

Introduction to World Literature
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Catcher in the Rye

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Teenage Skaz
(From *The Art of Fiction* by David Lodge)

J. D. Salinger *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Skaz is a rather appealing Russian word (suggesting "jazz" and "scat", as in "scat-singing", to the English ear) used to designate a type of first-person narration that has the characteristics of the spoken rather than the written word. In this kind of novel or story, the narrator is a character who refers to himself (or herself) as "I", and addresses the reader as "you". He or she uses vocabulary and syntax characteristic of colloquial speech, and appears to be relating the story spontaneously rather than delivering a carefully constructed and polished written account. We don't so much read it as listen to it, as to a talkative stranger encountered in a pub or railway carriage. Needless to say, this is an illusion, the product of much calculated effort and painstaking rewriting by the "real" author. A narrative style that faithfully imitated actual speech would be virtually unintelligible, as are transcripts of recorded conversations. But it is an illusion that can create a powerful effect of authenticity and sincerity, of truth-telling.

For American novelists *skaz* was an obvious way to free themselves from the inherited literary



Hi and welcome to today's session, today we are discussing the novel *Catcher in the Rye*, it is a popular and iconic work written by J. D. Salinger he is an American writer, this work was published in 1951 and the novel was an immediate success, an instant success and it has remained very popular with readers across ages and across subculture center, the traditions since then.

And this novel was also significant in the sense that it was banned for a brief time from public schools fearing that this may initiate some kind of untoward actions from the young teenage children and this novel is also considered as the best kind of narrative about the coming of age of an adolescent boy and there is a way in which we can situate this as a bildungsroman though this has a limited canvas compared to the bildungsroman tradition that we are familiar with from the Western classical tradition.

This is a work which has found immense appeal across the reading public in the world and this is clearly seen as one of the most popular novels of contemporary times of the 20th century and even after these decades even after these many decades which have passed between the publication of the novel and the contemporary we find that there are a number of ways in which people try to engage with this work, it could be a scholarly approach, a critical approach it could even be response from an ordinary reader.

So here we do not attempt to (pre) put *Catcher in the Rye* within any particular theoretical framework the intention of this lecture may be in the course of a couple of lectures to introduce this novel to you and discuss some of its salient features and possibly discuss some of its excerpts to be able to (initia an intre) initiate an interest in you and I hope you will be able to go back and read the novel in its original this is a fairly are slender volume *The Catcher in the Rye* to give you a sense of their language which is used in this work.

I would begin by reading the opening lines this is how the work begins if you really want to hear about it the first thing you will 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 the *David Copperfield* kind of crap but I do not feel like going into it if you want to know the truth in the first place that stuff bores me.

And in the second place my parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece if I told you anything pretty personal about them they quite touchy about anything like that especially my father it a nice and to all, I am not saying that but they are also touchy as hell besides I am not going to tell you my whole goddamn autobiography or anything, I just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run down and had to come out here and take it easy, I mean that is all I told D. B. about and he is my brother and all.

He is in Hollywood that is not true far from this crummy place and he comes over and visits me practically every weekend he is going to drive me home when I go home next month maybe, he is got it he just got a Jaguar one of those little English jobs that can do around 200 miles an hour it cost him damn near 4,000 bucks he is got a lot though now, he did not used to he used to be just a regular writer when he was home he wrote this terrific book of short stories *The Secret Goldfish* in case you never heard of him the best one in it was a secret goldfish.

So this is how the narrative goes and if you look at the language it is far from literally the kind of language that one would expect in a literary fiction and I want to draw your attention to the kind of language which is used here before we get to further discussion in the art of fiction why David Lodge he uses this term *Skaz* to talk about J. D. Salinger is to talk about the language used in J. D. Salinger is the *Catcher in the Rye*.

So skaz is an appealing Russian word as you would see David Lodge mister describing it, it suggests jazz and scat as in scat-singing and this is how the term gets coined and it is a first-person narration as you have seen the entire narration is in first-person where the protagonist Holden Caulfield he refers to he narrates his entire story in the first person and interestingly if you have paid attention to except that I have just read out to you, the reader disinterest as you.

So it is an dialogue it is an engagement between the writer and the reader and there is a continuing engagement that the narrator is demanding from the reader and this is there is also contributes to the casual nature of the text as if the writer is trying to have a private dialogue, a private confession with the reader.

