

MLA Lesson Plan

“TEENAGERS IN DANGER: gli adolescenti a rischio in “*The Catcher in the Rye*” di J.D. Salinger ”

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STEP 1: IL GENERE LETTERARIO ED IL CONTENUTO

Activity 1: Arousing Motivation

Il docente scrive alla lavagna il titolo del primo brano “**The secret goldfish**” e chiede agli studenti di rispondere alle seguenti domande di previsione sul contenuto del testo.

What does this title “THE SECRET GOLDFISH” refer to?

- children’s literature
- horror story
- a fable with talking animals

The story deals with

- a boy who keeps his goldfish in the bowl secretly, because their parents don’t want him to keep it
- a goldfish kept in a cage which manages to run away
- a goldfish stolen from a pet shop

Activity 2: Presentazione del primo brano “*The secret goldfish*”

Prima di leggere il testo il docente chiede di sottolineare nel brano i vocaboli e le espressioni che gli alunni non conoscono.

“*The secret goldfish*”

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll 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 that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don’t feel like going into it. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They’re nice and all – I’m not saying that – but they’re also touchy as hell. Besides, I’m not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything.

I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas before I go pretty run-down and had to come out *here* and take it easy. I mean that's all I told D.B. about, and he's my brother and all. He's in Hollywood. That isn't too far from this crummy place, and he comes over and visits me practically every week-end. He's going to drive me home when I go home next month maybe. He just got a Jaguar. One of those little English jobs that can do around two hundred miles an hour. It cost him damn near four thousand bucks. He's got a lot of dough now. He didn't use 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 "The secret Goldfish". It was about this little kid that wouldn't let anybody look at his goldfish because he'd bought it with his own money. It killed me. Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the *movies*. Don't even mention *them* to me.

Activity 3: Analysis

Vocabulary

Match the following words from the text with their Italian equivalents.

1. Lousy childhood	a. dollari
2. Kind of crap	b. dannato, maledetto
3. That stuff bores me	c. un sacco di piccioli
4. haemorrhages apiece	d. infarti
5. goddam	e. schifosa infanzia
6. bucks	f. tipo di merda
7. a lot of dough	g. questa roba mi scoccia

Understanding

Choose the right answer.

Who is narrating the story?

a. D.B.	b. Holden	c. Holden's younger brother
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Who is D.B.?

a. Holden's little brother	b. Holden's father	c. Holden's older brother
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What is D.B.?

a. A writer for the movie industry	b. A journalist in a newspaper in Hollywood	c. A millionaire
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Interpreting

Answer the following questions.

What is the narrator's opinion about his parents?

.....

What happened to him around last Christmas?

.....

What's the narrator's opinion about his brother?

.....

What is "The secret goldfish" about?

.....

Activity 4: Interpretazione dei rapporti interpersonali

Il docente chiede agli alunni di individuare nel testo le espressioni che indicano:

- la condizione di infelicità di Holden;
- l'opinione negativa che ha dei propri genitori;
- il sentimento di amore/odio che prova nei confronti del fratello D.B.

Presenta una tabella con le espressioni fra le quali scegliere:

my lousy childhood	my parents were occupied
my parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece	they're also touchy as hell.
Goddam autobiography	I go pretty run-down
he comes over and visits me practically every week-end.	He wrote this terrific book of short stories
Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute.	

STEP 2: HOLDEN CAULFIELD E LA SUA DEBOLEZZA PSICOLOGICA

Activity 1: Arousing motivation

Il docente presenta un breve filmato su una partita di football americano. Chiede ai suoi studenti in che modo il filmato possa collegarsi alla vicenda di Holden narrata nel primo brano e chiede di fare delle previsioni.

- Holden has been an American football champion
- He loves watching American football matches on TV
- His brother Allie is an American football champion

Activity 2: Presentazione del secondo brano "My brother Allie"

Il docente chiede agli studenti di sottolineare nel brano i vocaboli che non conoscono.

