

Oisín Hyland

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Giknis

In “The Road” by Cormac McCarthy, the author uses multiple different literary techniques to keep the reader interested and captivated. From the symbolism, imagery, and vocabulary used, McCarthy utilizes these techniques to encapsulate the fast-moving and action-packed nature of the story.

One of the earliest signs of these techniques is on page 23 where both the man and the boy find a supermarket on the outskirts of the city, the narrator states, “They went back through the store again looking for another cart but there were none. By the door were two soft drink machines that had been tilted over into the floor and opened with a pry bar. Coins everywhere in the ash. He sat and ran his hand around in the works of the gutted machines and in the second one it closed over a cold metal cylinder. He withdrew his hand slowly and sat looking at a Coca-Cola.” After finding the Coke the Man gives it to the boy saying, “It’s a treat. For you.” Eventually, the boy asks, “It’s because I won’t ever get to drink another one, isn’t it?”, the man responds “Ever’s a long time.” McCarthy chose to use Coca-Cola as a piece of symbolism due to how renowned a can of Coke is in today’s society. The idea of a boy not knowing what the drink is, symbolizes to the readers how far removed the characters are from the world that we live in today. It would be unheard of for a kid in 2022 to not know what a Coke is.

In addition to McCarthy’s use of symbolism, he uses bleak and dim imagery or vocabulary to set the mood of “The Road”. On page 78 he writes, “The water buckled boards sloping away into the yard. Soggy volumes in a bookcase. He took one down and opened it and then put it back. Everything is damp. Rotting. In a drawer, he found a candle. No way to light it. He put it in his pocket. He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it.” McCarthy specifically chose to use words like,

sloping, soggy, damp, rotting, gray light, darkness, and sorrow to make sure the reader feels where the book takes place, a post-apocalyptic, lawless world. If McCarthy was to not use this selection of words throughout the story, the reader would simply not understand the world he was trying to create.

Cormac McCarthy's use of symbolism, imagery, and vocabulary plays a major part in the way that readers see his 2007 Pulitzer prize-winning novel, "The Road". He does an excellent job of using these literary devices to better display and illustrate his book in a way that not many other authors do.