

Stylistic techniques: Holden Caulfield and Harry Potter

Throughout the novel Salinger creates a consistent and identifiable 'voice' for his narrator Holden Caulfield.

In the piece below, Justine Windsor has recreated this style to describe events taken from *Harry Potter*.

This demonstrates how important the stylistic techniques that an author uses are; it also shows how the voice created in a text can colour the reader's interpretation of the events described.

Dumbledore's death in the style of *The Catcher in the Rye* Wednesday July 13, 2005

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Boy, the whole thing was a bastard. If you really want to hear about it, what happened was it was the day of the Quidditch match with Slytherin. I was as anxious as hell; I was already all worried about what crumby thing old Voldemort was going to come up with next. I mean, his goddam death eaters had already killed my godfather, Sirius, but I don't want to talk about that. It's too depressing.

Anyway, old Ron and me fly on to the pitch. The crowd below us are all going crazy. Then I fly into Malfoy, the ferret faced little sonuvadeatheater. He started griping about me grassing up his old man. He just about drove me crazy.

"You're a goddamn moron, Malfoy," I screamed at him. I was about to hex him, but Ron held me back. He kills me, old Ron, he really does. You'd really like him.

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See: <http://books.guardian.co.uk/harrypotter/story/0,,1527754,00.html> for the entire piece.

Task One

Identify the techniques used by Windsor in this piece to re-create the voice of Holden Caulfield. Record your ideas by underlining and annotating the text.

Try to pinpoint the techniques that make the piece sound very 'spoken':

- use of colloquial language (slang)
- use of first person viewpoint
- use of dialogue
- digressions
- use of taboo language (swear words)
- use of informal connectives/ fillers
- exaggeration
- vague expressions
- use of repetition

Task Two

Write about your walk to school this morning in the style of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Your piece should be 200 to 250 words long.

Once you have finished you should highlight and label the techniques that you have used in your own piece of writing.

Think carefully about the effect that you have attempted to create. How successful do you think you have been?

Extension task:

Swap your work with a partner. Read your partner's piece and see how many of the bullet pointed techniques they have used. What is particularly effective in their writing? What doesn't quite work? Be prepared to share your findings with the rest of the class.

Discussion point:

Now that you've attempted to write in Salinger's style, you'll have a good idea of the difficulties associated with it and the pluses and minuses of writing in this way. Did you find it at all restrictive? If so, how? What might be the disadvantages of trying to construct a whole novel in this style and tone?