy. This further reinforces bond between the green light and the critical lens. Another literary element that can be applied to the critical lens is theme. The particular theme would be, repeating the past. Since Gatsby came back from the war, his life has been completely devoted to Daisy. He wants their situation to be the same as it was before the war. Everything he has done, from buying clothes to buying a house, has been influenced by Daisy. An event that symbolizes this theme would be when Gatsby and Daisy have met again for the first time and

Gatsby nervously knocks a broken clock down. The fact that the clock is broken symbolizes how Gatsby's mental clock is stuck in the past, in the time before the war. Gatsby's devotion to Daisy shows his love for her and this relates back to the critical lens. Being stuck in the past and wanting this to go back to the way they were is something a lot of readers could relate to.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck also relates to the critical lens. It is a story about compassion and disappointment, another more somber universal truth. A literary element in the story that demonstrates the critical lens is imagery. When George and Lennie dream of their farm to be together, they imagine a rich dream world that attracts many people. Lennie is so obsessed with the image that he frequently begs George to describe the farm. This image of the farm shows George and Lennie's compassion for their dreams. They constantly imagine their dream farm and take strides toward achieving their goal. Their compassion for the farm demonstrates the critical lens. It is a universal truth that most readers could relate to. Another literary element used in the novel is symbolism. Candy's dog in the novel symbolizes the fate of anything that outlives its purpose. That idea then relates to George shooting Lennie. George shot Lennie basically because he wanted to shoot his own dog. He wanted to spare Lennie from Curly and the horrors of the rest of the world. He wanted Lennie to die thinking of the farm rather than in a jail cell or scared. These reasons reveal that George shooting Lennie was really out of compassion for him and the dream of the farm. He wanted Lennie to be in a happy place when he died. The idea of compassion ties in with the critical lens and the universal truths. Readers could also relate to sparing people from the harsh realities of the world.

William Faulkner once said, "The best literature is about the old universal truths, such as love, honor, pride, compassion, and sacrifice." Two works that demonstrate this idea are The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck.