

# A literary analysis of "johnny got his gun"



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In an excerpt from the novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*, Dalton Trumbo shifts from an apprehensive to a resigned tone utilizing the boy's changing perspective, focused details, and sophisticated diction proving that with focus and determination one can successfully develop into a mature adult.

Trumbo narrates the story as an outsider, in order to emphasize the importance of a father and son relationship. He is able to divulge the feelings of both the father and the son, " It was an ending and a beginning and he wondered just how he should tell his father about it." Trumbo is able to create a universality around their strange situation by making it represent puberty and the boy's transition from adolescence to adulthood. During this time, a shift in dominance occurs between the men in the house and it becomes a power struggle whilst balances out once puberty is over and both are equal in manhood. Trumbo was also able to tune into Joe's specific dilemma by considering context clues and eye contact, " He sat in front of the fire and looked across at his father and wondered just how he was going to tell him," which he manipulated to fit his own personal views and life experience. However, the focus is on the boy's inability to read his father's opinion on him having a new fishing partner and leaving his fishing childhood in the past, where he can learn from it and grow into the fisherman he was meant to become.

Trumbo's selection of detail is based on the understanding of a father-son relationship that changes with knowledge and experiences. The whole concept of development comes from the boy's life stage during the fishing trip, " They had been coming to this place ever since he was seven. Now he was fifteen and Bill Harper was going to come tomorrow." Joe and his father

have created their own father-son tradition to immortalize their biological and emotional connection which grows stronger as the years go by, it's location is the sustainable variable that will connect them forever. Their bonding time is focused on growth and the effects of maturity on their relationship; there will come a time when the boy can no longer rely on his father to protect him and he must become the man of the house. Trumbo's selection of detail also relates to his complex setting, which focuses on the simplicity of language and human interaction. He begins by setting the stage for Joe and his father's relationship, " They fished in the lakes and when they slept at night the roar of water from the streams which connected the lakes sounded in their ears all night long," emphasizing the shared importance of the location to their roles in each other's lives. Therefore, demonstrating Joe's fear of telling his dad that he wants to share their bonding time with another boy that is going through the same transitions. The details ebb and flow with Joe's apprehensive around revealing his feelings surrounding the inevitable shift in their father- son relationship which he refuses to accept as adulthood slowly takes hold of him.

Trumbo employs sophisticated diction to further illustrate Joe's metamorphose from inside his father's shadow to outside into his own reflection. Joe's bonding time with his father revolved around the art of concentration - fishing. They would ritualistically wield the same fishing rod each time, so much that it became an extension of their being. The more time they spent together on their adventures, the more the rod and the act of fishing grew in importance to their growing relationship, " valuable," " extravagance." " expert," and, " glistening." Therefore, when Joe wanted to

invite a friend to tag along on their ventures, his father surprised him by suggesting, " you take my rod and let Bill use yours." What astonished Joe the most wasn't that his father was accepting of his friend joining their fishing trip, but that he considered him responsible enough to use his " treasured" fishing rod; when Joe's father gave him permission to use his fishing rod, he also gave him permission to grow up and become his own man. Thus, the purpose of Trumbo utilizing enlightened language is to further illustrate Joe's metamorphose from inside his father's shadow to outside into his own reflection. The sophisticated diction falters whenever their fear is associated with the next step but grows stronger with their hopeful attitude, proving both Joe and his father's resignation when discussing the up and down flow of their father-son relationship which must occur for Joe to experience all the stages from childhood to adulthood, that is father will be there to guide him through as well.

Dalton Trumbo wrote Johnny Got His Gun when World War II was becoming an overwhelming possibility, if not the only means to an end. It was publicized during a time of rapid change as the world was thrust into yet another war that would deconstruct everything they'd built since World War I. Trumbo focused on America's exploration and globalization, caused by their interactions with other societies and cultures.