

# The catcher in the rye free essay



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Coming of age has a different definition in diverse areas of society, but Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)) told me this when I searched the definition of "coming of age": "Coming of age is a young person's transition from childhood to adulthood. The age at which this transition takes place varies in society, as does the nature of the transition."

It can be a simple legal convention or can be a part of a ritual, as practised by many societies today, such a change is associated with the age of sexual maturity (early adolescence); in others, it is associated with an age of religious responsibility. What this paragraph describes to me is that coming of age is not something that can simply be labelled as one thing or another. There is not a point in your life where you wake up one morning and you have merely "come of age" and are tossed into the world of adulthood. Its definition varies from society to society, culture to culture, religion to religion, etc. But, because of this uncertainty of when someone such as myself is to be considered an adult, doesn't that mean that it is just another point that is thrown amongst the whirlwind of a teenager's life to be yet another point of confusion and frustration? As I regularly hear from my teachers.

parents and some of my wiser friends, "Everyone matures at their own rate". But what exactly does that vague statement mean? What is maturity? Is it when you can make your own decisions and fend for yourself? But, hang on - if this is the case that idea of coming of age has collapsed on itself. When others make decisions for you and you are still relying on the opinions of to guide your own decisions - have you ever grown up? My original definition of coming of age was independence, but relying on others to direct your own decisions isn't independent at all. What influences people to "grow up"? Are

the decisions of other people long before our times the reason for us having to grow up, sometimes before we should have to? Is it the factors that are beyond anyone's control, or rather the impulses of life as a young adult? These impulses and actors may include war, sex, religion, love, competition, or even illnesses beyond our control? What I really want to know, now that I am at the point in my life where I have to "grow up" is - What makes us grow up? Purpose The purpose of my investigation is to research various areas of coming of age literature, including aspects such as the target audiences for such novels, and the author's backgrounds that may have influenced the plots of their novels, and the main character's attitudes towards coming of age.

The authors I have studied are: Texts and Authors that I will be focussing on:\* The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger\* The Perks of being a Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky\* A Separate Peace, by John Knowles Focussing Questions: 1 . Have the backgrounds of the authors of The Catcher in the Rye, The Perks of being a Wallflower and A Separate Peace influenced the personalities of the main characters in their novels? 2. What are the similarities/differences between the main characters in three coming of age novels - The Catcher in the Rye, The Perks of being a Wallflower and A Separate Peace? 3. Within the storyline of each novel, what are the main influences on the main characters' attitudes towards the idea of "coming of ge", and how are these attitudes expressed? 1 .

Have the backgrounds of the authors of The Catcher in the Rye, The Perks of being a Wallflower and A Separate Peace influenced the personalities of the main characters in their novels? Jerome David O. D. ) Salinger " Anyw ay, I <https://assignbuster.com/the-catcher-in-the-rye-free-essay/>

keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff.

What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff- I mean if they're running and they on't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be.

" -J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye Background of J. D. Salinger J.

J. D. Salinger was born January 1, 1919 in Manhattan, New York. His parents, a Jewish man and an Irish-Catholic woman, owned a meat importing business. Growing up, he attended Valley Forge Military Academy from 1934 to 1936, and then moved to Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pennsylvania. While at Ursinus, he struggled to keep his grades up, and one professor even called him, " the worst English student in the history of the college. After dropping out of Ursinus, he went to other schools only to fail again and again and finally ended up at Columbia University.

There, he was enrolled in a writing class taught by Whit Burnett, an editor for the Story Magazine. Burnett was the first to see some writing talent in Salinger, and helped him publish some short stories in Story, which was his first opportunity to get his work read and acknowledged by the public. World War II came along and Salinger was forced to fly out and join the fight as part of the U. S. Fourth Infantry Division.

