

The Catcher in the Rye

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Second Person Narrative, Anecdotes, Academic Diction

Throughout JD Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye," second person narration, anecdotes and academic diction to bond Holden and the reader in his quest for companionship. This ultimately results in Holden confiding in the reader as though they were a close friend. Holden is shown to be a socially inept person through a series of botched social interactions. In addition Holden repeatedly reaches out to people, making plans with he admittedly dislikes revealing his desperation for human contact. He calls and arranges a date with Sally, complains throughout the entire date then proposes an elopement. The implementation of academic diction causes Holden seem more like an ordinary person. This relatability to the reader allows for a more personal connection to be made. In addition the implementation of slang such as "that kills me" makes Holden a more genuine teenage like character. The anecdotes give more depth to Holden's character. The events he chooses to recall provide a window into he truly feels about different issues. Evidence of this is when he recollects the summer he met Jane, which contrasts his usual rigid demeanor. Salinger establishes a stronger more personal connection between Holden and the reader referring to the reader directly. Throughout the novel second person narration is employed such as when Holden says, "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life". Holden is trying to forge a friendship with the reader. These various attempts to engage with the reader when he is alone shows his desperation for company.

Basic Diction and Generalization

All throughout "The Catcher in the Rye," the JD Salinger writing style incorporates basic diction and language. The author maneuvers simple words around such as "like" and "I'm a very weak guy" so that Holden speaks very plainly, which is how a typical teenager would. The academic style exhibits how Holden is fighting to keep in touch with his youth and innocence. He believes once people grow up, they start becoming "corny" or "phony." The repeated name-calling towards adults when Holden refers to them as phonies is generalization, another device used to make Holden's way of speaking seem immature. By speaking with the language of a child, Holden takes a stand against adulthood. Holden also frequently swears as he talks. For instance, he proceeds to tell the reader that "he has never waited so long in his goddamn life" and that "he's sweating like a bastard." Mature adults, which he should be in only a year, don't swear so freely, because society see this as being rude or trashy. But Holden speaks in such a way because he is not ready to grow up and mature yet, because he is not ready to let go of his younger brother Allie. Holden is clearly still living into the past and until he learns to let go, he will speak using basic, vulgar diction so as not to conform to society's ideas of maturity.

Overall, the devices mentioned in the paragraphs above stress the main idea that Holden is trying to keep a firm grip on his innocence and keep his head above the waters of adulthood. He speaks so plainly because he believes that if he's using big "adult" words he will be prompted to discuss and dissect his past and present issues. If Holden never has to grow up he will never have to take responsibility for his actions, or become "phony" and "fake" like the other adults that he sees. But in Salinger's book, Holden is 17. He is too old to act childish and this is something that he struggles with throughout the entire story. From countless incidents of him getting into fights over minor occurrences, to his complete denial that he, in fact, is scared by past events. This causes his actions to be erratic and impulsive as well as self-destructive. His views on life weaken his mental state, this can be suggested by his constant and borderline manic mood swings. The whole book he is trying to find a way to cope with the trauma he has experienced from Allie's death. Another factor includes Holden's mind is completely polarized. He believes that either you are innocent or you are a phony. He fails to see a gray area and when he evaluates his character he doesn't fit into the pure or innocent category anymore. This prompts Holden to have a mental breakdown on the street and causes him to call on his deceased brother for help during the difficult time.

Anecdotes and Basic Dictions

In "The Catcher in the Rye" J.D. Salinger continuously exposes Holden Caulfield's thoughts and ideas through countless anecdotes weaved into basic diction in order to illustrate Holden's incapability to move forward. There are several anecdotes in the novel, but an extremely significant pattern of this device has to do with Holden's dead older brother, Allie. The first anecdote regarding Allie, is evoked through Stradtler, while asking Holden to write a descriptive composition for his English class. As Holden begins writing about Allie's left-handed baseball mitt, he shares several anecdotes expressed through extreme basic diction to enlighten the reader with mounds of information about Allie. From these first anecdotes, we can establish that Holden and Allie shared a very positive, enjoyable relationship. These initial observations, allow the reader to not only understand why it is easier for Holden to focus on the past rather than the future, but also how Holden expresses his feelings and emotions. As the novel progresses Holden continues to characterize his brother Allie with anecdotes, but their relationship comes full circle near the end of the novel as Holden asks for Allie to help him continue on. Expressed through academic diction, Holden's cry for help illustrates his dependence on his brother, and one of the few positive relationships he had shared in his life. By nourishing the novel's style, "The Catcher in the Rye," with descriptive anecdotes, specifically about Allie, J.D. Salinger truly opens the door to Holden's mind, allowing readers to gain insight, and be more compassionate towards a relatable teenager.

Generalization and Dramatic Irony

Generalization is name-calling aimed at a large group of people. Dramatic irony is when the audience knows an important piece of information that the other characters in the book do not. These seem like completely unrelated terms, but in the "Catcher in the Rye" they work together very closely to help the audience obtain a clearer picture of what motivates Holden, the main character. Holden often dislikes the other people around him because he views them as untrustworthy and fake. "Phony" is the word Holden uses the most to describe these people. However, Holden tell us in the beginning of the book "I'm the most terrific liar in the world" and talks about how he can't seem to stop lying once he starts. Thanks to Holden's confession, the reader knows that it is really Holden, not the people surrounding him, that have issues with legitimacy, which is dramatic irony because only the people reading the book are aware of this. The generalization and dramatic irony juxtapose one another to make clear to the reader Holden's own insecurities. And we know that his constant lying is an insecurity, because if Holden didn't like this about himself he wouldn't demean other people for doing the same thing. The two devices build off of each other to bring to light Holden's inner struggle with authenticity, which will haunt him throughout the book and lead him to make crazy accusations.

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