

# Catcher in the rye – point of view assignment

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Who is telling us the story of *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger? Holden Caulfield tells it to us, the readers, through his point of view. His point of view, literally speaking, is called first person. We get the facts through his recollections, with his opinions and bias. Did you ever wonder what *The Catcher in the Rye* would be like if it were in a different point of view? It would be very different if it was told in third person dramatic, third person omniscient, or third person limited omniscient through a character other than Holden. Third person dramatic point of view is like a roaming camera.

You see all, hear all, but you do not know what the characters are feeling or thinking unless they say or show it. If *The Catcher in the Rye* were written in this point of view, we would not get Holden's opinions and bias. We would not know exactly how he feels about certain characters or events. If it weren't for Holden's descriptions and feelings, some readers might think that Salinger isn't a very nice girl, and that Stradlater, who Holden makes out to be a real jerk, is actually a real nice guy! Not getting into any character's head lets the reader draw their own conclusions about that character based simply on how they act.

What if you got into ALL the characters' heads? That would make for a very different, yet interesting story. Third person omniscient point of view is just that. Omniscient literally translates to "all knowing". It is again told using he, she, him, her, they, etc" the same as all the other third person points of view. What about Mr. Spencer? When told by Holden, it seems like Mr. Spencer really likes Holden. If written in third person omniscient, we would know what Mr. Spencer really thought of Holden. Perhaps he didn't like Holden at all and was just pretending.

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It also would have led to different events and again change OUR view of the story. What if Holder's sister Phoebe liked the "phonies"? Holder is trying to save her from them and keep her from becoming one, but what if she wanted to? That again would make for a very different story. Knowing that she didn't want Holder to stop her from growing up and becoming phony, the story would have a different impact. Perhaps a different theme as well. Knowing what all the characters' are thinking can greatly change a story. Let's say we get into a character's head other than Holder's. His mother and father re obviously not very involved in his life.

From what Holder tells us in the story, they really don't care. Limited omniscient is when the story is told in the dramatic third person format, except you do get inside one or some, but not ALL of the characters' 1 OFF but a flashback shown to us by a camera that not only captured the events as they happened, but also gave us a glimpse into Holder's mother's feelings and thoughts, how different of a story would THAT be? We may find that she really does care about Holder and the problems he has. Instead of seeing her as this uncaring phony mother Holder describes her as.

Point of view makes a large difference in the interpretation, and meaning of a story. Holder wants to save children from growing up and turning into "phonies". This is what HE tells us. He justifies his cause to us. Would we think that Holder was doing the right thing if somebody other than Holder told the story? As a reader we draw our own conclusions from what we read.

However, with Holder's bias, we may only be able to draw the conclusions that he wishes us to draw. The story, and the conclusions we draw, would be

VERY different if the story wasn't told to us by Holder in first person point of view.