



BEYOND TRUTH AND FICTION: AN EXPLORATION  
OF THE ARBITRARY AND INCONSISTENT  
CONSTRUCTION OF SELF IN J. D. SALINGER'S  
*THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*

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ABSTRACT

The history of the unreliable narrator in fiction, characterizing narratives shaped by personal biases, mental instability, or intentional deception, has a rich history dating back to ancient Greek drama. This investigation into the historical trajectory and influence of unreliable narration focuses on J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* as a case study. Published in 1951, the novel intricately explores the complexities of its protagonist, Holden Caulfield, seen here as embodying the essence of an unreliable narrator. The analysis delves into Salinger's artistry as part of a broader examination of truth, perception, and storytelling reliability throughout literary history. By drawing parallels with archetypal forms of unreliable narrators, the analysis aims to uncover Holden's classification and unique role in the exploration of unreliable narration. A consideration of the literary techniques employed in the novel emphasizes their contribution to the overall impact of the work, prompting a reflection on the foundations of selfhood and the narratives that shape it within the broader context of the history of ideas.

KEYWORDS: Self, Unreliability, Rhetoric narratology, Focalization, Constructivist narratology, Implied author

The use of non-reliable narrator in fiction has long history. The unreliable narrator, often a character of complexity and enigma, assumes the role of storyteller, molding the narrative through a lens tainted with ambiguity and uncertainty. This archetype, spanning from classical works to contemporary masterpieces, has indelibly shaped the literary landscape, prompting readers to reconsider the very essence of truth, perception, and storytelling reliabil-

ity. Characterized by a proclivity to distort or manipulate the truth, whether intentionally or unknowingly, an unreliable narrator is motivated by personal biases, mental instability, flawed memories, or a desire to deceive. In presenting events, characters, and their own thoughts, these narrators introduce a skewed, inconsistent, or contradictory narrative, plunging readers into a labyrinth of uncertainty and challenging them to decipher hidden truths amid the unreliability of the narrator's account.

The roots of this narrative style can be traced back to ancient Greek drama, with an early instance apparent in Euripides's *The Bacchae*. Within this play, the God Dionysus serves as the narrator, yet his intentions and perspective remain enigmatic, establishing the groundwork for the theme of unreliable narration. However, the full realization and skillful utilization of this storytelling device occurred only with the onset of modernity. It was in 1961 when Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, used this term and wielded a profound influence on literary storytelling. Booth writes, "the history of unreliable narrators from Gargantua to Lolita is in fact full of trap for the unsuspecting readers, some of them not particularly harmful but some of them crippling or even fatal" (Booth 1983, 239). William Riggan's 1981 work, *Pícaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator*, further refines the understanding of unreliable narrators, concentrating on the first-person narrator, the most prevalent form of unreliable narration. Riggan provides the following description to illustrate his classification. The first archetype, the Pícaro, frequently encountered in picaresque novels, embodies the obstinacy of sin. A prominent exemplar of this picaro type of unreliable narrator is found in Don Quixote, the protagonist of Miguel de Cervantes' *The Ingenious Gentleman Sir Quixote of La Mancha* (1605). This novel chronicles the adventures of Don Quixote, a middle-aged man driven by a fervent yearning for adventure. The second classification, the Clown, characterized by a narrative tradition associated with fools, court jesters, and soties, utilizes unreliable narration replete with irony and ambiguities. A pertinent example of a Clown is Tristram Shandy, the central figure in Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67). This biographical novel is marked by digression, double entendre, sarcasm, and insults, rendering it challenging for readers to discern which aspects of Tristram's life and recounted events are to be taken seriously. The third archetype, the Madman, possesses unreliability stemming from an unbalanced mind and serves as a case study in the pathology of insanity. Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) features the narrator, Alex, as an exemplification of the liar and madman type of unreliable narrator. Alex recounts the narrative under the influence of drugs and exhibits mental instability, characteristics intricately linked to the madman archetype of unreliable narrators. The fourth classification, the Naïf, is a narrator whose na-

ture unfolds through their own narration, lacking the experience to grapple with moral, ethical, emotional, and intellectual questions. An embodiment of The Naif is evident in Scout Finch, the protagonist of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1995). As a young child documenting her experiences growing up in the Deep South, Scout provides an example of the Naif archetype within the realm of unreliable narration (Riggan 1981).

The exploration of the unreliable self within the realm of psychology delves into the intricate facets of human consciousness and identity. Sigmund Freud's pioneering work in psychoanalysis notably in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923) laid the groundwork for understanding the complexities of the self. Freud's conceptualization of the unconscious mind, defense mechanisms, and the dynamic interplay of conscious and unconscious desires illuminated the inherent unreliability of self-perception. This psychological dimension provides a foundational understanding of how the self is often obscured by unconscious motives and hidden facets. Later, theorists like Carl Jung expanded upon Freud's ideas, introducing the collective unconscious, shadow, and archetypes. The concept of the shadow, introduced by Carl Jung, signifies the unconscious facets of an individual's personality that undergo rejection and repression. In analytical psychology, the shadow represents elements conflicting with the ego ideal, resulting in inner resistance and projection. It functions as an emotional blind spot, taking on archetypal manifestations within the collective unconscious, such as the trickster. While the concept of the shadow in Jung's psychology doesn't directly align with the notion of an unreliable narrator, there exist connections between the two concerning the comprehension of human perception and self-awareness. An unreliable narrator typically distorts or manipulates the truth in storytelling, often stemming from personal biases, mental instability, or a desire to deceive. This distortion can be perceived as a psychological defense mechanism, akin to the way the ego might resist acknowledging certain personality aspects, as elucidated by Jung's concept of the shadow (Jung 2014). In both scenarios, there's a nuanced exploration of unconscious elements influencing perception and narrative. Carl Jung's significant contributions to psychology through influential works like *Man and His Symbols*, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, *Psychological Types*, and *Psychology of the Unconscious*, indirectly shape discussions on the unreliable narrator in literature. These psychological constructs added further layers to the concept of the unreliable self, suggesting that the self is not only influenced by individual experiences but also by universal symbols and themes embedded in the collective unconscious. Additionally, Virginia Woolf's narrative innovations, particularly in works like *Mrs. Dalloway*, intricately navigate the inner thoughts and perceptions of characters, revealing the subjective and often fragmentary nature of self-awareness. Woolf's literary

explorations align with emerging psychological theories, creating a convergence of disciplines in the exploration of the unreliable self. The symbiotic relationship between psychology and literature becomes particularly evident in works like Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, where characters like, Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny, and Louis grapple with their shifting identities and the unreliability of self-perception.

### 1. HOLDEN CAULFIELD: NAVIGATING THE HISTORICAL IDEATION OF KNOWING AND UNKNOWING

As the exploration of the unreliable self-intertwines with psychological dimensions in literature, our focus now shifts to a captivating case study that embodies this intricate theme. It is in this context that the paper intends to analyze *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, as it is an interesting case-study belonging to the history of this idea. This analysis accentuates the broader concept of the history of ideas, delving into the evolution and impact of unreliable narration as depicted in Salinger's seminal work. The exploration aims to unravel the intricate layers of Holden Caulfield's unreliability, offering insights into how this character contributes to the evolving narrative landscape and the historical trajectory of the idea within literature.

Published in 1951 *The Catcher in the Rye* serves as a rich reservoir of complexities within the narrative structure, with Holden Caulfield emerging as a character who encapsulates the embodiment of an unreliable narrator. It is a classic novel that follows the life of a teenage boy named Holden Caulfield, who is expelled from his boarding school and embarks on a journey to find meaning and purpose in his life. Holden's narrative unfolds through a lens tainted with ambiguity and uncertainty, a testament to the profound impact of Salinger's craftsmanship on the literary landscape. The novel compels readers to confront the intricate interplay of truth, perception, and storytelling reliability, mirroring the broader exploration of these themes throughout the history of literature. *The Catcher in the Rye*, like a chameleon in the literary realm, possesses an uncanny ability to mirror the universal struggles of human existence. Its protagonist, the brooding and disillusioned Holden Caulfield, embodies the angst and restless yearning that courses through the veins of countless souls navigating the treacherous path of adolescence. Holden's battle against the perceived phoniness of the adult world strikes a chord with individuals from all corners of the globe, transcending cultural barriers and resonating with the raw essence of youthful rebellion and existential contemplation. Furthermore, Salinger's novel acts as a cultural touchstone, a shared language that allows disparate individuals to connect and find solace in their shared experiences. It has become a testament to the