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spoken rather than the written word. In this kind of novel or story, the narrator is a character who refers to himself (or herself) as "I", and addresses the reader as "you". He or she uses vocabulary and syntax characteristic of colloquial speech, and appears to be relating the story spontaneously rather than delivering a carefully constructed and polished written account. We don't so much read it as listen to it, as to a talkative stranger encountered in a pub or railway carriage. Needless to say, this is an illusion, the product of much calculated effort and painstaking rewriting by the "real" author. A narrative style that faithfully imitated actual speech would be virtually unintelligible, as are transcripts of recorded conversations. But it is an illusion that can create a powerful effect of authenticity and sincerity, of truth-telling.

For American novelists *skaz* was an obvious way to free themselves from the inherited literary traditions of England and Europe. The crucial impetus was given by Mark Twain. "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*" said Ernest Hemingway - an overstatement, but an illuminating one. Twain's masterstroke was to unite a vernacular colloquial style with a naive, immature narrator, an adolescent boy who is wiser than he knows, whose vision of the adult world has a devastating freshness and honesty. This, for example, is Huck's reaction to different types of Christian faith:

Sometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body's mouth water; but maybe next day Miss Watson would take hold and knock it all down again. I judged I could see there were two Providences and a poor chap would stand considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss



And the vocabulary used is very colloquial, there is nothing profound, there is nothing deliberate about the way the language is used on the other hand we find that we find the language of a teenage boy a disturbed teenage boy rather at work in this entire narration and this know it would appear as if this is not a polished kind of writing but it is also important to bear in mind that a lot of work has perhaps gone into retaining the rawness of this in retaining the spontaneity of narration in retaining the casual vocabulary which is used perhaps the same way in which Holden Caulfield would have narrate that had he been speaking to us had he been delivering this orally and as David Lodge himself puts it needless to say this is an allusion the product of a much calculated effort and painstaking rewriting by the real author.

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authenticity and sincerity of truth telling and this is a kind of craft that launches drawing our attention to in this narration by J. D. Salinger. One also needs to situate this tradition of storytelling.

The style of narration within a historical context particularly within the neutral historical context this is an American text and this is also a way in which the American writers perhaps could move away from the dominant traditions of England and Europe and there is undoubtedly a way in which America inherited much of the literature editions of England there is no doubt about that but at the same time it also needs to be noted and appreciated that the American writers the American literature Edition also moves away significantly also moves away significantly from the English and European traditions.

And this is one of the ways service in a narrative style is deliberately free deliberately liberated from the inherited traditions and this becomes easy to do when the narrator is also and a child rather an adolescent in this case and Mark Twain and he is Huckleberry Finn has already employed this technique like many others Salinger also identifies narrator who is fresh, who can also move away from the adult world in significant ways.

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J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield is a literary descendant of Huck Finn: more educated and sophisticated, the son of affluent New Yorkers, but like Huck a youthful runaway from a world of adult hypocrisy, venality and, to use one of his own favourite words, phoniness. What particularly appeals Holden is the eagerness of his peers to adopt that corrupt grownup behaviour. In the course of the story, Holden takes a girlfriend to a matinee of a Broadway play starring a famous acting couple, Alfred and Lynn Lunt. "Old Sally", and the acquaintance she meets in the lobby during the interval, are described in this extract as acting out a wholly inauthentic type of adult social behaviour.



And here David Lodge also draws our attention to the way in which he uses this technique in Huckleberry Finn and here he talks about the adolescent boy whose vision of the adult world is has a devastating freshness and honesty this is something that we would begin to see in the narration of Holden Caulfield as well and Catcher in the Rye and when Huckleberry Finn

talks about different types of Christian faith this is in Mark Twain text this is how he responds.

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So David Lodge here makes this powerful point that and Janie Salinger is Holden Caulfield is a literary descendent of Huck Finn and this is the way in which we need to locate the significance of this text and also the kind of narrative style and also the kind of plot structure that the Catcher in the Rye follows.

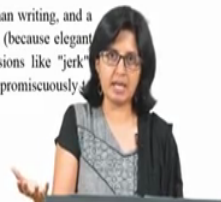
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vernacular colloquial style with a naive, immature narrator, an adolescent boy who is wiser than he knows, whose vision of the adult world has a devastating freshness and honesty. This, for example, is Huck's reaction to different types of Christian faith:

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We shall again come back to Lodge when we look at some of the other narrative techniques but the one thing that I wanted you to keep in mind while we start reading their text is that this is a response from an adolescent boys point of view against the phoniness that is the term that he uses throughout against a phoniness of the adult world, here we find a richer up here we find Holden Caulfield trying to save himself and the other young children from the phoniness of the adult world by rescuing them by not loving them to grow up by he wants he has this ideal of view of the world that he wanted to save the children before they grew up he wants to retain their innocence, retain their innocent identity forever.

