In this portfolio, I examine *This Side of Paradise* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The highlighted sections in the table of contents indicate sections to draw your attention to particular skills. The section highlighted in yellow demonstrates my ability to summarize and evaluate a secondary critical source. The section highlighted in green exhibits my skill in analyzing quotes from the text. The blue section displays my capacity to consider questions about the text in a broader critical analysis using a variety of lenses.

This Side of Paradise

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Preface

This Side of Paradise by F. Scott Fitzgerald first sparked my interest through my previous reading of The Great Gatsby and my most recent fascination with the 1920’s. This Side of Paradise was a good choice in researching the 1920’s because it is a semi-autobiographical novel, based on F. Scott Fitzgerald’s experiences starting with his childhood until his mid-twenties.

One of the most interesting ideas for me was the theme of conformity throughout the novel as Amory Blaine, the protagonist, struggles with this internal conflict of conforming, finding such conformity unfulfilling, and then do away with those conforming ideas in search of one’s self. Amory went through these shifts as he put himself in a new location or situation or among different people. Similarly, I have found myself at a time of similar transition as I complete my first full year at college, and have experienced my own self-discoveries as each semester passes, and I surround myself with new people.

I would suggest this novel for others, especially in college. The self-discovery theme is prevalent to most college students, especially with all of the significant life decisions we make at this time in our lives. It really requires the reader to examine his or her own identity.
Writer’s Chronology

Because *This Side of Paradise* is a semi-autobiography of F. Scott, Fitzgerald, it is helpful to understand the author’s life—particularly that of the earlier years up until the point when the book was published.


1908 (age 12)  Father, Edward Fitzgerald, loses job as salesman for Procter & Gamble in New York, so family moves to back St. Paul to live on mother’s inheritance. F. Scott attends St. Paul Academy and publishes first work in school newspaper.

1911-1913  Fitzgerald attends Catholic prep school, Newman School, in New Jersey. Fitzgerald is encouraged by Father Sigourney Fay to follow “his ambitions for personal distinction and achievement” (Bruccoli).

1914-1917  Fitzgerald attends Princeton University, but ignores classes and assignments, in favor of writing scripts for the Princeton Triangle Club, a theatre group, and working with the Princeton Tiger, a comedic student paper, and the Nassau Literary Magazine. Fitzgerald never graduates due to his academic probation.

1917  Fitzgerald joins the army, and is “commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry” (Bruccoli). Writes the first part to *This Side of Paradise* as novel in the form of “The Romantic Egotist”, which was rejected from publishing.

June 1918  Fitzgerald is stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, where he meets Zelda Sayre, which pushes him to revise and submit “The Romantic Egotist” again, but is rejected once more.

1919  World War I ends before F. Scott is sent overseas, resulting in his discharge. In search of fortune in order to marry, he goes to New York. Zelda became impatient for him to find fortune and breaks off engagement.

July 1919  Fitzgerald quits advertising job in New York, and returns to “St. Paul to rewrite his novel *This Side of Paradise*”. The novel is “accepted by editor Maxwell Perkins of [Charles] Scribners [splice] [Sons]” (Bruccoli).

Fall-Winter 1919  Fitzgerald works on short stories to publish in mass-circulating magazines, including Saturday Evening Post.

March 26, 1920  (*age 23*)  *This Side of Paradise* published, and Fitzgerald discovers instant fame, and marries Zelda Sayre in New York.

Summer 1920  Writes *The Beautiful and the Damned*.

October 1921  Zelda gives birth to Frances Scott (Scottie) Fitzgerald, their only child.
Fall 1922  Fitzgeralds move to Great Neck, Long Island after success of *The Vegetable* on Broadway, but the play fails. Fitzgerald writes short stories to get out of debt. Also worsen alcoholic habits, but writes sober.

Spring 1924  Fitzgeralds go to France, where Fitzgerald writes *The Great Gatsby*. Marriage is damaged by Zelda’s affair with a French naval aviator.

Winter 1924-1925  Fitzgeralds go to Rome, where he edits and revises *The Great Gatsby*. On their way to Paris, the novel is published.

