

How i became me



To begin, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D.

Salinger is unique. The novel is written from the perspective of a teenager who lives in New York in the 1950's. From the context in the beginning and the end of the book, " I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy" (page 1), " I could probably tell you what I did after I went home, and how I got sick and all, and what school I'm supposed to go to next fall, after I get out of here, but I don't feel like it" (page 213), we can infer that Holden Caulfield, the aforementioned teenager, is in a mental hospital. However, he tells the story through flashback of a three-day period sometime before Christmas the year before. This is unusual because most novels cover much more time than three days. This is one reason why this novel is so unique. Although the novel is spread over only three days, we learn so much about the protagonist, and many other characters, because all Holden's thoughts and feelings, especially about other characters, during these three days is portrayed, nothing is left out.

My favorite part of the book is probably Holden's interaction with and description of Ackley in Chapter 3. This is probably my favorite part of the book because I can relate to the protagonist in that I have to put up with my neighbor who fits the description of Ackley perfectly. Ackley is a rather nosy fellow who comes over through a window and without permission. He plays with all of Holden's possessions, and then puts them back in different locations. He cuts his nails all over Holden's room, stands in his reading light to talk to him, and he never brushes his teeth. I also enjoy not only this part, but also other descriptions of other characters, because the author has a

totally unique way of describing people. " He was exactly the kind of a guy that wouldn't get out of your light when you asked him to" (page 21), " He was one of those guys that think they're being a pansy if they don't break around forty of your fingers when they shake hands with you" (page 87).

Even though the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* is set in the fifties, I can still relate to the protagonist, as well as others around his age, because of the lingo. It makes the characters so human, and just about anyone can relate to that! I found myself looking forward to Holden meeting a new character or happening upon an old acquaintance, to see what type of personality the author had given them. Also, there is no brilliant sentence structure or sophisticated diction to this novel. The reason this novel is so good is the incredible insights the author uses, which connects the reader to the characters in a way that is inimitable. Salinger's wonderful insights are enhanced by his strategic use of italics to indicate emphasis, which tells the reader the exact meaning and tone Salinger is attempting to portray as if the reader were to hear the spoken dialogue, " In the first place, we're both practically children. And did you ever stop to think what you'd do if you didn't get a job when your money ran out? We'd starve to death. The whole thing's so fantastic, it isn't even-" (page 132).

This is the type of novel that generates emotion, true, honest emotion, from the reader, because they can connect so well to the characters. A reader would truly cry, say if Phoebe, Holden's younger sister, were to die at the end; whereas in other novels that a character dies in, less of an emotional impact is made on the reader. Finally, only one huge event takes place that affects all the others, and that is Holden Caulfield flunking out of Pencey. All

other events in the book are trivial. This keeps the plot simple enough so that the main focus is on the protagonist's thoughts rather than actions. However, I think this novel is so excellent and one-of-a-kind because of the personality of the protagonist. He is easily bothered by the little things people do, " God, how I hate it when somebody yells " Good Luck! " at me when I'm leaving somewhere.

" (page 202), yet he loves to drive others crazy, " You weren't allowed to smoke in the dorm, but you could do it at night when everybody was asleep or out and nobody could smell the smoke. Besides, I did it to annoy Stradlater. It drove him crazy when you broke any rules. He never smoked in the dorm. It was only me. " (page 40). He doesn't seem to buy into religion, as he describes himself as an atheist.

He also seems to be an existentialist as well. Every single thing he does is based upon whether he " feels like it" or not. Holden is a well-crafted character who could be a real person writing an autobiography he is so lifelike. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone.