

**USING J.D. SALINGER'S THE CATCHER
IN THE RYE IN THE CLASSROOM****Twentieth Century and
Contemporary Literature****Keywords:** The Catcher in the Rye, Salinger, classroom, teaching, learning.**Argjent Mehmedi**

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Abstract

There are many works in the world of literature that have dazzled us with their fascinating stories; their specific way of using vocabulary and their magical ability to take us and lead us to an imaginary world where we can experience what the characters of that work are experiencing. Such literary masterpieces make us think deep, while trying to understand them given the context in which they have been written. *The Catcher in the Rye* is without a doubt one of those books that challenge the way we see the world around us; challenge that which we believe is true and what consider a lie. Therefore, it is no wonder why we have chosen this work so we can analyze it and try to find ways how we can inject it in our classrooms. Yes, it is true that the book has a very specific and “hard” language that many students may find it inappropriate; nevertheless, it represents a unique way of vocabulary usage and a particular style of reflecting human emotions.

INTRODUCTION

The *Catcher in the Rye* is one of the most popular books taught in high schools and one of the most frequently censored texts in the United States, which may seem contradictory at first, but as we read through the pages of this research, we will understand why things are as they are currently. There is no better way to introduce a book with a fact that immediately lets us know what we should expect when reading about it.

J. D. Salinger's work has stirred up a lot of debate among parents, school boards, and religious organizations worried about the morality of young Americans ever since it debuted at the top of the New York Times fiction best-seller list in 1951. It's important to note that this book about prep school student Holden Caulfield's adventure in Manhattan was listed by the American Library Association as one of the top ten most challenged books of 2009. This was primarily because of the book's offensive language, excessive sexuality, explicit scenes, and general unsuitability for young readers.

Whatever the situation, by employing first-person narration, Salinger's protagonist's voice comes across with angry and confused thoughts as well as observations of a youngster who is trying to find his identity and fitting in in a perplexing and materialistic environment. The current and conservative American society is afraid of this certain voice.

The book earned a lot of praise and criticism after it was published. Some readers criticized it for portraying a kid who consumes alcohol, smokes, and solicits the services of a prostitute as a

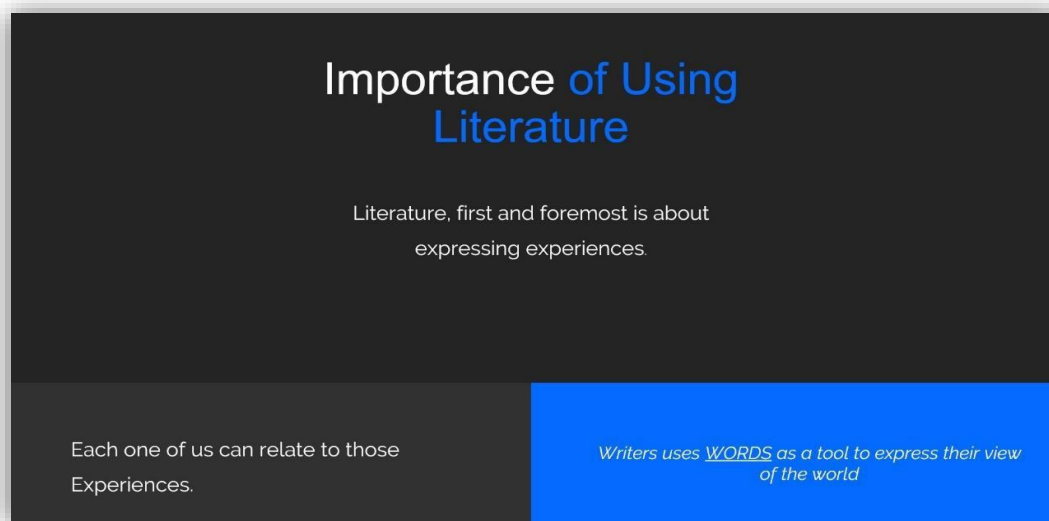
hero. Given the social context in post-war America, it is understandable why the book received such harsh criticism.

Nevertheless, despite the complexity of the topics covered in the book, the plot itself is not too complicated. The sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield who is the narrator of it writes it in the first person. Just before the Christmas break, he was dismissed from his school, Pencey Prep, for failing all but one of his tests. Things take off when he decides to stay in a city hotel for a few days rather than immediately returning to his family in Manhattan. From Saturday through Monday, the novel follows the protagonist as he comes into contact with a variety of characters and thinks back on his past, particularly the death of his younger brother, Allie, which had a significant impact on his life. The story is narrated retroactively from some sort of institution in California where Holden has gone to "take it easy," as he states in the opening of the book. It is also vital to stress that the story is full of memorable phrases, scenes, comedic moments, and anxiety. Additionally, its language, topics, and style have had a significant impact, turning Holden Caulfield into a legendary fictional character that represents disturbed youth. This paper represents an attempt to assess the work in outlining various teaching strategies that could be used to incorporate it into the classroom.

SALINGER'S WORK IN THE CLASSROOM

Considering the work to be so particular and interesting to analyze, it is understandable to use it in our classrooms as a tool to teach students about different kinds of vocabulary, ways of how to express one's feelings, dialogue, good manners and creativity. In the following pages I will provide some examples how we can introduce Salinger's work to the classroom.

Importance of Literature



Ways to use Literature

- Literature as a vocabulary chest
- Literature as a web of sentences
- Literature as an ocean of creativity
 - All of the above combined

Vocabulary

Vocabulary Aspects

Words display the Character

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.

Academic vs Everyday Talk

"On the subway, for Chrissake! Ya lost them, ya mean?"

The *Catcher in the Rye* is a treasure chest of vocabulary, although quite explicit at times. Nevertheless, it represents a unique blend of word usage, which can be very helpful in making students understand different ways of expressing themselves in English.

Themes

Every author who writes a book has something to say about the world around him. He expresses his worldviews to the reader by themes.

Family Ties	Believing in Yourself
Avoiding Being Fake	Isolation

Thematic Aspects

Words and Meaning

Researching Highlighted Words

- Overly sensitive
- Personal rules for correct behavior
- A large, expensive country house
- Expensive; fancy

- ✓ Touchy
- ✓ Principles
- ✓ Chateau
- ✓ Swanky

We can have various methods and techniques through which we can use the novel from a dictionary point of view. The examples above and below are just one of the ways we can make students highlight words they do not quite understand, and with the teacher’s help they can get to their meaning in a more creative way.

The minute I went in, I was sort of sorry I'd come. He was reading the Atlantic Monthly, and there were pills and medicine all over the place, and everything smelled like Vicks Nose Drops.

He really was, too. You could see that. But it was just that we were too much on opposite sides of the pole, that's all.

They got all excited and asked Marty if she'd seen him and all. Old Mart said she'd only caught a glimpse of him. That killed me.

Selecting Words and Expressions we don't Understand

I forgot to tell you about that. They kicked me out. I wasn't supposed to come back after Christmas vacation on account of I was flunking four subjects and not applying myself and all. They gave me frequent warning to start applying myself--especially around midterms, when my parents came up for a conference with old Thurmer--but I didn't do it. So I got the ax.

Fill the Gaps

The diagram consists of a vertical line with five circles. The top circle is connected to the word "Context". The bottom circle is connected to the word "Vocabulary". To the left of the line is a blue rounded square, and to the right is another blue rounded square. The text "Fill Options" is positioned to the left of the bottom circle, and the text "TEXT" is positioned to the right of the top circle.

Context

TEXT

I had the _____ of meeting your mother and dad when they had their little chat with Dr. Thurmer some weeks ago.

Vocabulary

Fill Options

- Privilege
- Book
- Time

Explain the Word

Context

TEXT
That stuff gives me a bang sometimes. Besides, I know it annoyed the hell out of old Ackley. He always brought out the old **sadist** in me.