1926  Fitzgeralds alternate between Paris and the Riviera. F. Scott forms close friendship with Earnest Hemingway, while Zelda’s “unconventional behavior became increasingly eccentric” (Bruccoli).

Spring 1927-1929  Family moves back to the states, making smaller trips back to France. Zelda decides to become a professional dancer. F. Scott tries his hand at screenwriting in Hollywood.

Spring 1929-  Family moves to France so Zelda can go to a professional ballet school. The intense practices damage her health, when she has her first breakdown. She is treated at a clinic in Switzerland. F. Scott returns to writing short stories to cover the psychiatric treatment costs.

Fall 1931  Family moves back to states. F. Scott tries unsuccessfully at screenwriting again. Zelda suffers a relapse in Feb. 1932, and spends “the rest of her life as a resident or outpatient of sanitariums.” She writes the autobiography *Save Me the Waltz* as “a patient at Johns Hopkins,” which distances the couple even further (Bruccoli).

1934  Fitzgerald publishes *Tender is the Night*, about a psychiatrist and “his marriage to a wealthy mental patient” (Bruccoli).

1936-1940  F. Scott is deeply in debt, and sends Scottie to boarding school, where she adopts a surrogate family, the Obers. He works in Hollywood, where he gets several contracts, eventually earning $91,000 from MGM, which gets him out of debt. He also “fell in love with gossip columnist Sheilah Graham and completed a screenplay, *Three Comrades*, a year later” (Teisch). He goes to North Carolina, where Zelda is at in Highland Hospital.

December 21, 1940  F. Scott Fitzgerald dies of a heart attack in Graham’s apartment. Zelda (age 44) died eight years later in a fire in Highland Hospital.
Critical Summary

Craig Monk is a critic who discusses the political views that Fitzgerald expresses throughout his first two novels, *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*. In his focus of *This Side of Paradise*, Monk examines Fitzgerald’s different ideological trends pre-war and post-war throughout both novels. He also describes how the general melancholy of Fitzgerald’s books should be considered a political character in and of itself, depicting society’s political attitude at the time. Monk discusses the political optimism in which Fitzgerald wrote the first part of *This Side of Paradise*, “The Romantic Egotist,” and why Fitzgerald seemed to hold so much hope both for America and for himself in terms of fixing his relationship with Zelda. He discusses major themes within *This Side of Paradise* such as Amory’s immaturity, his lack of preparation to enter the world on his own, the influence of his parents and the differences in their upbringing due to societal changes. Monk discusses the contrast between the idealism of dreams and the horrible reality that destroys these dreams.

I agree with Monk about how Fitzgerald’s writings create a political character from which we can see how society moved and thought at the time, and how those thoughts changed as new events changed the course of history. I thought his insight into the political views to which Fitzgerald would have been jaded by were interesting. During my reading—particularly of the second half—I recognized how Fitzgerald was putting his views and ideas into circulation via Amory, but I was ignorant at the time of what the political thought was that interested him.
Discussion of Literary Elements

*This Side of Paradise* explores the milieu of the Lost Generation. Amory Blaine serves as a sketch of Fitzgerald himself in America during the Jazz Age.

Amory Blaine is a young man on a quest of self-discovery. He serves as a sketch of F. Scott Fitzgerald himself during the same period of his life. Amory’s childhood describes his friendship-type relationship with his mother, Beatrice, who raises and educates him to know the elegance of high society. When he enters into school in Minneapolis, he finds his peers and professors dull, and they find him too sophisticated. He determines that his “first philosophy, a code to live by... was a sort of aristocratic egotism,” considering himself superior in every capacity than everyone around him (18). He carries this attitude with him as he continues on to St. Regis, a boarding school in New England, where he struggles with his individualism and his desire to conform to the conventions of society around him. While there, he forms a significantly close bond to Monsignor Darcy, a clergyman and close friend of Beatrice. Amory enrolls into Princeton, where he carries his egotism and sophistication with him. He eventually drops out of Princeton on academic probation, and enrolls in the military as World War I starts. He then spends his time picking up small jobs and falling in love.

