

**STYLISTIC FEATURES OF HOLDEN CAULFIELDS LANGUAGE IN THE
J.D. SALINGER THE CATCHER IN THE RYE**

Analysis through the stages of Holden's emotional decline.

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Abstract

The Catcher in the Rye, novel by J.D. Salinger, is generally perceived as an ordinary story of Holden Caulfield, a teenage boy, who is expelled from yet another school and spends two days aimlessly wandering through the wintertime New York City. The story can be satisfying enough after the first reading, however many readers often tend to criticize the novel for the lack of plot, development, its episodic nature or first person narrator motivation, and other. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that it is a journey of a confused young man who going through a significant changes and has a difficult time accepting that growing up is an inevitable part of one's life.

Keywords: symbolism, emotional decline, separation, alienation, isolation, reconciliation.

Form and distribution of symbolism

The novel unarguably contains a large number of symbols that are supporting novel's prominent motifs and themes. They are also showing Holden's motivations, which help us understand his actions or inactions. The generally most discussed symbols are usually the red hunting hat, Central Park Lagoon and its ducks, The Museum of Natural History and the carousel. However, as Alsen puts it, "most of the symbolic objects contribute to the characterization of Holden Caulfield [and] an analysis of these symbols clarifies the inner change that Holden experiences". In other words, the symbols are an inevitable means for the structure of the novel. We can perceive this build up through the rising tension in their meaning as they systematically map out Holden's emotional turmoil and decline.

Therefore, as Trowbridge points out: "...a symbol cannot be fully understood without discussing it in relation to the entire work" otherwise the complexity of the meaning is lost and interpretation of the symbols without full context of the story makes critics' "remarks either tantalizing, absurd, or simply obtuse" (21). Consequently, in this chapter, I would like to first provide an overview of the pattern through Holden's decline and relate this structure to the symbolism using the example of the shift in intensity of the ducks and the change in connotation and multiple meaning of the red hunting hat. Subsequently, before carrying out the full analysis of the symbolism in the

novel, it is also necessary to focus on how the symbolic elements are used in order to convey meaning through the conflicts set out by the central metaphor.

Emotional decline and its stages

The possible way how to decode the story's structure, is to follow Holden's journey, more precisely, follow his emotional decline. As I have established in the analysis of the central metaphor, Holden takes refuge in the world of his fantasy, saving children from falling over the cliff. His idealism of adoring childhood and fearing adulthood has been also discussed. Simply put, the reality of the world around agitates him. He is focusing on its phoniness and immorality and so his expectations do not match reality. He is constantly resorting to comparisons between the childhood that has passed for him, and the adulthood he is not able to make a transition to. Due to this dichotomy, he seems lost, frustrated and uncomfortable in his environment, which is natural for adolescence. It is therefore no surprise that alienation is one the main themes of the novel. Although we see him talking to people, the communication is insincere or there is no actual connection. No place he has stayed in is sufficient enough for his needs. Trowbridge clearly articulates that this dissatisfaction creates the structural pattern of the novel:

. . . as a result of a frighteningly clear vision of the disparity between what is and what ought to be both in the world and in himself and because of an increasing feeling of incapacity to reform either, he attempts to escape into a series of ideal world.....

These ideal worlds refer to the both, actual places such as New York and the Central Park lagoon or imaginary places such the field of rye and the secluded cabin way out West he wants to hide in. We can agree that Holden's journey takes a downward spiral as he ends having a breakdown and gets hospitalized. Therefore, the structure maps out his emotional state and so the underlying mechanism of the symbolism and structure

lies in Holden's emotional decline. Structurally, this decline is represented by the rising conflict of his inner state as he flees from one flawed reality to another ideal that turns out to be flawed and insufficient again, until he finally comes to the understanding and reaches the acceptance of the world around and him being its part. So the stages of his decline are mapped out by his dissatisfaction with the environment and his subsequent escaping. Because we are speaking about states of emotional deterioration that increases in intensity, it is apt to distinguish the sections of the novel according to this main symbolic build up. I have decided to divide the novel into four distinct parts, based on the stages of his decline and classified them as stages of separation, alienation, isolation and reconciliation.

Separation

This first section of the story functions as a setup of the story's main conflicts. From the beginning, we can see Holden separating himself from the rest when he is standing on the hill, looking at the football game. Game is another symbol and metaphor appearing at the beginning, while Holden is discussing his expelling from the school □ life as a game that one plays according to the rules. This Pencey Prep section shows Holden as someone, who is rebelling against this idea, deliberately separating himself from such environment.

Alienation

The new vast setting of New York and its numerous places Holden flees to show the intensified conflict. Holden assumes a new strategy of playing along with the adult world. This again makes it impossible for him to fit in. We can see him in situations where he shapes his identity, on multiple occasions he pretends to be someone else, lies or acts out of character just to play the part he has openly criticized because he is desperately searching for some connection. This dichotomy of his personality is supported and presented to us with numerous juxtapositions of adult and innocent symbols. Ultimately, this strategy leaves him misunderstood and alienated from the rest.

Isolation

This section's starting point is right before Holden's return back home as he is by that point severely depressed. He assumes next stage of ideal in fleeing to some secluded place west and he alters his identity from the lonely catcher in the field to a completely isolated deaf-mute. In this heightened stage of Holden's depression from the inevitable change he has to go through, he fixates himself on the static and isolated images of the displays and catacombs in the Museum of Natural History that represent comfort to him due to their immutability. This is however contrasted with the symbols and images related to prominent motif of falling of multiple symbolic meaning. Here the falling either represents the rapid change of falling into the adulthood or it also becomes closely related to the static nature provided by death, as seen in James Castle and mummies in the museum.

Reconciliation

This last section examines the conclusion of Holden's journey depicted in the final scene of chapter 25 with Holden and Phoebe at the carousel. The carousel is a major symbol of the novel that combines childhood innocence and immutability, still spinning in the same fashion, with the possibility of falling and the importance of

taking risks. It is when he redefines his savior catcher fantasy and gradually comes to the understanding of the difference between □to catch□ and □to meet□.

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