universal nature of human emotions, an emotional compass that points towards the turbulent seas of adolescence and the complex maze of identity formation. *The Catcher in the Rye* serves as a rite of passage, an initiation into the realm of global popular culture, where readers from diverse backgrounds are united in their collective nod of recognition, their shared understanding of the trials and tribulations of growing up. Moreover, the very themes and motifs that weave through the pages of *The Catcher in the Rye* are deeply embedded in the fabric of our modern world. The quest for authenticity, the struggle against conformity, the longing for connection in a fragmented society—these are not merely literary tropes confined to the realm of fiction. They reverberate in the corridors of our own lives, echoed in the voices of countless individuals who navigate the complexities of a globalized and rapidly changing world. This iconic work of literature, cherished by generations, acts as a perfect case study to illuminate the intricacies of self-construction and the role of the narrator in shaping an idealized version of themselves through their narration. Within this narrative tapestry, we shall explore how the text itself may subvert or challenge the implicit authority of the narrator, transcending the boundaries of conventional storytelling. Our inquiry delves beyond the surface of the story, peering into the depths of the characters' minds and the world they inhabit, uncovering the underlying nuances that shape their perceptions and actions. Through this exploration, the paper strives to provoke thought, to question the very foundations of our understanding of self-hood and the narratives that shape it.

This article aims to scrutinize the nuanced layers of Holden's unreliability, motivated by personal biases, mental instability, and a profound yearning for authenticity. By dissecting Salinger's masterful use of narrative distortion, intentional or unknowing, this analysis contributes to the ongoing dialogue on the evolution of unreliable narrators and the history of the idea of unreliability. The profound influence of *The Catcher in the Rye* on shaping perceptions of authenticity and truth within literature underscores its significance as a compelling case study in the historical trajectory of this captivating literary device. This article will also explore the literary techniques employed in *The Catcher in the Rye* and how these techniques contribute to the novel's overall impact.

## 2. NARRATOLOGY: COGNITIVE AND RHETORIC

To begin with the concept of Narratology, the art of unraveling the intricate tapestry of narratives, is more than a mere academic discipline; it is a key that unlocks the hidden chambers of human experience. In its exploration of storytelling, narratology delves into the depths of our collective conscious-

ness, exposing the intricate threads that weave together our thoughts, emotions, and perspectives. It invites us to question the very nature of truth and fiction, challenging the boundaries of our perceived reality. Through the lens of narratology, we become both architects and voyagers, constructing and traversing the landscapes of imagination, empathy, and meaning. It is a realm where words transcend ink on paper, becoming vessels of profound revelation, allowing us to glimpse the profound complexity and interconnectedness of our shared human existence. There exist two major schools of narratology that explore narrative unreliability: the rhetorical school, represented by scholars such as Wayne Booth, Seymour Chatman, William Riggan, Rimmon-Kenan, and James Phelan, and the cognitive or constructivist narratology, primarily represented by Tamar Yacobi and Ansgar Nünning and Mieke Bal. Wayne Booth, in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, delves into the role of the implied author and the strategies employed in narrative communication. Seymour Chatman, through *Story and Discourse* and *Reading Narrative Fiction*, examines the distinction between story and discourse, providing insights into narrative unreliability. The comprehensive understanding of various narrative unreliability types is elucidated by William Riggan's in *Pícaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator*. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in her work *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, contributes to the understanding of narrative structure and the poetics of fiction. Her insights enrich the exploration of how narratives, including their unreliable aspects, are crafted and perceived. James Phelan, known for his work *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*, focuses on the rhetorical dimensions of narrative, examining techniques, audiences, ethics, and ideology.