Option 1

Option 2

Explain
Sadist:

Choose

- A person who likes to entertain
- A person who enjoys causing pain or humiliation to others

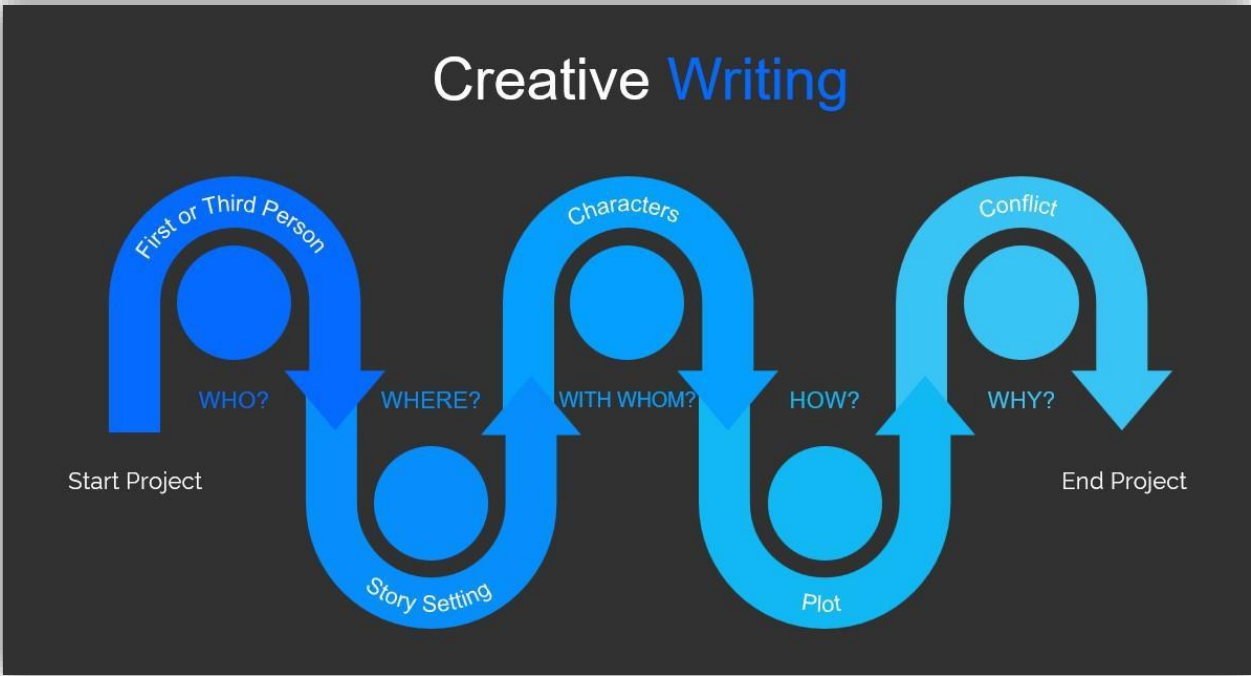
Creativity

Creativity Aspects

FINDING THEMATIC PATTERNS
IN THE BOOK

UNDERSATNDING SYMBOLISM

DETECTING THE ANTAGONIST



Creative writing is one of the best ways through which a student can improve word order and improve their abilities of expression, and what's a better way than to have a model upon which they can base their storytelling talent. The picture shows all the key aspects of a story development, which students can use to tell Holden's story in a different way. Each of us have gone through many difficulties in our lives, so it is fitting to tell a story from our point of view by using Salinger's book as a guide.

Text Analysis

The slide is titled "Text Analysis" and features a dark background with a vertical blue bar on the right side. On the left, there are three categories, each with a blue horizontal bar below it:

- Dialogue
- Description
- Creativity

On the right side, there is a dark grey box titled "Example" containing the following text:

"Watch your language, if you don't mind."
What a lady, boy. A queen, for Chrissake.
"Where you girls from?" I asked her.

