

Literary analysis of catch 22 by joseph steller



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There is much literature on the subject of World War II. *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller, published in 1961, expressively describes this nerve-racking, gruesome, and turbulent era. The story is centered around a paranoid and homesick Yossarian who is fed up with his military career as an air force bombardier. Through imagery, allusions, and mystery the author carefully crafts the storyline and each character to fit in with the surrounding events. The malingering Yossarian who is considered a hero is furious because he thinks "Every one of them, enemy forces, is trying to kill him". Although he is a soldier in war, the main problem is not the opposing Central Powers, but is in fact his own army whose leaders keep increasing the number of missions the men must fly to complete their duty to the United States. Yossarian faces *Catch-22*, an ironic and sinister bureaucratic rule, where one is considered insane if he willingly continues to fly dangerous combat missions, yet if he requested to be removed from duty, he is proven to be sane; therefore, ineligible to be relieved from service.

As Yossarian grows certain that he will not be able to leave his comrades, he ventures on different experiences of their own from near-death missions to running fraudulent business ventures. The first climax occurs when Colonel Korn and Colonel Cathcart offer a despicable deal to Yossarian: he can either have a court martial (getting sent to prison) or be sent home. As always there is a catch, meaning that Yossarian once after arriving to the United States has to boast about the administration and the colonels fighting the war. Colonel Korn and Colonel Cathcart are all in for this as it may get them promoted. Another sub climax occurs when Yossarian has a flashback of Snowden's death while he was trying to treat him on a bombing run. This

leads Yossarian to not betray the men of his squadron by making others fly his missions. The only option he has left is to “turn his back on the whole damned mess and start running” off into a desert in attempts to go to Sweden. How the plot unfolds can be credited to the author, Joseph Heller. As a child of Jewish immigrants from Russia, Heller recognizes what it means to be American and explores American values of liberty and war. It is said that Heller was interested in socialist politics: socialist at the time were one of many groups who were quite vary of entering WW1. This reveals one reason why the main character, Yossarian, is determined to leave the war as soon as possible. As a bombardier himself, Heller understands the pressure and tragedies that one might encounter on missions.

One of the most traumatic and life changing experiences of Heller’s life is portrayed in the book when “Yossarian crawled into the rear section of the plane...to help the gunner”; thus, this reveals Heller’s powerful indictment of the world’s most insane practice: war. Heller’s views of the nature of war is achieved through the satirical tone and fractured narrative. Heller’s personal criticism of events during the postwar years such as the Cold War, the Red Scare, nuclear anxieties, and the possibility of loss of oneself in a large corporation/organization are apparent in the book. Heller tries to target a multiple of groups: the American society, military, and large corporations. The author attacks large corporations for being greedy and degrading America’s ideals only for the sake of wealth as “someplanes were decorated with flamboyant squadron emblems illustrating such ideals as Courage, Might...that were painted out at once by Milo’s mechanics...with the stenciled name M & M ENTERPRISES...”. Among American audiences, the

youth, especially men seemed to gain the most inspiration. Heller tries appeals to these to young Americans who are potential draftees for the war, by pointing out and warning about the harsh regulations how one like " Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to". This irony of Catch-22 is throughout the story and contributes to his message of how numbing war is.

Heller achieves the goal of showing the desensitizing nature of war is achieved through the rhetoric he uses. His use of ad hominem makes the reader make a generalization about the " uncompromising" character of the colonels rather than their opinion or argument. Using this Heller makes some people look " more ' sane' than those who willingly die for Colonel Cathcart or for a tighter bomb pattern". Heller's mocking tone matches the ups and downs of the storyline which also describes the absurdity of war. Once the reader become adept at understanding Heller's style of writing to becomes easier to notice the underlying symbolism used. " The soldier in white who had been filed next to the Texan" is seen multiples time throughout the story, but it is a different human being every time despite Yossarian and Dunbar not discerning that. Heller uses this to show the indifference the government shows to its soldiers, as the soldiers may seem like basic units which can be swapped out at any time without anyone batting an eye. The author's use of rhetoric effectively communicates his intents and dislike of war by attempting to persuade the reader to be fully aware of the corruption in this time period.