Conversely, the cognitive or constructivist narratology finds representation in theorists like Ansgar Nünning, Birgit Neumann and Mieke Bal. Bal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2017) offers insights into the analysis of narrative structures and their impact on storytelling across various media. Ansgar Nünning, and Birgit Neumann notably in *An Introduction to the Study of Narrative Fiction* (2008), direct attention to the cognitive aspects of narrative, emphasizing how readers construct meaning and engage with unreliable narrators.

The rhetorical school of narratology refers to a theoretical approach to the study of narrative that focuses on the various ways in which narratives are constructed and communicated to readers. This approach is rooted in the classical tradition of rhetoric, which focuses on the use of language and other communicative strategies to persuade, influence, or engage an audience. According to the rhetorical school of narratology, narrative texts are not simply neutral conveyors of information, but rather they are shaped by the rhetorical strategies employed by their authors. In the context of narratology, the rhe-

torical school seeks to identify the specific rhetorical strategies that authors use to construct their narratives, such as the use of figurative language, the selection of specific details, and the deployment of narrative voice and point of view. These strategies are not limited to but may include the use of metaphor, irony, and other figures of speech, as well as the arrangement and organization of the narrative elements themselves. According to some critics, the rhetorical school of narratology draws on the ancient Greek rhetorical tradition, which emphasized the use of language to persuade and manipulate readers and audiences. In this approach, narrative is seen as a form of communication that aims to influence readers through its use of language, structure, and other rhetorical devices. These strategies are used to shape the reader's understanding of the story and the characters, and to create a particular emotional and aesthetic effect. One of the key principles of the rhetorical school of narratology is that narratives are not neutral or objective accounts of events, but rather are constructed and shaped by the author to achieve specific goals. These goals may be overtly political or ideological, or they may be more subtle, aimed at shaping the reader's attitudes, beliefs, or values. According to this school of thought, narratives are not simply reflections of reality, but are rather constructed through the use of rhetorical devices. The 'implied author', as conceptualised by Booth is a key concept in the rhetorical school of narratology, and it refers to the persona or voice that is created by the narrator of a story. This persona is not the same as the author of the work, but rather is a constructed character that is created through the use of language and rhetorical devices. The implied author is the voice that the reader hears as they read the story, and it shapes the way that the reader interprets and understands the narrative. The concept of the implied author is important because it allows us to understand the way that narratives are constructed and how they influence the reader. By analyzing the language and rhetorical devices used by the narrator, we can gain insight into the author's intended meaning and the effect that the narrative has on the reader. According to this school of theory, the implied author is not a static character, but rather is constantly evolving throughout the course of the narrative, as the narrator uses different devices and techniques to shape the reader's understanding of the story. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* writes, "The implied author chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" (Booth 1983, 74-75). In simpler terms, the meaning of a narrative is not fixed or predetermined by the author, but rather is shaped by the reader's interpretation. Readers bring their own experiences, beliefs, and values to the reading process, and these factors play a crucial role in shaping the meaning that is derived from a narrative. Booth argues that the implied author is a powerful force in shaping the reader's un-

derstanding of the story, and that it is the responsibility of the reader to critically analyze and interpret the narrative. By understanding the role of the implied author and the techniques used to construct it, readers can become more aware of the ways that narratives shape our understanding of the world and our place in it.

On the other hand, Cognitive narratology, also known as constructivist narratology, is an approach to the study of narrative that focuses on how readers construct meaning from the stories they read. This approach is based on the idea that the meaning of a story is not inherent in the text itself, but is instead created by the reader's interpretation of the text. According to cognitive narratology, readers bring their own knowledge, experiences, and cultural background to the act of reading. They use this knowledge to make sense of the story and to create their own mental representations of the characters, events, and themes of the narrative. These mental representations are constructed through a process of inference, where readers draw inferences about the story based on the information provided in the text and their own prior knowledge. This approach recognizes that different readers may interpret the same text in different ways, depending on their individual perspectives and backgrounds. The cognitive approach to narratology is grounded in the theory of cognitive psychology, which emphasizes the importance of mental processes such as attention, perception, memory, and reasoning in shaping human behavior (Huhn et al. 2014). In the context of reading, cognitive psychology suggests that readers actively engage with the text, using their cognitive processes to construct a mental model of the story. According to cognitive narratology, the process of constructing a mental model involves four stages: comprehension, inference, elaboration, and evaluation. In the comprehension stage, the reader processes the narrative at a surface level, extracting basic information about the story's characters, setting, and events. In the inference stage, the reader uses this basic information to make inferences about the story's meaning and themes. In the elaboration stage, the reader integrates their own prior knowledge and experiences with the story to create a more detailed mental model. Finally, in the evaluation stage, the reader evaluates their mental model and the story itself to determine its overall significance and meaning.