Amory Blaine has a unique personality, which strongly influenced the events of his life. His laziness, acquired in his younger years with his mother, frequently inhibits his ability to reach exactly what he wants in life though: he struggles academically because of his arrogance and lack of self-discipline and socially due to his egotism and vanity. When he gets to Princeton, he makes several close friends, with whom he continually discusses the ideas of a social caste system, and a desire to be among the elite, but says, “I hate to get anywhere by working for it” (Fitzgerald, 46). He finds success in athletics, specifically football, until he is injured, and must seek elite status elsewhere. He does finds small success in reading poetry of higher thinking—again setting himself
apart from his peers—and writing poetry for the *Princetonian*, the college paper. After becoming ineligible to publish in the school paper because of his grades, he discards his dreams of becoming an elitist, and seeks to find the basic elements of himself: The fundamental Amory.

He finds himself continually falling in and out of love with different girls, discovering that his confidence and looks have the power to charm most any girl he chooses. In college, his first love is Isabelle Borgé, to whom he writes constantly, falls in love more “with his idea of himself as a conqueror” (92). He continues to fall in love with Clara, a clear, witty, young widow, who was an equal in mental capacity to Amory. Then he returns from the military only to meet college cohort Alec’s sister, Rosalind, at her very traditional and impractical début. They fall deeply in love, and are engaged for several weeks. He gets a job so as to have a better prospect when they get married, but she became impatient for him to gain his fortune, and breaks off the engagement in favor of another wealthier young man. (Amory’s failed engagement is a sketch of Fitzgerald’s own originally failed proposal to Zelda.) Afterward, Amory has a period in which he continually drinks alcohol to alleviate the sorrow, until the Prohibition eliminates this source of comfort. Then, he has one last fling with Eleanor, a young, carefree, and unconventional girl who almost gets herself killed in “a crazy streak” (240).

Amory’s life follows that of Fitzgerald, chronicling his own personal experiences of the times. Amory’s family is well to do in the beginning, with a large budget for Beatrice and her son to travel to Europe regularly during his youth. Her health requires her to leave Amory in the hands of an aunt and uncle in Minnesota for several years. When they meet again two years later, Amory insists that convention dictates that sophisticated boys his age of that time should go to boarding school. After attending a fictitious boarding school in New England called St. Regis, Amory goes to Princeton, as Fitzgerald did. He remarks on his parents finances, which serve as a rough representation of the general society’s view of money. He discusses how his father, who remains
almost unmentioned unless discussed about in terms of his business and money, “had been experimenting with the mining stocks and, in consequence, [Amory’s] allowance, while liberal, was not at all what he had expected.” (49) and later when his father writes to Amory and tells him that “money isn’t forthcoming as it used to be” (81). After his father’s death, Beatrice suggests Amory to “go into finance” and learn the art of speculation (101). Similar remarks about the increase in stock speculation and the decrease in Amory’s allowance chart the decline of the economy in America, leading to the Great Depression to occur only several years after the publication of the novel.

The political scene has moments of emphasis as Amory and his fellow college students go into the military when the United States gets involved with World War I. The “Interlude” of the novel depicts Amory’s experience in the military through letters to and from friends. Amory never describes his experience on the battlefield—most likely because Fitzgerald himself never got to Europe before the war ended. However, Fitzgerald did give Amory the same infantry rank that he had during his time in the military before he was discharged.

Society is clearly illustrated in Amory Blaine as the icon of the Jazz Age that Fitzgerald was. Amory spends his time going to dinner parties, dances, and a popular fellow among young ladies of the day who were experiencing their own revolution. He describes the difference between that generation of young ladies and their mothers: “None of the Victorian mothers—and most of the mothers were Victorian—had any idea how casually their daughters we accustomed to be kissed” (58). The moral code changes over the period of the next few years, and after the war, the Mann Act finds its own scene. Amory sacrifices his name for his friend, who is caught in the act of “entertaining in his room a lady not his wife” (253). This law describes how the government was trying to regulate the morals of society. Another effort to regulate societal morals resulted in the Prohibition, which also has a great influence on Amory (and Fitzgerald). After proposing to
Rosalind and then being rejected for lack of wealth, Amory develops a deep alcohol problem, which the “advent of prohibition with the ‘thirsty-first’ put a sudden stop to the submerging of Amory’s sorrows, and when he awoke one morning to find that the old bar-to-bar days were over, he had neither remorse for the past three weeks nor regret that their repetition was impossible” (208). Amory’s behavior during those three weeks serves as an explanation of how significantly alcoholism had struck America and how the law impacted society’s