"My brother Allie"

I had to write a composition for Stradlater. I put on my pyjamas and bathrobe and my old hunting hat, and started writing the composition. The thing was, I couldn't think of a room or a house or anything to describe the way Stradlater said he had to have. I'm not too crazy about describing rooms and houses anyway. So what I did, I wrote about my brother Allie's baseball mitt. It was a very descriptive subject. It really was.

My brother Allie had this left-handed fielder's mitt, he was left-handed. He's dead now.

He got leukemia and died when we were up in Maine, in 1946. You'd have liked him.

He was two years younger than I was, but he was about fifty times as intelligent. His teachers were always writing letters to my mother, telling what a pleasure it was having a boy like Allie in their class...

But it wasn't just that he was the most intelligent member in the family. He was also the nicest, in lots of ways. He never got mad at anybody. People with red hair are supposed to get mad very easily, but Allie never did, and he had very red hair. God, he was a nice kid, though. He used to laugh so hard at something he thought at the dinner table that he just about fell off his chair. I was only thirteen and they were going to have me psychoanalysed and all, because I broke all the windows in the garage. I don't blame them. I really don't. 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. My hand still hurts me when it rains and all, and I can't make a real fist anymore – not a tight one, I mean – but outside of that I don't care much. I'm not going to be a goddam surgeon or a violinist or anything away.

Activity 3: Analysis

▪ **Vocabulary**

Match the following words from the text with their Italian equivalents.

1. Mitt	a. mancino
2. Left-handed	b. stringere il pugno
3. Goddam	c. arrabbiarsi
4. For the hell of it	d. dannato
5. Get mad at	e. mazza
6. Make a real fist	f. nessun motive

▪ **Understanding**

Why is the narrator unable to write his composition?

.....

Who was Allie?

.....

▪ **Interpreting**

What are the expressions that reveal his deep affection for Allie?

.....

How did Allie behave when they were at dinner?

.....

What was the narrator's reaction like when his brother died?

.....

What did their parents decide to do?

.....

Activity 4: Interpretazione dei rapporti interpersonali

Il docente chiede agli alunni di individuare nel testo le espressioni che indicano:

- la stima e l'ammirazione che Holden nutriva per il fratello;
- le reazioni di Holden in seguito alla disgrazia;

Presenta una tabella con le espressioni fra le quali scegliere:

You'd have liked him.	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	I hardly didn't even know I was doing it
His teachers were always writing letters to my mother, telling what a pleasure it was having a boy like Allie in their class.	he was about fifty times as intelligent.
he was the most intelligent member in the family.	he was a nice kid

STEP 3: HOLDEN E LA SUA CONDIZIONE DI INFERIORITA'

Activity 1: presentazione del brano "Old Phoebe"

Il docente chiede agli studenti di sottolineare nel brano i vocaboli che non conoscono.

"Old Phoebe"

You should see her. You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life. She's really smart. I mean she's had all A's ever since she started school. As a matter of fact, I'm the only dumb one in the family. My brother D.B.'s a writer and all, and my brother Allie, the one that died, that I told you about, was a wizard. I'm the only really dumb one. But you ought to see old Phoebe. She has this sort of red hair, a little bit like Allie's was, that's very short in the summer-time. She's only ten. She's quite skinny like me, but nice skinny. Roller-skate skinny. You'd like her. I mean if you tell old Phoebe something, she knows exactly what the hell you're talking about. I mean you can even take her anywhere with you. The only trouble is, she's a little too affectionate sometimes. She's very emotional for a child. She really is.

Something else she does, she writes books all the time. Only, she doesn't finish them.

They're all about some kid named Hazel Weatherfield – only old Phoebe spell it "Hazle".

Old Hazle Weatherfield is a girl detective. She's supposed to be an orphan, but her old man keeps showing up. Her old man's always a 'tall attractive gentleman about 20 years of age'. That kills me. Old Phoebe. And when Allie and I were having some conversation about things in general, old Phoebe's be listening. Sometimes you'd forget she was around, because she was such a little kid, but *she'd* let you know. She'd interrupt you all the time. She'd give Allie or I a push or something, and say, 'Who? Who said that? Bobby or the lady?'. And we'd tell her who said it, and she'd say 'Oh', and go right on listening and all. She killed Allie, too. I mean he liked her too. She's ten now, and not such a tiny little kid anymore, but she still kills everybody – everybody with any sense, anyway.