One of the key concepts in cognitive narratology is the idea of a "narrative world." This refers to the mental model that readers construct of the story as they read it. In cognitive narratology, a mental model is a cognitive representation of a narrative that a reader constructs in their mind while reading or listening to a story. The mental model is based on the information that is presented in the narrative and is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural background. It is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic construct that evolves as the reader encounters new infor-

mation in the narrative. The reader continually updates their mental model as they process new information and revise their understanding of the story. Mental models play a crucial role in cognitive narratology because they help to explain how readers make sense of stories. When a reader constructs a mental model, they are actively engaging with the narrative and creating a personalized understanding of the story based on their own cognitive processes and experiences. The concept of mental models is closely related to other key concepts in cognitive narratology, including schema, frame, and script. Mental models are built using these basic building blocks, and they provide a foundation for the reader's interpretation and understanding of the narrative.

### 2.1. *The Unreliable Narrator*

*The Catcher in the Rye* is a prime example of rhetoric narrative, as Salinger uses language to create a specific mood and tone throughout the novel. While cognitive narratology primarily focuses on the cognitive processes involved in the creation and reception of narratives, rhetoric narratology centers its attention on the persuasive and communicative strategies employed by authors to shape and convey their narratives. In the case of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger's deliberate use of language, narrative voice, and point of view serves as a testament to the rhetorical nature of the novel. The novel's narrative structure is also very essential to its impact and meaning. The narrative is divided into three parts, with each section reflecting different stages in Holden's emotional journey. The first part introduces Holden and his current state of mind, while the second part explores his interactions with other characters and his attempts to connect with them. The final part focuses on Holden's inner thoughts and emotions, as he begins to come to terms with his own identity and the world around him. We can say that Holden Caulfield's voice dominates the narrative, and his use of slang and colloquial language creates a distinctive and authentic voice that resonates with readers. Salinger's use of repetition, such as Holden's use of the phrase "phony" to describe things he dislikes, adds to the novel's thematic coherence and reinforces Holden's characterization as an outsider who sees through the hypocrisy of the adult world. However, the narrative structure of the novel is also characterized by a nonlinear plot-line that reflects Holden's fragmented and unstable emotional state. The story is punctuated by flashbacks and dream sequences that further blur the line between reality and fantasy. The nonlinear plot structure also reflects Holden's feelings of disorientation and confusion, as he struggles to make sense of his own emotions and experiences.

One of the key aspects of rhetoric narratology is the way that the narrative elements and rhetorical devices interact to create meaning. In *The*

*Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger uses a variety of rhetorical devices to convey the novel's themes and messages. For example, the novel is replete with metaphors, such as Holden's description of himself as a "catcher in the rye," which symbolizes his desire to protect innocent children from the corruption of the adult world. The use of this metaphor creates a powerful image that resonates with readers and reinforces the novel's themes of innocence and corruption. One of the most prominent rhetorical devices in the novel is the use of symbolism. The title of the novel itself is a symbol that represents Holden's desire to protect the innocence of childhood from the corrupting influence of adulthood. The red hunting hat is one of the most prominent symbols in the novel. Holden wears the hat as a way to separate himself from the rest of the world. The hat is also a symbol of Holden's innocence and vulnerability, as he is only comfortable wearing it in private. To quote a few lines, "I pulled the peak of my hunting hat around to the front all of a sudden, for a change. I was getting sort of nervous, all of a sudden" (Salinger 2018, 20). When Holden gives the hat to his sister Phoebe, it is a symbol of his acceptance of growing up and moving away from childhood.

