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“The Role of a First-Person Narrator when Dealing with Mental Illness”

This thesis examines how the first-person narrator alters reader perception in a story about mental illness. The role genre plays with the first-person narrator when talking about mental illness is also important when distinguishing how it can affect the perspective. Therefore, I included both fiction and non-fiction texts. The three texts work together to show how the first-person narrator allows access for the reader. The novel, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, uses the epistolary form to provide a subjective experience for the reader about what the protagonist is going through. The novel, *The Bell Jar*, on the other hand, uses reactions from other people around the main character to emphasize how the main character is perceived by others. The memoir, *Girl, Interrupted*, takes other people’s perspective of the main character one step further by adding doctors’ reports and other documents as a more objective approach to the story. With this analysis, I have concluded that the first-person narrator allows an access to the thoughts and perspective of someone dealing with a mental illness in a way that a third-person narrator cannot. The creative component then, told in third person from Dr. Hinch, a character that is observing his son dealing with mental illness, works to show the distance that a third-person narrator creates for the reader. Dr. Hinch can’t offer intimate access to what his son is going through because he is not close enough to the situation. This third-person narration works to juxtapose the critical component to show how important the first-person narrator is to allow the reader access to someone dealing with a mental illness.