Amory serves as a reflection of Fitzgerald in America during the economic decline leading to the Great Depression, the impact of World War I on that generation, and the changes in society’s moral code.
How do ghosts become the archetypal symbol to represent change?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
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<tr>
<td>“He granted himself personality, charm, magnetism, poise, the power of dominating all contemporary males, the gift of fascinating all women” (18).</td>
<td>From his childhood education of higher class elegance and education from Beatrice, Amory believes himself to be superior to his contemporaries. From this superiority, he creates a very bold, arrogant, and egotistical personality.</td>
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<td>“Figures that dotted the day like ants now brushed along as shadowy ghosts, in and out of the foreground.... He liked knowing that Gothic architecture with its upward trend, was peculiarly appropriate to universities, and the idea became personal to him” (53-54).</td>
<td>This first mention of ghosts is followed by the comment about adopting the theory of Gothic architecture belonging to universities. This entire episode shows a shift for Amory from egotism to an anti-transcendentalist view, in which he begins to write poetry.</td>
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<td>“He lacked somehow that intense animal magnetism that so often accompanies beauty in men and women; his personality seemed rather a mental thing, and it was not in his power to turn it on and off like a water faucet” (60).</td>
<td>This is Amory’s first conscious acknowledgement that his personality is all in how he thinks- in his thoughts.</td>
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<td>“He had the ghost of two stanzas of a poem forming in his mind...” (85).</td>
<td>Amory describes his mental capacity in terms of what is almost there, and what has the potential to become great. This is also right before they discover Dick Humbird’s body, foreshadowing the transition from life to death, and symbolizing the transition from almost complete thought to a tangible, visible, and written poem.</td>
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| **“A personality is what you thought you were... Personality is a physical matter almost entirely; it lowers the people it acts on... But while a personality is active, it overrides ‘the next thing.’ Now a personage, on the other hand, gathers. He is never thought of apart from what he’s done” (104). ** | M. Darcy says this in an effort to emphasize to Amory that as a personality, he is merely a physical being, but as a personage, he can become a spiritual, mental force which has a much more powerful influence over others in their mental capacities and decisions. As a personage, he would be remembered as more than just a charming egotist, but a man who changed the world in some way, whether it is through his writing, a discovery, or product. **
| “...now suddenly all his mental processes of the last year and a half seemed stale and futile—a petty consummation of himself....He was not even a Catholic, yet that was the only ghost of a code that he had” (124). | This melds the ghost with the mental processes once again as he as an individual revolution of mind, becoming more aware of his own thoughts because he has watched Burne become a personage overnight. This also refers back to his “code” or philosophy by which he lives his life. The code he has adopted is not even his anymore, but the hollow frame of a general code as built be a faith he does not believe in. |
| “Sometimes I think that with both of us the secret of success, when we find it, is the mystical element in us; something flows into us that enlarges our personalities, and when it ebbs out our personalities shrink” (220). | The idea that the personality changes depending on the environment around us give us a better idea of the nature of the personality, as well as what the persona is not. In this case, the persona does not change depending on the outside influences. It is a constant. |
| “‘Amory, you’re making yourself sick. You’re white as a ghost’ (200). | This is a description of Amory after his first night of mournful drinking after Rosalind rejects him, and he becomes a ghost of love, making Rosalind’s rejection a symbolic killing. |
| “Probably more than any concrete vice or failing Amory despised his own personality—he loathed knowing that tomorrow and the thousand days after he would well pompously at a compliment and sulk at an ill word like a third-rate musician and a first-class actor. He was ashamed of the fact that very simple and honest people usually distrusted him; that he had been cruel, often, to those who had sunk their personalities in him—several girls, and a man here and there through college, that he had been an evil influence on; people who had followed him here and there into mental adventures from which he alone rebounded unscathed” (261). | Amory discovers in this episode that he detests his own personality because he was so arrogant and prideful. This recognition of his own personality’s damaging effects makes him more self-loathing of his personality, and propels him towards becoming a personage rather than just a damaging personality. |
| “There was no God in his heart, he knew; his ideas were still in riot; there was ever the pain of memory; the regret for his lost youth—yet the waters of disillusion had left a deposit on his soul, responsibility and a love of life, the faint stirring of old ambitions and unrealized | Amory has reached his final epiphany that his fundamental self has been formed by his experiences and those of his parents and close family friends, like Beatrice and M. Darcy. He recognizes that those internal conflicts are worth the struggle because they help him learn who he is at the core. |
dreams.... And he could not tell why the struggle was worth while, why he had determined to use the utmost himself and his heritage form the personalities he had passed... ‘I know myself,’ he cried, ‘but that is all” (282).

