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"quite amusing and
all."



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The passage of adolescence has long served as the central theme for many novels, but *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger, has captured the energy of this period of life by dramatizing Holden Caulfield's somewhat obscene language and emotional reactions. *The Catcher in the Rye* deals with an intelligent yet confused teenage boy struggling to see the genuineness in society. During his experiences, Holden tends to use easy, natural, but controversial language to help get his point across in an effective manner. As a result, the themes and messages Salinger attempts to get across appear more natural and believable, as if one was talking to Holden himself.

Although seemingly inappropriate for society, the language used in throughout the novel is very appropriate for the character. At the time of the novel through today, Holden's speech rings true to the colloquial speech of teenagers, which includes both simple description and cursing. For example, Holden says, "Quite amusing and all." (Pg. 83), referring to the taxi driver. This oversimplifies the taxi driver, implying that Holden does not necessarily want to praise or demean the man. Also, Holden states that he will not tell his "whole goddamn autobiography or anything." (Pg. 1), which indicates Holden's hostility right from the start of the novel. The reader can easily pick up on Holden's stubbornness and views simply from his language, which can help in defining the character. Holden tends to use choice phrases to end his sentences, such as "and all" and "or anything" throughout the novel. Using these phrases, it can be said that these speech patterns are character traits since not everyone uses them. Also, Holden tend to use the phrase "if you want to know the truth" at the conclusion of many of his sentences. He feels compelled to verify his statements and prove that he is not lying, which may

indicate a lot of his character. Because Holden failed out of a lot of schools and does not have any close friendships, he attempts to solidify some form of communication by verifying to the readers that he is, in fact, telling the truth. The speech patterns help individualize Holden and made his speech seem more authentic while making his dialogue conform to the contemporary society of the 1940's.

The setting and theme in *The Catcher in the Rye* revolve around a teenage viewpoint. Therefore, non-grammatical and profane language is again appropriate in the monologues and dialogues throughout the novel. During this time period, teenagers first start to rebel against authority figures and express themselves more freely. Holden's language reflects upon these newfound values in that he curses and rarely uses proper English. At the time of the novel until today, light cursing is considered 'contemporary' and even somewhat acceptable in society. Holden seems to find it as an outlet to release his frustration, seeing as his experiences change, his language does as well. When he is enraged and caught up in the current situation, "sunuvabitch" and "bastard" find their way into his vocabulary quite frequently. However, when he simply addresses the readers as the narrator, Holden rarely slips into this extreme form of swearing. Salinger conducted these speech patterns so the reader can tell the extent and quality of Holden's anger, offering further insight into his character without lengthy word descriptions, in order to help identify which types of situations make him the angriest.

As a whole, the vernacular speech we see from Holden Caulfield is very necessary in order for Salinger to present his ideas in an efficient manner.

With his speech mannerisms, the reader is able to define Holden as a character much more easily than had the novel been written in proper English. The reader can identify where Holden feels compelled to curse in certain situations and how these circumstances affect him emotionally. Holden can be identified as a character who is unsure of himself, noting the constant using of "if you want to know the truth", yet puts on a cocky front, making him as phony as the characters he discriminates against.

The Catcher in the Rye, however, depends on this language, for the novel would not be as effective without it. Readers would not be able to identify Holden's character very quickly, if at all, in that they would not see which situations upset Holden more than others. Also, the teenage perspective of the story would be lost, in that teenagers tend to use their choice phrases and light cursing. This would eventually turn the book into a mundane piece of literature that would not be half as interesting to read as it is currently, even though it is somewhat controversial.

Throughout the novel, some controversial language takes place and some argue as to whether or not it is really necessary. The language, though, is extremely necessary in order for The Catcher in the Rye to be as effective and get its point across. The language, non-grammatical and obscene, is appropriate for the time and the theme of the novel, not to mention the main character. Despite past and present disputes over whether or not this language should be presented, all can agree that Holden's language defines him as a character and the situations that he encounters.

Bibliography:

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