Of course towards the end of the novel he realizes that that is not a practical thing and there is a way in which one needs to negotiate those various aspects of reality but throughout the novel we find this fight between Holden Caulfield and the world that he sees outside which according to him is phoney throughout and throughout his experimentations, with his education, with his friendships, with his sexuality, with his relationships we find that he is constantly fighting with the adult world and he also has this fears protectiveness about his younger sister whom he wants to protect from the adult world.

And we will also see you later about what the what this phrase Catcher in the Rye means and what the significance of this phrase is in the context of the novel before we get into the novel we can quickly take a look at some of the fundamental themes which are explored throughout there is a certain sense of a universality that Catcher in the Rye also brings it of course this is based in America, the context is a public school education but there is a kind of universality that the author manages to bring in which we all such see in the discussions of the major themes and motives.

So emulation is something that comes across as extremely significant right from the beginning we get to know from the tone from the attitude that Caulfield adopts that he could not care less there is a kind of cynicism that he has and he feels alienated from the society, from his family, from everything around him. We realize that even the little bit of relation even the little bit of connection that he has with friends or with his siblings he finds it difficult to completely get attached to them.

So he uses alienation as a form of self-protection, we find this getting worse in certain contexts, in certain situations but at the same time we find that he also grows up in the process trying to deal with they are trying to negotiate with it and this alienation is something that he uses as a mask to protect himself mostly against the mostly from the adult world the phoniness of the adult world, from the expectations of the adult world from the mockery and the many fake things which he has to see it is with the adult world.

And we find that he finds strength and being alienated from everything he gets into trouble on account of that but it also remains a strength at various in where this face but at the same time it is also be at the root of all his problems and he finds this process of growing up very painful and it is evident right from the beginning the when the story opens we are being told about how he got thrown out of this prestigious public school and how painful and experience that was dealing with his peers going back home facing the adult world and explaining to

them what exactly got him into this and it is not as if he is a terrible student throughout we find him making an effort but it is just that Caulfield does not seem to fit the bill when it comes to the ticking that right boxes in an adult world.

And this is if we see this as a bildungsroman it is possible to see that through this work as a work which captures the process of a young characters growth into maturity and this is indeed a painful process and he is an unusual protagonist one would say because unlike the other kinds of bildungsroman that here we come across where the central character protagonist has a zestful life and also wants to experience life in it is all eccentricity and in it is all adventurous spirit.

We find Holden Caulfield emerging as a protagonist who is resisting that process he does not want to grow up, he remains he wants remain forever in the world that he is comfortable with for the same reason he is also most comfortable with his younger sister Phoebe and he is resisting the process the growth towards maturity and that makes him an unusual protagonist for a bildungsroman.

And it is in this context that I also want to talk about the significance of the this titles Catcher in the Rye. Holden imagines childhood as this perfect ideal state where children should remain forever and this is he also has this image of in a very idyllic field of Rye in which our children ((14:12) and play and he sees adulthood as a fall as a fatal flaw of fall across the edge of a cliff.

So he wants to be the Catcher in the Rye there are children playing in the Rye in the field they are having a good time, they are running about and he thinks he wants to be the one who stands at the edge and he wants to be the protector of all the children who are there with all their childhood innocence he wants to retain them in that state and help them not to fall over, the falling over from this field over the ends of a cliff that for him is very fatal because that is also fall into adulthood.

So this is how this entire work is themed and structured it is about a Catcher in the Rye who wants to protect the children before they fall into adulthood but of course at the end of the towards the end of the novel Holden Caulfield also realizes that it is not a realistic thing to do that at one needs to grow up and allow each other to grow up as well and the other important theme is the phoniness of the adult world that Caulfield comes across phoniness is perhaps the moves to use term in this novel Catcher in the Rye and it is also Holden is favourite

concepts it can mean multiple things in multiple contexts as you would see when you begin to read the novel.

It can describe a range of things like superficiality or hypocrisy or pretension and mostly the shallowness that he encounters around the world that he sees the adult world that he sees and the complexity of the adult world that is something that really bothers him whether it is in terms of the expectations in school or the expectations at home or the various pitfalls in terms of relationships, he finds it unable to comprehend the complexity that the adult world is situated with it.

And coming to some of the motifs there are certain significant recurring motifs which we find throughout this novel some of the important ones and loneliness, about relationship, about intimacy and sexuality which also brings in the innocence and the naivety in this character and there is also a lot of lying and deception and this is very interesting too because a Caulfield sometimes finds this compulsive need to lie and at the same time we also get it through the process of the narration that.