Text in a novel may be presented in different ways, so in order to improve student's writing skills we can evaluate passages from the book by explaining how a dialogue should be written, how we should use description.

The graphic is divided into two main sections. On the left, a light gray background contains two dark gray rounded rectangles. The first is labeled 'Example 1' and asks 'Was the girl a good dancer or not?'. The second is labeled 'Example 2' and asks 'Did the band play good or bad?'. On the right, a dark gray background features the title 'Answer Questions from the Text' in blue and white. Below the title is a text passage: 'She wasn't listening, though. So I ignored her for a while. We just danced. God, could that dopey girl dance. Buddy Singer and his stinking band was playing "Just One of Those Things" and even they couldn't ruin it entirely.'

Finding the appropriate manner to depict a given text and to explain it is of the utmost significance because understanding a book might be one of the most difficult jobs that a learner can encounter. A fantastic example of such passages that are fairly challenging, especially for beginners, is *The Catcher in the Rye*. Students can misunderstand the part in the example above when it says, "Could that dopey girl dance," which is actually a statement suggesting she is an excellent dancer. Furthermore, the phrase "even they couldn't spoil it" implies that although the band wasn't very talented as a performer, the song they played was so excellent that even their lackluster performance couldn't ruin it.

The same holds true for discovering symbols that mean more than we initially think. Many of these symbols are used in *The Catcher in the Rye*, including the ducks, the hat, and the title character. They all have meanings that call for explanation, as we have seen throughout this inquiry.

With all of this in mind, it is easy to conclude that the book is a fantastic teaching resource for English students and instructors.

Finding Symbols

"But finally, after I was riding a while, the cab driver and I sort of struck up a conversation. His name was Horwitz. He was a much better guy than the other driver I'd had. Anyway, I thought maybe he might know about the ducks."

THE DUCKS

THE RED HUNTING HAT

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

Role Playing

Role Play

- Give students the opportunity to pick roles
- Make them write about those roles
- Make them act upon those roles
- Ask them how they feel acting a certain character



CONCLUSION

We may now wonder how the tale of an upper-class youngster from Manhattan who attends boarding schools in the northeastern United States can appeal to such a wide range of people on a global scale. We may draw the conclusion that Holden's experiences are common to young people everywhere, despite the particulars of his biography, which portrays him as an American rebel youngster. Even more significant, and something that strongly resonates with the readers, are his responses to the situations he finds himself in. Many readers have experienced similar reactions to the world at some point in their lives, including his detections of "phoniness," as he usually refers to it, in the people and institutions around him, his unsuccessful attempts to share his judgments with others around him, and the distress all this causes him. And we can be sure that many people have experienced the same problems—and in some cases, far worse—as Holden has.

Of course, things are not always so black and white; is there a chance that Holden's acts would be seen favorably by many young people if he is a sympathetic hero to many readers? Here, it's important to keep in mind that both John Hinckley, who attempted to kill President Ronald Reagan in 1981, and Mark Chapman, who killed John Lennon in 1980, were connected to the book. Chapman even read aloud from it during his trial, and a copy of the book was discovered in Hinckley's possession. These concerns prompt us to consider the effect a piece of literature can have on its audience, and they have heightened the debate surrounding *The Catcher in the Rye*. Some argue that since the book is associated with criminals, it has the potential to influence some people's behavior and that teens shouldn't be permitted to read it in order to protect them from its negative impact.

But it's important to understand that the book wasn't written with teenagers in mind. Only when people Holden's age are encouraged to read the book does the notion that he is a negative role model for young people emerge. Salinger continually writes about children and adolescents, but not for them, which is the problem. Many of the issues with the book have developed as a result of it being suggested to teenagers, maybe in the hope that it will help them understand their circumstances. For some readers, *Catcher* still stands as the benchmark novel for the teenage experience.

Whatever the situation, a teacher must be aware of all these factors if he or she wishes to include it into the English curriculum. If the issue is handled carefully and methodically, I believe that all of our goals will be met.

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