The Museum of Natural History is another symbol that is significant in the novel. For Holden, the museum represents a frozen moment in time, a place where things remain the same and do not change. The museum also represents Holden's desire for stability and permanence in a world that he perceives as constantly changing and phony. Holden says,

The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers would still be drinking out of that water hole, with their pretty antlers and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket. Nobody'd be different. (Salinger 2018, 66)

The ducks in Central Park are a recurring symbol in the novel. Holden asks several people throughout the novel where the ducks go in winter when the pond freezes over. The ducks are a metaphor for Holden's own situation, as he is also displaced and searching for a place to belong. The carousel is a symbol of innocence and childhood. Holden watches his sister Phoebe ride the carousel and experiences a moment of clarity and understanding. The carousel represents the fleeting nature of childhood and the inevitability of growing up. The symbols used in *The Catcher in the Rye* contribute to the overall theme of Holden's search for meaning and identity. Holden's struggle with authenticity is reflected in his search for symbols that represent stability and permanence in a world that he perceives as constantly changing

and phony. The symbols also serve as a way for Holden to separate himself from the rest of the world, highlighting his feelings of isolation and alienation.

Salinger also uses imagery to create a vivid and memorable picture of Holden's experiences. For example, he describes Holden's encounters with various characters in vivid detail, such as his conversation with the taxi driver who tells him about the ducks in Central Park. The use of vivid imagery helps to make the story more engaging and memorable for the reader. Holden abruptly asks the taxi driver a series of questions: "You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you happen to know, by any chance?" (Salinger 2018, 33)

The idea of the "implied author" is particularly relevant to *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden Caulfield is a character who is often described as being a stand-in for J.D. Salinger himself. However, it is important to remember that Holden is a fictional character and that the implied author of the novel is not necessarily the same as the real-life author. The implied author of *The Catcher in the Rye* is the persona that the reader constructs based on the textual clues provided by Salinger.

Holden's narration is also characterized by its unreliability and the use of irony to create meaning. Booth defines irony as a "hidden evaluation," which means that the author is making a judgment about a character or situation without explicitly stating it. Holden's unreliability as a narrator is apparent from the very beginning of the novel. He introduces himself as a liar, stating that he sometimes lies just for the sake of lying. He also frequently contradicts himself, such as when he claims to dislike his former school but then admits to missing it. Holden's narration is further complicated by his tendency to exaggerate and misremember events. For example, he describes an encounter with a former classmate as a violent fight, but it later becomes clear that the encounter was not as extreme as he initially described it. Like the characteristic traits of an unreliable narrator, as proposed by Rigman, Holden frequently lies, exaggerates, and distorts the truth. He is prone to making sweeping generalizations and indulging in black-and-white thinking, which can make his perspective seem skewed or exaggerated. For example, he describes his brother as a prostitute-chaser, implying that his brother is promiscuous and unfaithful, but it later becomes clear that this is not the case. Another example for the same is, he tells his little sister, Phoebe, that he wants to be a "catcher in the rye" who saves children from falling off of a cliff, but later admits that he doesn't actually know what he wants to do with his life. Holden's unreliability as a narrator forces the reader to question their assumptions and to engage with the text more critically. Holden also withholds information from the reader. He often alludes to events that have oc-

curred in his past but does not provide a full explanation. For example, Holden talks about his brother's death but does not provide any details about how his brother died. Holden says:

I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it. I even tried to break all the windows on the station wagon we had that summer, but my hand was already broken and everything by that time, and I couldn't do it. It was a very stupid thing to do, I'll admit, but I hardly didn't even know I was doing it. (Salinger 2018, 22)

Holden also mentions a girl he used to know, Jane Gallagher, but does not provide any information about their relationship. Holden's withholding of information creates a gap between what the reader knows and what Holden wants the reader to believe. Holden's misrepresentation of events is evident in his interactions with other characters. Holden often misinterprets the intentions of others, which leads to misunderstandings. For example, Holden misinterprets the intentions of his former English teacher, Mr. Antolini, and accuses him of making a homosexual advance. Holden's misrepresentation of events creates a gap between what the reader knows and what Holden wants the reader to believe.