And in this process we also interestingly way ironically I get you know that even when Holden is lying we do not seem to judge him we do not seem to know any kind of ill feelings towards him it only makes him more human it only shows to the reader as well as to Holden Caulfield that he is also a part of this adult world because there is no way in which you can escape this lying interception, it is also an inherent part of the world within which you are caught.

There are some symbols and images that I would encourage you to be on the lookout for as you are reading this and the most important one being *Catcher in the Rye* there is a song coming through the Rye which gets referred to then there is a reference to Holden's red hunting hat, the Museum of Natural History, the Ducks in the Central Park Lagoon maybe in the following session we will also discuss the context within which these images and symbols appear and the mummies that he sees in the museum about death itself and there is a lot of discussion about death and I find it sometimes comes across as being a very uncanny when Holden Caulfield who is a young adolescent who is barely began his life and he talks about death when he reminisce about death.

And of course they are surely beans record that he buys for his younger sister and Phoebe's notebook the obscene signs that he sees on the wall which again you know he feels is very

harmful for the children he wants to childproof the entire world if you may call it that way he wants to make the world a safer place a perfect childhood experience for all children and this is what makes a Holden Caulfield very endearing to us in spite of the adventures that he goes through in spite of the apparent complexity within which he is also rooted.

And finally towards the end of the novel we find these three major symbols emerging it just has a younger sister Phoebe the (())(18:46) in which she is playing and the gold ring and in these symbols and images we also find the character getting fine tune into a mature person and we find that there is a recurrent way in which these images and symbols they continue to modify the story, they continue to define and redefine the story in multiple ways.

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adult hypocrisy, venality and, to use one of his own favourite words, phoniness. What particularly appals Holden is the eagerness of his peers to adopt that corrupt grownup behaviour. In the course of the story, Holden takes a girlfriend to a matinee of a Broadway play starring a famous acting couple, Alfred and Lynn Lunt. "Old Sally", and the acquaintance she meets in the lobby during the interval, are described in this extract as acting out a wholly inauthentic type of adult social behaviour.

The features of Holden's narrative style that make it sound like speech rather than writing, and a teenager's speech at that, are easy enough to identify. There's a lot of repetition (because elegant variation in vocabulary requires careful thought) especially of slang expressions like "jerk", "bored as hell", "phoney", "big deal", "killed me" and "old" (an epithet applied promiscuously to anything familiar, whatever its age). Like many young people, Holden expresses the strength of his feelings by exaggeration, the device rhetoricians call hyperbole: "smoking himself to death", "You'd have thought they hadn't seen each other in twenty years", "slobbering around". The



Coming back to the narrative style there are a number of a slang expressions that we can find throughout this work expressions like jerk or bored as hell, phoney, big deal, killed me and older is also are used as an epithet to refer to anything familiar regardless of it is age and also certain exaggerated expressions such as smoking himself to death you would have thought they had not seen each other in 20 years slobbering around.

We also find a teenager at work here are teenager using language the way he word with his peers.

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syntax is simple. Sentences are typically short and uncomplicated. Many of them aren't properly formed, lacking a finite verb ("Stricdy Ivy League. Big deal.") There are grammatical mistakes such as speakers often make ("He was die kind of a phoney that have to give themselves room ..."). In longer sentences, clauses are strung together as they seem to occur to the speaker, rather than being subordinated to each other in complex structures.

The informality of Holden's discourse is the guarantee of his spontaneity and authenticity. It is drawn into relief by the well-formed but pretentious small talk of George: "He said the play itself was no masterpiece, but that die Lunts, of course, were absolute angels." This utterance is further downgraded, and made to seem especially stilted, by being rendered as indirect or reported speech, in contrast to Holden's exasperated outburst to Sally, which is quoted directly: "Why don't you go on over and give him a big soul kiss ..."

It is, as I say, easy enough to describe Holden's style of narration, but more difficult to explain



And we find that the syntax is kept fairly simple there are no complex complicated sentences, no profound ideas but at the same time the overall effect is indeed very profound we shall later take a look at some of the important critiques that this novel places in terms of critiquing the public school system of education in terms of engaging with the expectations of education which also forms which also follows a certain kind of a formula.

We find how certain brilliant minds for instance one cannot dismiss Holden Caulfield as a dumb student but he fails to fit within a framework and these are some of the critiques that the novel also raises and the sentences mostly are very short and uncomplicated and some sentences are not even properly formed as you would see.

