

Down at the Dinghy

Down at the dinghy is another one of many great short stories written by Jerome David Salinger. It is based upon a relationship between a run away child; and his parents who try and reason with the boy for a reason why. Although the relationship is perceived to start on the wrong foot it most certainly concludes with a light-hearted ending.

The novel is mainly based around a child aged four. The problem with this child is that he prefers to 'flee from his natural habitat.' For unknown circumstances we see that the boy is under a lot of stress of some kind as he seems to be a very melancholy young soul for a child of that age. This maybe due to the location that the house is situated in. It can clearly be seen by the passages that the boy lives in an area in which there are no children of his age, and generally at all. This may have a toll on the boy as children require some kind of friend of a young age that has the same type of developing understanding so that they can perform various activities that a child of that certain age, and that certain age only perform. I believe this is the case as seen right at the beginning of the novel. The maid, Mildred Snell is complaining about an incident where the boy 'Lionel,' was hidden beneath the table, thus his presence going unnoticed by her. This is why she accidentally manages to step upon the boy's hand, which is starting to drive her 'loony.' Not only is it her, but indeed I suspect that the child is also being driven insane with the presence of another child missing from his life. This can be seen by the way in which the locations that he flees to seem to be related to that of prime 'hangouts' of young children. This is such as the park and the mall, which is significant as shown in the novel as,

'The mall's where all the kids go skating' in New York,' Sandra said very sociably to Mrs Snell. 'The kids and all.' This quote shows that Lionel is yearning for another childlike influence, this is why he flees to where he knows there are other children that he can communicate and socialise with.

The second most important or significant character is most definitely Boo Boo Tannenbaum, the mother of the Lionel, and a suspected Indian American, living in a stately home, as the maid would clearly suggest. Boo Boo is a character that has a great impact upon the reader for the way in which she is much organised in her handle the young boy even though he frequently runs away from home. Lionel has been running away from home since he has been of two and a half years of age. This is a very young age to start to run away from home. This is an age group in which children are still attempting to talk, or talk understandably. Even more walk with confidence, whereas this young child seems to be able to run away from home at the age of two and a half! This is an astonishing age at which to begin to run away from your home at, as at two and a half, children still do not have the courage to be alone, or remain in the dark. Also this is an incredible feat as described by her mother as he manages to run away to the park for the night. This is utterly strange for a child of that age, as I remember one as a child would never even ponder a trip into the park alone, especially at night. Although Boo Boo tries to cope with this fact as well as she can, as many times; repeatedly, she asks the child why in fact he decides to keep running away from home. He on the other hand makes up odd reasons such as a child called him 'stinky,' and promises to never run away again. The one trait thought that the mistress Boo Boo does possess (as did Seymour from previous novels), is the ability to communicate with children well. This is done by both the characters places themselves in a child's shoes and attempting to act as one would. This is done with great success by both parties and I suspect a reason for this. In my view Boo Boo

Tannenbaum is in fact the descendant of the same Seymour that we know and cherish from the other short stories of Salinger. I believe this due to the goggles that are stated in the novel to belong to a former, 'Uncle Seymour.' This is why I believe that Boo Boo may have actually picked up these child understandings from him. This is why she is able to play along with the games that Lionel creates but also manufactures her own individual ones. This can be seen as in 'A perfect day for a Bananafish,' when Seymour tells Sybil about Bananafish and she plays along. As does Boo Boo when she tells Lionel about the various Admiral Bugle calls, which entices Lionel to join in as well as the lure of the key chain that is similar to the one that his daddy keeps. In the end with these little diversions she manages to penetrate the dinghy that the boy has been sat in throughout the entire novel and then also manages to make him happy after he was in a gloomy and downhearted mood. She is able to do this by infiltrating his mind and acting just like a child would and doing and giving him all the things he likes such as playing games with him and buying him pickles. This is why the complex relationship between the mother and son is so intense due to all of these small factors in the play that just generate the plot into a much deeper and more solid text to understand, as are most of Salinger's writings.

J.D. Salinger is most rightly one of the best writers of short stories in all known histories with his soft text yet intense plots that form writings that create such an intense impact upon the reader. This is why Salinger is so popular as a writer...due to his odd style of omnipotent writings.