

The catcher in the rye
is a novel which
evokes hope and
despair for holden
caulfi...

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



JD Salinger uses a variety of techniques to evoke both hope and despair for Holden Caulfield. Hope is explored as an emotional state where one believes in a positive outcome, whereas despair displays a complete lack of positive belief. J. D. Salinger uses such techniques as narrative style, symbolism and foreshadowing, in his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. The reader's feelings of despair and hopelessness for Holden Caulfield are stimulated through the use of Salinger's narrative style. He is unable to logically sort information with a constant variation between flashbacks and events.

For example, whilst Holden narrates his longing for a 'good-by' he then changes the subject and talks about playing football with Robert and Paul (pg. 4). His erratic and haphazard stream of consciousness is echoed by the juxtaposing sentence structure prevalent throughout the novel. The first sentence, being over four lines long, is contrasted by the short and uncontrolled statements Holden makes; "he's in Hollywood"(pg. 1), "it killed me"(pg. 1). The staggered and abrasive pace of Holden's stream of consciousness hints at his unsteady mental state.

Through this disjointed sentence construction it becomes clear that Holden has no control over what and how he says something; "he's got a lot of dough now. He didn't use to." (pg. 1) Coupled with the shortened sentences, Holden often deviates from the main course of the narrative. These digressions create an air of confusion and add to the random and uncontrolled pace of the novel; "he's out in Hollywood being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies." (pg. 1)

These digressions often end with the word ' anyway' as Holden attempts to return to the main story; " anyway, it was..."(pg. 2), " anyway, it was December..."(pg. 3) and " anyway, as soon...pg. 4) These further highlight his unhinged state and are an emotional reflection of Holden. Furthermore, his pessimistic and jaded tone provides a sense of despair in readers as his reality is tinted by his cynicism. Holden's negativity becomes his biggest obstacle and is a psychological barrier to his happiness; " They finally got me this stinking table, right up against a wall and behind a goddamn post" (pg. 77). This cantankerous and disgruntled tone causes a feeling of sympathy for Holden and thus an overall feeling of despair, which derives from the reader's pity for Holden.

This dominant tone of negativity can be seen throughout the novel and highlights exactly how Holden sees the world and himself. Together these narrative style techniques, pace, structure, digressions and tone, develop despair for Holden as he struggles with his inner chaos. The use of symbolism gives rise to feelings of both hope and despair for Holden Caulfield. The ducks are a symbol which evoke despair and help explore Holden's desperation to find a way to fit in. Just as the ducks are forced to leave an environment that no longer accommodates them, Holden too, feels that he is being forced to leave his childhood.

Holden searches for where the ducks go when the lake freezes over, reflecting the idea of Holden's own personal journey. He asks the taxi driver " do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? " (pg. 54), however he receives no answer from the cab driver,

symbolically suggesting that there no place exists where he can belong. This symbolises his inner struggle to fit in and evokes a feeling of despair for Holden Caulfield. Moreover, Holden becomes consumed by the idea of how the lake is frozen thus making it impossible for the ducks to survive.

He sees that death is the ducks' only choice, and consequently feels that death is his only choice; " I almost wished I was dead" (pg. 82). However, Holden has not realised that the ducks come back, meaning they only temporarily vanish and hence death is not Holden's fate. Additionally, the lake becomes a metaphor for life, as it's " partly frozen, partly not frozen" (pg. 139) suggesting a correlation between the transition of childhood to adulthood. The symbol of the ducks are then replaced by the carousel symbol as we see Holden choose life over death, " Don't let me disappear" (pg. 178) evoking a true sense of hope.

The carousel becomes a representation of childhood and the carousel ring symbolises taking risks and accepting the passage into adulthood. Holden recognizes that he cannot protect himself or children from adulthood and in allowing Phoebe to reach for the ring he begins to realise the need for change; " If they fall off, they fall off" (pg. 190) Holden acknowledges that he cannot keep going in circles like a carousel does, but instead, one must reach for the ring and move forward in life. The carousel symbol contrasts against Holden's previous notions of the ducks and his desire for death.

Finally, the carousel provides Holden himself with hope, " I felt so damn happy all of a sudden" (pg. 191) and thus evoking a great sense of optimism

and hopefulness in the readers. It is through the ducks and the carousel we feel both despair and hope for Holden Caulfield. Foreshadowing is utilised to present the idea that Holden will overcome his inner turmoils thus evoking a sense of hope. The red hunting hat appears in the novel when Holden feels most vulnerable and requires protection, for example after his fight with Stradlater; " It was under the bed, I put it on. " (pg. 40)

When Holden gives his red hunting hat to Phoebe this foreshadows his ability to finally abandon the protection it offered and to admit his own vulnerability; "...took my hunting hat...and gave it to her" (pg. 162) Although this is a minor gesture, it foreshadows Holden's eventual recovery and displays the beginnings of his self-actualisation, thus eliciting a feeling of hope for Holden. Not only does this action foreshadow his healing, so too does the carousel scene.

It foretells his path to accepting that everyone must make the transition from childhood to adulthood; " I was sort of afraid...but you have to let them do it" (pg. 190), presenting the idea that Holden is on his way to resolving his inner chaos. This idea that Holden will recover provides readers with a sense of hope and overall optimism for his future. Thus, through the subtle foreshadowing of Holden's recovery and giving the hunting hat to Phoebe, hope is evoked for Holden. ' The Catcher in the Rye' evokes both hope and despair for Holden Caulfield. Narrative style stimulates despair, symbolism elicits hope and despair, and foreshadowing arouses hope in readers.