Activity 2: Analysis

▪ Vocabulary

Match the following words from the text with their Italian equivalents.

1. she's had all A's	a. un mago, un genio
2. The only dumb one	b. Suo padre
3. A wizard	c. Pelle ed ossa
4. Quite skinny	d. Aveva tutti voti altissimi
5. Her old man	e. L'unico stupid
6. Keeps showing up	f. Con una certa sensibilità
7. With any sense	g. Spunta all'improvviso

▪ Understanding

Is Phoebe intelligent? Quote from the text.

.....

How old is she? Is she more mature than her brother or not

.....

Does she love writing? What does she like writing about?

.....

▪ **Interpreting**

How is Phoebe described? List here all the adjectives used for her physical appearance and her character.

.....

Holden loves Phoebe and this is evident from the way he describes her. Can you find any similarities with the description Holden does of his brother Allie? Is the tone the same?

.....

Activity 3: Interpretazione dei rapporti interpersonali

Il docente chiede agli alunni di individuare nel testo le espressioni che indicano:

- l'ammirazione che Holden prova per sua sorella Phoebe;
- gli elementi che aiutano a comprendere che si tratti di una ragazzina.

Presenta una tabella con le espressioni fra le quali scegliere:

She's really smart. I mean she's had all A's ever since she started school.	She'd interrupt you all the time
Something else she does, she writes books all the time. Only, she doesn't finish them.	She's very emotional for a child.
She's supposed to be an orphan, but her old man keeps showing up.	I mean if you tell old Phoebe something, she knows exactly what the hell you're talking about.

Quali affermazioni presenti nel testo testimoniano che Holden si percepisca come la pecora nera della famiglia?

.....
.....

Al termine delle attività di analisi dei tre testi presentati, il docente potrà presentare agli studenti un "homework", in cui si propone di fornire un riferimento più completo al romanzo oggetto di studio.

Si potrà dunque scegliere di presentare il riassunto della trama dell'opera e un tratteggio dei personaggi principali da leggere, con domande di comprensione del brano.

STEP 4: CONCLUSIONI CONTESTO E CO-TESTO

Secondo Julia Kristeva (*"Semeiotiké. Ricerche per una semanalisi"*, Feltrinelli, 1978) la lettura di ogni testo va inquadrata in due ambiti:

- Il **contesto**: ovvero il periodo storico in cui l'opera è ambientata che fornisce riferimenti non solo storici ma culturali, sociali, artistic
- Il **co-testo**, ovvero il "dialogo con altri testi": con questo termine la linguista intende riferirsi ad altre opere letterarie dello stesso periodo di altre epoche storiche, che presenti soggetti, storie, personaggi, sentimenti simili a quelli ritrovati nell'opera analizzata.

Activity 1: Group discussion

Il docente, dunque, può chiedere agli studenti divisi per gruppi di fare una ricerca su Internet o su libri di storia per:

- inquadrare il periodo in cui "The Catcher in the Rye" di J. D. Salinger è ambientato, ovvero gli anni Cinquanta del Novecento.
- raccogliere informazioni sulla realtà adolescenziale di quegli anni (*le tipologie delle teen tribes, il modo di vestire, la musica ascoltata, i gusti degli adolescenti degli anni Cinquanta*).

Ne seguirà, dunque, una group discussion in cui i diversi gruppi presenteranno agli altri il risultato delle proprie ricerche.

Activity 2: Writing

Per quel che riguarda il co-testo, il docente può chiedere agli studenti di scrivere un breve saggio che tracci un parallelo con altri "teenagers in danger" della letteratura, andando a pescare nelle letture fatte finora. Si potrà, per esempio, spaziare dal "Pinocchio" di Collodi a "Tom Sawyer ed Huckleberry Finn" di Mark Twain etc.

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