Observation: Ghosts represent Amory’s conscious and unconscious shifts from a personality to a personage.
Ghosts of Personality versus Persona

Amory Blaine and Monsignor Darcy have a multitude of discussions throughout the novel *This Side of Paradise* about the difference between being a personality and being a persona. The novel then follows his course on his path from becoming a personality to a persona. *This Side of Paradise* highlights Amory’s transitions from being a personality to a persona through the archetypal idea of ghosts.

Ghosts are naturally symbolic of change and transition, particularly from one stage of life to the next, and most commonly from death to trapped spirit in limbo. While Amory never physically dies in the novel, he is continuously experiencing shifts from personality to persona. The idea of shifting from a personality to a persona, especially in the context of ghosts, implies a physical matter to a spiritual or mental matter.

Monsignor Darcy first discusses the differences between a personality and a persona when he tells Amory:

> A personality is what you thought you were... Personality is a physical matter almost entirely; it lowers the people it acts on... But while a personality is active, it overrides ‘the next thing.’ Now a personage, on the other hand, gathers. He is never thought of apart from what he’s done (104).

A personality is more of a mask, or outward appearance, for individuals. As personalities, we change depending on the people we are around or the situations we are in. Personalities change and are subject to their emotions. Amory is conscious of this during the first part of the novel, admitting that “he was slave to his own moods” (19). His main concern throughout the first part is his image to other people. He desires to look superior to everyone else, and prides himself in such superiority and sophistication. When he decides what his first philosophy is, he determines that it is “a code to live by, which, as near as it can be named, was a sort of aristocratic egotism” (18). As
he considers his different traits and parts physically, mentally, and socially, he determines that his social superiority was “most dangerous...granting himself personality, charm, magnetism, poise, the power of dominating all contemporary males, the gift of fascinating all women” (18). Amory prides himself in the outward appearance of being superior, and others acknowledging that he is superior.

There are several shifts which happen slowly over time that changes him from a personality to a persona. This shift really begins at the first appearance of the word ghost, when Amory is describing the Princeton campus in an anti-transcendentalist nature, admiring the “figures that dotted the day like ants now brushed along as shadowy ghosts, in and out of the foreground.... He liked knowing that Gothic architecture with its upward trend, was peculiarly appropriate to universities, and the idea became personal to him” (53-54). He has shifted from caring so much about what others think of his personality, and begins to think purely to pleasure his own mental capacities. This is the start to his literary and poetry phase, when he joins the Triangle Club to write their scripts, and begins publishing his poems in the school paper. He does not care so much he was “getting a reputation for being eccentric” (137). He continues in his transition, particularly as less of a personality, after one of his classmates, Dick Humbird, dies in a car crash, and Amory becomes afraid of the past and the dark. Just before finding Humbird’s body, Amory has “the ghost of two stanzas of a poem forming in his mind,” implying a transition of thought status (85). Humbird’s ghost is the catalyst for the ghosts of the past to enter into his life. After a serious engagement to Rosalind that was broken off, Amory goes into a deep depression and concedes to alcoholism, and his cohorts describe him as “white as a ghost” (200). After several weeks, when he stops drinking because of the Prohibition, he writes a piece of prose poetry, in which he reflects on that relationship with Rosalind, and describes how their “two ghosts kissed,” which now implies the idea that they are ghosts of love and regret, in which rejection has killed them (220).
After this point in Amory’s life, his personality fades; he is no longer the superior, egotistical, arrogant person that he once was. Between having his love rejected, his parents die, watching his friends die in the war, and losing his fortune to the poor economic climate, he is haunted by these ghosts of love, pasts, death, and hunger.

