

# Holden's relationships with females in "the catcher in the rye" essay sample

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## **Holden's Relationships with Females in "The Catcher in the Rye" Essay Sample**

During this essay, I will be discussing how Salinger presents Holden's relationships with females as throughout the novel he meets several females; however Holden meets many different characters in the novel, both male and female and while many of his experiences with the opposite sex end up being negative. Furthermore the novel 'The Catcher in the Rye' is set around the 1950s and is narrated by a young man named Holden Caulfield. Holden is not specific about his location while he's telling the story, but he makes it clear that he is undergoing treatment in a mental hospital or sanatorium. The events he narrates take place in the few days between the end of the school term and Christmas.

Furthermore certain vocabulary is used throughout the novel several times for instance word "Phoniness" which is probably the most famous word from The Catcher in the Rye as it is used commonly by Holden. As Holden explains that adults are inevitably phonies, and, what's worse, they can't see their own phoniness. Phoniness, for Holden, stands as an emblem of everything that's wrong in the world around him and provides an excuse for him to withdraw into his cynical loneliness.

In addition Holden's encounter with Sunny, when it becomes clear that he is unable to handle a sexual encounter; the end of his date with Sally, when he tries to get her to run away with him; and his departure from Mr. Antolini's apartment, when he begins to question his characteristic mode of judging other people

Holden gets along well with Phoebe; his sister and the two nuns who Holden meets in Grand Central Station. He also had a strong bond with Mr Antolini; however Holden in my opinion misunderstood the concept of Mr Antolini.

He gets on with his sister Phoebe Caulfield because they relate on many subjects such as literature and their brother Allie who died of leukaemia which brought Phoebe and Holden even closer, Phoebe is also the only person Holden really talks about Allie to. Phoebe is nine years old so her and Holden have an age gap of seven years which helps Holden relate with her because he finds it difficult to relate to people of his own age, Holden often takes on a paternal role with Phoebe because he sees himself as her protective big brother. Holden says ' she kills me', meaning Phoebe makes him laugh and he does not consider her as a phoney because of this.

Holden also meets two nuns in Grand Central Station and gets on with them very well because again there is a significant age gap of at least forty-five years and no prospect of sex at all. Holden and the nuns chat comfortably because one of the nuns " taught English" which is Holden's favourite subject and they talk about literature and the nuns ask Holden ' what have you read this year' which shows they are interested in Holden and Holden likes people who are interested in him and like him because their aren't many of them, he tells them about the books he has read and Holden finds the nuns charitable and generous.

So all the female characters who Holden has positive experiences with all have several things in common; there is a significant age gap between them

and Holden, Holden does not think that there is any prospect of sex between them and they like him so he likes them and does not consider them to be phonies.

The female characters whom Holden does not get along with are Sally Hayes; a friend who he goes ice skating with, Sonny the prostitute.

When Holden was in the Lavender Hotel he arranged for a prostitute to come to his room, the prostitute was called Sonny and ' she was around my age' said Holden. There was obviously a huge prospect of sex and Holden even commented that he ' could get some practice on her' which also supports the idea that Holden just thinks of women as sexual objects. When the prostitute came in Holden was too embarrassed to have sex with her and lied about having ' an operation very recently.... it's in the spinal canal' which excused him from having sex. He also found it very difficult and struggled to talk to her and ' tried to keep the old conversation going', Sonny got annoyed with him and was shouting " what the heck did you tell.... Maurice you wanted a girl for'", she eventually left irritated at Holden and they didn't have sex but Holden still gave her some money.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that Holden cannot relate with females of his own age was when he and Sally Hayes went ice skating and Holden ' felt like marrying her the minute he saw her' which is a bit far fetched seeing as he has only just met her. Then Holden suggests the idea that him and Sally run away and live on a ranch in Colorado and when Sally is not sure Holden

starts shouting at her and Sally is confused saying 'one minute you scream at me and the next you' and then Holden interrupts her shouting "no!."

Holden even admits they 'both hated each others guts by that time' and then says to Sally "you give me a royal pain in the ass" which in the 1950's is one of the worst insults there can be, he even makes her cry and minutes later "she was still sort of crying."

In conclusion this proves that Holden finds it very difficult to get along with females and all of his experiences with the opposite sexes who are roughly the same age as him, with a prospect of sex and who Holden thinks are phonies are all negative. On the other hand he has extremely strong and affectionate relationship with females that have a huge age gap like Phoebe and the nuns. Furthermore Holden believes that girls 'can drive you crazy, they really can.'