
Catcher In The Rye By J.D. Salinger: Sarcasm And Foreshadowing

Catcher in the Rye focuses its story on young Holden Caulfield on his adventure through his school and New York City during the post-war era of the 1950s. Author J.D. Salinger illustrates Holden's adventure using dominant literary techniques to help the reader interpret and understand the concept of 'coming-of-age' and youth culture in this Bildungsroman. Such literary techniques include J. D. Salinger's Diction and syntax. Diction is the author's choice of words describing the events of the story, examples in Catcher in the Rye include Holden's use of the word phony and other slang. The syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences. Another literary device is foreshadowing, a warning or an indication for a future event. The third literary technique is tone, which is often sarcastic and judgemental in Cather in the Rye.

J. D. Salinger, the author of Catcher in the Rye, uses syntax and diction to create a sense of vulnerability in the main character. Holden, though a foul-mouthed and angry teenage boy, Salinger shows the reader that this is a shell. Salinger uses simple syntax and diction to help the reader see through this shell and see Holden for who he really is, a vulnerable seventeen-year-old boy who has been through some very difficult situations. Blunt, short sentences, and a lesser developed vocabulary are used by Salinger to illustrate Holden's weakness. Holden's less educated way of speaking, including slang, can make him seem vulnerable and quite dim. One example is Holden's tendency to repeat things, 'People with red hair are supposed to get mad very easily, but Allie never did, and he had very red hair. I'll tell you what kind of red hair he had,' (Pg. 38). The continued use of profanity like 'crazy Donovan**ch' and 'split his good**m throat open' shows Holden's inability to control his temper, and therefore makes him seem more vulnerable to the reader. This tendency to hide his true personality behind profanity and strong language shows he has strong insecurities. A trait every share venturing into adulthood.

Foreshadowing is one of the dominant literary techniques in Catcher in the Rye. The novel opens with Holden living in Los Angeles with his brother after being placed in a medical facility. As the novel is in Holden's point of view he goes on to describe a brief synopsis of his story. : "I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy." (Pg 3). His use of the word "madman" and the euphemism "run down" suggests the nature of his breakdown without explaining it fully. This gives the reader incentive to speculate about possible reasons for Holden's hospitalization and allows them to again speculate about the latter half of the book. Having read the book, Holden's synopsis gives the reader his thoughts of what he went through and whether he has changed because of it. At face value, Holden seems to shrug off the events of last Christmas as if they didn't affect him. As mentioned before however, Holden doesn't give anyone much at face value.

The tone of The Catcher in the Rye is often sarcastic and judgmental, yet reveals Holden's longing for connection and frustration in achieving it. Holden uses sarcasm as a tool to prove his superiority to people he finds less intelligent than him. An example is Holden watching a football game from afar and thinks, "you were supposed to commit suicide or something if old Pencey didn't win." In making this darkly comic remark about suicide, Holden expresses superiority

over his classmates who care about the game. Despite Holden's judgment of most people, he also feels sorry for them. A good example of this is Mr. Spencer. Holden's disgusted by his "ratty bathrobe" and the use of 'Phony' words like "Grand" and yet he feels sorry for him. The tone of Holden's narration also contains nostalgia for his own childhood, a time he romantically associates with innocence and purity. Holden's nostalgia is ironic, however, as he is not much older than a child himself. Holden's nostalgic belief that childhood is a static time of warmth and security is also naively immature – in fact, childhood is a time of a drastic change and is not necessarily safe or innocent, as evidenced by the fact that Allie died when he was still a child.

Holden is a character that many readers identify with. This might be because of his tendency to hide his true self from others, using profanity and blunt sentences. Or maybe because of his nature, his nature to pretend that things don't affect him, like the events of this novel for example. Most likely it is because of his nostalgia for the past, a time which was warm and cozy and was far from the pains of growing up.

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