He was involved in the landing on Utah Beach on D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge, where he saw a good amount of combat action. Unfortunately, he was hospitalized and diagnosed with, “ combat stress reaction,” which sent him back home. According to the online Encyclopedia, Wikipedia, the symptoms of combat stress reactions of World War II were, “ slowing of the reaction time, difficulty prioritizing, difficulty initiating routine tasks, preoccupation with minor issues and familiar tasks, indecision and lack of concentration, loss of initiative with fatigue and exhaustion. After returning home in 1946, Salinger was able to get The New Yorker to print some of his short stories in their paper.

One called Slight Rebellion off Madison was the first story to introduce the famous Holden Caulfield. This short story had some similar features and characters of The Catcher in the Rye but it seemed like a rushed, rough draft of the novel soon to come. Five years later, after Salinger had mentioned to many that he felt Holden deserved his own novel, he stretched, detailed, and extensively changed his short story and thus The Catcher in the Rye was published. Comparison of J. D. Salinger to Holden Caulfield J.

D. Salinger created Holden Caulfield in the book, The Catcher in the Rye as an autobiographical character. Holden’s many adventures lead from his school in Pennsylvania to Central Park in New York. The more readers get to know him, the more they can see that he is a very unique character, and many of the events in the book create surprising results. It’s difficult to understand how J.

D. Salinger was able to think of so many different scenarios for Holden to experience. However, when comparing Salinger's real life experiences to the events of the book, it is arguable that the book is autobiographical. Certain real life experiences Salinger went through he placed in the book, while at the same time instilling similar characteristics in the protagonist, Holden. The pieces of Salinger's personal life he put into *The Catcher in the Rye* make up the main structure and underlying ideas the book presents to its audience.

There are many events and experiences J. D. Salinger included in the novel that are related to his personal life. For example, both, Salinger and Holden were born and raised in Manhattan, and went to preppy private, all-boys schools in Pennsylvania. Another interesting similarity between the two is that they were kicked out of numerous colleges because of grades.

Also, Salinger first thought both his parents were Jewish, but soon after his bar mitzvah he found out his mother was Catholic. He wasn't very happy that his mother had been lying to him throughout his life, and in the book, he shares how Holden has mixed feelings about Catholics. He says they're always trying to figure out if he's Catholic, and thinks they would like him more if he was. Read about Superman and Meln one part of the book, Holden meets a couple of Catholic nuns, and accidentally blows some cigarette smoke in their face while donating ten dollars to their church. This shows that he likes the nuns enough to give them money, but he still wants to do something that will let them know he's still unsure about what he thinks about Catholics.

Finally, another similarity is that Salinger was involved in World War II and was sent home because he suffered from combat stress reaction, while Holden says he wouldn't be able to stand going into war and would rather die by sitting on the atom bomb. This part of, "The Catcher in the Rye," shows Salinger's dislike of his service time in the war. It seems Salinger hated being in the army not because he had to shoot and kill people, but because of what kind of people in the army he had to be surrounded by. Another real life experience that J.

D. Salinger seems to have included into his novel is that someone he loved turned him down for a much older man. In 1941, Salinger became romantically involved with Oona O'Neill, the daughter of Eugene O'Neill, the famous playwright. A year later, Salinger was whisked off to fight in World War II, from where he sent Oona letters almost daily. Unfortunately for Salinger, Oona met Charlie Chaplin, the actor, producer and director, when she was recommended to play a role in one of his movies. The pair fell in love, and married in 1943, despite Oona's father disapproving the idea of his eighteen year-old daughter marrying a fifty-four year old man.

Salinger was crushed, and reacted by sending Oona an angry letter. Readers can easily see Salinger's hurt of romantic rejection in *The Catcher in the Rye* when Holden's roommate, Stradlater, goes out on a date with Holden's childhood girlfriend, Jane Gallagher. It seems one of Holden's insecurities about their date is that Stradlater is too old and sexually experienced for Jane. Holden is also extremely stressed and nervous over the possibility of Stradlater making sexual advances towards her.

