

THE ROLE OF MEMORY AND REFLECTION IN “ON THE ROAD”

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Abstract: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is a masterful work that captures the spirit of the Beat Generation through travel, companionship, and the search for meaning in post-war America. The novel includes memories and reflections on the main themes that characterize the path of the main character Sal Paradise. This article explores how memory influences characters' views of their travels and encounters along the route. It also explores how memory influences character development and thematic depth, and sheds light on the complexity of identity and experience in the novel.

Keywords: *memories, reflection, self-discovery, identity, Beat Generation, nostalgia, motives*

Introduction

Jack Kerouac's classic 1957 novel *On the Road* captures the spirit of the American counterculture in the years following World War II. This article explores the evolution of the novel's characters, particularly Sal Paradise, and how memory and introspection relate to broader themes of despair, existential exploration, and self-discovery. Examining the structure, character's introspection, and memory use of novel, this paper investigates their impact on the narrative, philosophical, and spiritual elements as well as their application to solve generational concerns.

Main part

“*On the Road*” written by Jack Kerouac is often credited with describing the spontaneous and adventurous spirit of the Beat Generation. This work is about the travel of main protagonist Sal Paradise and his companions across America in search of freedom, meaning and self-identity. Although the physical journey lies at the heart of the novel, the deeper philosophical matters are explored through the character’s

memories and reflection. In this novel, memory means not only just remembering the past, but also a device for understanding the individual, experience, and addressing existential questions. Reflection functions to interpret life experiences on the road and coming to terms with the complexities of self-awareness.

Jack Kerouac starts the novel with the recollection of Dean Moriarty and his coming to the life of Sal Paradise: “I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up and my feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road.” (1957)

Nostalgia and the past

Sal Paradise's writings evoke nostalgia for simpler times, contrasting idealized memories with the complexities of his present situation, allowing readers to understand his motivations and inner surroundings.

Memory: A Storytelling Tool

On the Road's nonlinear structure captures the flux of memory. Sal's recollections merge with his current experiences, forming a tapestry of past and present. This narrative method focuses on how memories impact cognition and contribute to the development of broader themes of freedom and self-discovery.

Impact of Experiences

Sal's encounters on the road—friends, strangers, scenery—are important considerations. Each trip serves as motivation for personal growth and reflection. Encounters in Denver and San Francisco, for example, emphasize the power of travel, prompting him to question his identity and aspirations. What gives Kerouac his strength is the vividness of his memories. He remembers the names of places, the weather, details of sunrises and the peculiar comments of random companions. “He made all the characters and events a reflection of his own feelings.” (Benenaula & López, 2010, p. 30)

The road is a real and metaphorical search for meaning, but the rationale suggests that the answers they seek may be found in understanding their own memories and

experiences rather than at the end of the road. Kerouac's depiction of memory and reflection prompts readers to ponder the nature of the search for identity and the elusive nature of personal fulfillment. Sal's relationship with Dean reflects her personal needs and motivations, contrasting religion's freedom with her desire for stability and connection. The novel critiques postwar America's unrestricted possibility, highlighting the conflict between freedom and self-fulfillment.

Conclusion

"On the Road" by Jack Kerouac explores themes of self-discovery, freedom, and existential exploration through the use of recollection and reflections as narrative devices. While introspection helps characters acquire self-awareness, goals, motives, and frustrations, recollection helps them establish their identities and reconcile their experiences. His observations enrich Sal Paradise's journey by enabling readers to comprehend the intricacies of both his character and the greater human condition. The importance of memory in identity formation and its literary impact are highlighted in this work.

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