Holden's unreliability as a narrator has several important effects on the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. First, it creates a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty about the events of the novel. The reader is forced to question Holden's version of events and consider the possibility that what he is saying may not be entirely accurate. This uncertainty contributes to the novel's overall mood of disillusionment and confusion. Second, Holden's unreliability serves to highlight the theme of alienation and isolation. His inability to connect with others and his tendency to push people away are a direct result of his unreliable narration. The reader sees him as a complex and flawed character, but the other characters in the novel see only a difficult and unpleasant person. Finally, the use of the unreliable narrator serves to create a sense of intimacy between the reader and the narrator. The reader becomes intimately acquainted with Holden's thoughts and feelings, and is able to sympathize with his struggles. This intimacy is key to the novel's success, as it allows the reader to become emotionally invested in Holden's journey.

*The Catcher in the Rye* also employs internal focalization, with the story being told from the perspective of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. One of the unique features of *The Catcher in the Rye* is the way in which Salinger uses the theory of focalization to create a specific atmosphere and tone. By employing internal focalization, Salinger restricts the reader's access to information, forcing them to rely on Holden's perception of events. This cre-

ates a sense of tension and uncertainty, as readers are never quite sure what is happening outside of Holden's perspective. For example, when Holden meets up with his former classmate, Ackley, the reader can only see Ackley through Holden's eyes. We never get a sense of what Ackley is thinking or feeling, which creates a sense of ambiguity and unease. Another way in which focalization affects the reader's understanding of *The Catcher in the Rye* is through the characterization of Holden himself. Because the story is told entirely from his perspective, readers are given an intimate view of his psyche, which helps to create a sense of sympathy and understanding for the character. Holden is a deeply troubled and emotionally stunted individual, and his unique perspective on the world around him helps to explain some of his more erratic behavior. For example, when Holden visits the museum, he fixates on the fact that nothing ever changes. This reveals his fear of change and his desire for a world that is stable and unchanging.

Booth's theory of point of view argues that the author's choice of perspective can influence the reader's understanding of the story. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger uses a limited third-person point of view to convey Holden's story. This means that the reader is only able to see events from Holden's perspective, and other characters are presented only as he perceives them. Holden's limited perspective is an essential part of the novel's narrative structure. It allows Salinger to create a sense of ambiguity and irony, as the reader is forced to question Holden's interpretation of events. For example, Holden's perception of his brother D.B. as a sell-out writer may not be entirely accurate, as D.B. may have valid reasons for choosing to write for Hollywood. The limited point of view creates tension and suspense, as the reader is left wondering whether Holden's perspective is accurate or not.

## CONCLUSION

*The Catcher in the Rye*, intricately intertwines the theme of the unreliable self into the narrative, primarily through the perspective of Holden Caulfield. Holden's inclination towards falsehoods, exaggerations, and selective omissions represents a conscious narrative choice, crafting a nuanced landscape laden with ambiguity and uncertainty. Salinger's incorporation of metaphors, symbolism, and vivid imagery, as explored in the paper, further enriches the portrayal of Holden's unreliable narrative. The novel's rhetorical essence, reflected in Salinger's deliberate language, narrative voice, and chosen point of view, contributes significantly to the development of Holden's intricate character. As detailed in the analysis, the non-linear plot structure adeptly mirrors Holden's fractured emotional state, injecting nuanced layers into the exploration of truth and authenticity. Through these literary techniques, Sal-

inger not only constructs a captivating narrative but also draws readers into an intimate connection with Holden's emotional struggles and contemplative journey. *The Catcher in the Rye* remains a cultural touchstone, transcending generations due to its exploration of universal themes. Salinger's role in shaping the evolution of unreliable narrators, as scrutinized in the paper, positions the novel as a noteworthy case study in the historical trajectory of this literary device and in understanding the history of the idea of the "unreliable self."

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