J. D. Salinger created Stradlater as the Charlie Chaplin figure, and Jane as Oona. In both circumstances, Salinger and Holden both feel their relationship with the "Jane" in their lives is being taken away by the "Stradlater" figure. Both Stradlaters are older, well known, and popular. Finally, both Holden and Salinger still have strong feelings for their first loves, and are jealous to hear they are dating someone else.

The fact that Oona O'Neill left J. D. Salinger for someone working in the movie entertainment industry is arguably the main reason why Salinger created Holden to have a hatred for Hollywood. In the book, Holden expresses that his older brother, D. B.

, sold himself out by writing scripts for movies instead of pursuing a serious literature career. He also believes that actors and actresses in movies and plays seem too phony. Read about Superman and Me When he encounters good actors, he then argues that they are too good at what they do and seem too confident: "In the first place, I hate actors. They never act like people. They just think they do.

Some of the good ones do, in a very slight way, but not in a way that's fun to watch. And if any actor's good, you can always tell he knows he's good, and that spoils it." Knowing Salinger's past experiences with Charlie Chaplin, it is clear Salinger was still upset when writing this novel and decided to have one more "shot" at the industry who took away his first love. Salinger and Holden are also similar because of their many failed attempts to find a meaningful, lasting relationship with a woman. The failed relationships in Holden's life include Sally Hayes, Jane Gallagher, three older women in a



lounge, and the prostitute, Sunny. On the other hand, Salinger's situation was not much better.

His first love, Oona, left him, and his first two marriages ended in divorce. Here, it's plain to see that both have a long record of broken relationships. It looks as if Salinger wanted to express the pain and desperation he feels in losing so many female lovers through Holden's many failed attempts of creating friendships. J.

D. Salinger created Holden Caulfield as a mirror image of himself. Not only do the two experience similar events, but their feelings, thoughts, and mind-sets are also very alike. In the book, Holden hates being in social environments and having to talk to people. It seems there is something he doesn't like about everyone he meets, and cuts many conversations short either by insulting the other person or leaving the room.

He doesn't enjoy talking to his fellow student, Ackley, because of his disgusting hygienic habits, nor does he care for his old history teacher, Mr Spencer when he goes to say good-bye to him. At first, he enjoys Mr Spencer, but when his old teacher begins to lecture him about taking school seriously: " All of a sudden then, I wanted to get the hell out of the room. I could feel a terrific lecture coming on. I didn't mind the idea so much, but I didn't feel like being lectured to and smell Vicks Nose Drops and look at old Spencer in his pyjamas and bathrobe all at the same time. I really didn't. J.

D. Salinger is exactly the same. He does not enjoy being in the public or having anyone know what is going on in his life. He also claims that he writes his best in total privacy.

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Salinger's reclusive, anti-social behaviour can be best expressed in his daughter, Margaret's book, where she explains that it was hard being raised in their house because of the isolation her father put himself through. The final and one of the most interesting points that roves Salinger and Holden are similar is how they remark that, now that they've told people their story, they wish they hadn't. At the end of The Catcher in the Rye Holden says this about his story: " If you want to know the truth, I don't know what I think about it. I'm sorry I told so many people about it.

.. Don't ever tell anybody anything. " Salinger is known to not have published another book after The Catcher in the Rye even though he still writes books and short stories. He dislikes the attention he gets for writing a popular book, and it drives him to stay away from anyone from the press.

Salinger became even more reclusive, going to great lengths to stop any attempt for any of his new stories to become published. He even sued to stop Ian Hamilton from publishing a biography called J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life. to make sure certain personal letters were not included in the book.

Salinger also hardly ever made public appearances or allowed people to interview him. Holden and Salinger's behaviour shows that, even though they want to write their stories out, neither of them wants anyone to read it because then they'll get attention. Some might argue that Salinger's personal life had no effect when he wrote his book.