Amory finds his persona after he has lost his personality with Rosalind’s rejection. Monsignor Darcy writes him after the broken engagement, warns that, “the secret of success, when we find it, is the mystical element in us: something flows into us that enlarges our personalities, and when it ebbs out our personalities shrink; I should call your last two letters [about Rosalind] rather shriveled. Beware of losing yourself in the personality of another being, man or woman” (220).

He makes a number of remarks about how his generation is lost because of the war, or at least changed beyond repair. When Amory and Alec, one of his college cohorts, talk for the last time before they leave Princeton for the military, one says, “the grass is full of ghosts tonight” and the other responds “the whole campus is alive with them” (153). This paradox highlights the loss of a generation of young men who have gone off to war and will never be the same. Though death will not take all of them and turn them into ghosts of physical death, the ones who will return will become ghosts of the memory of death.

When his father dies while Amory is at Princeton, the only influence this death has is on his allowance and access to money. However, Amory’s father’s financial situation is an expression of the economic death and collapse around the family, which was occurring everywhere. This economic death is highlighted further with Beatrice’s death, and after Amory quits his job at the advertising company, he begins to feel his own personal economic death to the point of delirious starvation. He has an episode of disoriented thoughts, depicting his frantic and disparate thoughts as he considers what little the future holds. He is no longer a personality, but a persona of himself as he talks himself through what to do and where to go next. He is alone with his thoughts until the
man with the goggles and the small man give him a ride. During their ride, they reach the height of his persona because he is extending his ideas to someone else. While his thoughts are still disparate and quite radical, he has reached his potential persona by saying things which make the man with the goggles think, and sparking his own thought processes, telling Amory that his radicalism “puzzles” him. He reached the height of persona, influencing another being to think and to do something on those thoughts. The novel does not describe the change to come from the man with the goggles, but Amory's change from a personality to a persona is drastic and permanent.
More Critical Applications

- How did Fitzgerald reach the same epiphany of personality versus personage in his own life? Was it in the same way that Amory reached it, or was there an eventual difference?

- How does the script-like text of the first part of “The Education of the Egotist” differ from the episodic structure of the rest of the novel?

  The dialogue based text surrounds mainly the part about Rosalind. This is the only section composed of strict dialogue and separate actions, in which we get a sense of how both Rosalind and Amory view each other, and do not get a jaded view from one or the other about what they think. This is a contrast from when Amory met Isabelle, in which that episode was told primarily from her perspective. The use of dialogue is similar to that of a drama or a play, so it also almost characterizes Rosalind in her dramatic personality and behavior.

- What would be Amory’s id, ego, and superego?

- How does the novel change how you view yourself as a personality versus a personage?

  I found myself curious about my balance between personality and personage, and have in many ways started to catalogue the experiences which have shaped me as well as who my fundamental self really is and who I have the potential to become, and discover that I need to find my fundamental self once more.

- Does Amory follow some form of the heroic journey? If so, what are the highlighted phases of that journey?

- Do women play a dominant or subordinate role in Amory’s young adulthood? How did women shape his life?
Women play a dominant role in Amory’s youth. Starting with Beatrice, his childhood education and image of self was shaped by the way she put specific influences in his path, such as Europe and Monsignor Darcy. The next major influence was Isabelle, in whom he fell in love “with his idea of himself as a conqueror” (92). Rosalind was the next major female influence, which made him into the man he could become, as well as destroying him emotionally. His last influence was with Eleanor, who scared him out of love once more.

- How does our modern knowledge of the Great Depression to come change how we read the text, full of characters and written by an author who does not see the economic collapse, but only the decline?

  Reading about the lives of Americans leading up to the Great Depression was an interesting perspective. The sense of the lack of money was more highlighted to me, knowing that the Great Depression was soon to come. Being aware of the collapse, I saw each mention of poverty and speculation as an unknown foreshadowing of what was to come, and felt some concern and fear for the characters, and curious about where each character would end up.

- How does This Side of Paradise express the conflict between the pros and cons of creating class caste systems?
Works Cited


