

Appendix C, Artifact 16

Nem Close Reading, Stages 4-6

Passage

“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, and you didn’t know Allie.” (pg. 39)

Stage 4: Grammar, Punctuation, and Tense

Grammar:

- The only pronouns in this passage that aren’t “I” is “Allie” and “you”, and that only happens at the very last sentence. He starts off talking about himself, and continues to do so until that last moment where he mentions “Allie”, his brother, and “you”, the reader.
- This gives the illusion that he’s there talking to us. He went on and on about what happened to him, but in the end, acknowledged that he’s sharing all of this to us instead of just thinking out loud to himself.

Punctuation:

- All of the sentences are long; many times, there were two to three separate ideas that could be separated into two to three succinct sentences, but instead were forced into one long sentence.
- For Holden, who usually narrates as if he was casually talking to us, short sentences like “It kills me. It really does.” and “I get quite a bang out of that.” are in the norm. To read this entire passage and find none of his characteristic short sentences shows us a different side to Holden, a more brooding, serious, contemplative side. The length of all the sentences in this passage gives us the impression that he’s admitting us inside his thoughts, instead of casually narrating like he does with all other events in his life.

Tense:

- Every verb in this passage is written in the past tense, the only exception to this being the word “admit”, where he briefly switches into the future tense.
- The fact that nearly every action word in this passage, save for one, is written in the past tense shows us to what extent that he still lives in his past; his use of the future tense to tell us that he’ll admit to his past stupidity shows how, even now, he has not yet moved on from his shock. He *will* admit to it, sometime in the future, but has not admitted it yet, nor is he able to right at this moment, because he still hasn’t moved on from his regretful past.

Stage 5: Larger Themes

- In class, we discussed several large themes prevalent throughout the book; it is these themes, specifically regret and inability to move on from the past, that supplements our understanding of this passage. We can understand this passage better when we read it with an understanding of Holden’s inability to move on from regret.
- As we see throughout the book, Allie is often linked to his deepest regrets, and this passage is no exception; from the constant usage of past tense, the unnatural length of

sentences, and the words used in this passage, we can understand how his inability to move on due to regret for his past relations with his brother factors into all of it.

Stage 6: Contribution to Major Themes

- This passage builds on the larger themes of regret and inability to move on; through this, we are able to see Holden as a more sensitive individual, quite the opposite of how he introduced himself in the first chapter. We see that his inability to move on from the past or cope with it is not just limited to this passage, but in all the times he talks about Allie and about Jane too; in talking to himself and telling “Allie” to come shoot with him, constantly asking Stradlater to ask Jane “if she still keeps her kings in the back row”, and later punching Stradlater when he refuses to answer him if he had sex with her, we can better understand these events when we see it through the lens of the larger theme of regret. For Allie, it is regret for not having spent as much time as he could have before he lost him. For Jane, it is regret for not making a move, confessing his true feelings, when he had a chance. Holden throughout the book is unable to separate himself from the past and constantly regrets, and this passage serves to help me see that as I was reading.