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It is, as I say, easy enough to describe Holden's style of narration, but more difficult to explain how it holds our attention and gives us pleasure for the length of a whole novel. For, make no mistake, it's the style that makes the book interesting. The story it tells is episodic, inconclusive and largely made up of trivial events. Yet the language is, by normal literary criteria, very impoverished. Salinger, the invisible ventriloquist who speaks to us through Holden, must say everything he has to say about life and death and ultimate values within the limitations of a seventeen-year-old New Yorker's argot, eschewing poetic metaphors, periodic cadences, fine writing of any kind.

Part of the answer is certainly the derisive humour created by the application of Holden's "low" language to the polite pretences of social and cultural life as exhibited by Sally and George. The



And the this course is a very informal throughout and this also speaks volumes about the spontaneity and the authenticity of this that this narration. We tend to take Holden Caulfield more seriously mostly on account of this spontaneous authentic narration, one would still have no way of knowing whether he is telling the truth or not because they also tells us about the various instances where he lied sometimes for no reason.

Regardless of that there is an honesty which comes through at least Holden Caulfield as presenting to us the self that the reader wants to know that he would ideally want to read it to know and this is extremely important given that he is a teenage boy there is a there are a range of expectations within which he is working, there is an anxiety of performance and he also wants to present his best self that is evident throughout and the painstaking way in which the author presents, the teenage boys confusions and struggles that suddenly praiseworthy and this is something that he reaches mostly on account of the kind of language that is used, we find language the form in which this work is present in getting a lot of attention here.

So as we begin to wrap this lecture I also want to draw your attention to and the significance of the language used here, the form in which this is present in more than the kind of ideas that the this novels tries to get across I am not saying that the ideas are not important but more than that at various levels what plays a significant role here is the mode of narration, the narrative technique, the language used which is closer to an adolescent word which also becomes more powerful, which also becomes more effective and the critique is also launched from that space which the adolescent boy inhabits.

The critique against publication public system of education, the critic against the overt and sometimes unreasonable expectations of the adult world and how an innocent helpless boy tries to fight these complications all by himself the helplessness that he feels though technically speaking he has a family, he has siblings, he has a system of education within which he is also placed the helplessness that he feels and what insanity that it drives him through those are some of the points that what makes sense that would make perfect sense I would say only when this is voiced from the through the language that the adolescent boy uses.

And throughout the story there is an episodic nature to it, it is a linear narrative but there are certain episodes there is a jump from one episode to the other and this makes a and also a lot of trivial instances are discussed as David Lodge also points out and in his words the language is by normal literary criteria very impoverished. Salinger the invisible ventriloquist

who speaks to us through Holden must say everything he has to say about life in death and ultimate values within the limitations of a 17 year old New Yorkers argot, eschewing poetic metaphors, periodic cadences, fine writing of any kind.

He relies a true challenge of this writing I would say when you get familiar with the novel you are also begin to see a hang of get the get this point across what David Lodge is trying to make here that this is fine writing achieved in a very different way, this is a (())(24:07) achieved without really using an elegant eloquent language of an impoverished language as he would say and what this impoverished language seems to achieve seems to access is perhaps the true test of genius and the true test of the supreme (craftm) craftsmanship that Salinger also has.

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Part of the answer is certainly the derisive humour created by the application of Holden's "low" language to the polite pretences of social and cultural life as exhibited by Sally and George. The formal incorrectness of his English is also a source of humour - the funniest line in the extract is, "He probably broke every toe in her body", a distortion of "every bone in her body", and another hyperbolic expression. A further reason is that Holden's language implies more than it states. In this extract, for instance, there is clearly an unacknowledged theme of jealousy on Holden's part, towards the rival male figure of George, much as Holden claims to despise his status-conferring Ivy-League clothes and suave manners. The pathos of Holden Caulfield's situation, here and throughout the book, is more effective for not being explicitly spoken.

In the last analysis, though, there's something surprisingly poetic about this prose, a subtle manipulation of the rhythms of colloquial speech which makes it an effortless pleasure to read



So when we come back to discuss this novel in a next session, I hope you will be more familiar with the text, with a plot and also with at least some excerpts from this novel and we should continue to take a look at some of the significant episodes and also how that validates certain points that Holden Caulfield is seems to stand for and also how such a kind of writing which seems very personal and private but at the same time it has the power to initiate discussions about larger macro things, about larger systems such as an institution, such as a system of education itself.

So with that note we wrap up today is session and I look forward to seeing in the next session.