

Catcher in the rye vs i am sam essay

[Family](#), [Parenting](#)



Just as one can find recurring topics of discourse and discussion in many different artistic representations, one is frequently able to relate such themes to the experiences they endure in life. One prime example of this can be found in the literary composition *The Catcher in the Rye* to the film production *I Am Sam* by Jessie Nelson. Both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *I Am Sam* illustrate the notion of childhood versus adulthood, and how the protagonists of each fight for the protection against maturity. Both Sam and Lucy Dawson of *I Am Sam* experience the values, tendencies and life situations that Holden Caulfield fights to protect throughout *The Catcher in the Rye*. This can be illustrated through parallel themes, the loss of innocence, and a bildungsroman archetype.

Both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *I Am Sam* provide their audiences with tangible evidence of the notion of the protection of childhood. An example of this concept in *The Catcher in the Rye* can be seen by looking at the evidence J. D. Salinger has placed in Holden's surname; Caulfield.

A 'caul' by definition is a membranous sac that encloses an embryo. This process is literally the safeguard of a fetus at birth; which is concrete evidence to illustrate the theme of protecting childhood, if one looks into the text. Thematically, *I Am Sam* can also be looked upon as the protection of childhood and innocence in that of its own title.

I Am Sam is based upon the Dr. Seuss series of children's books *Green Eggs and Ham*, which shows the innocence and childishness of its characters. *Green Eggs and Ham* is referenced throughout the film to further the theme that both protagonists, a child of seven and her father of forty, both stuck in

the midst of childhood and adulthood. The Catcher in the Rye and I Am Sam can also be looked upon as an individual's understanding of the human condition. This is one of the protection of, but inevitable loss of innocence, which is correlated to the transition of a child becoming an adult. The Catcher in the Rye illustrates this point through Holden's desire to protect his innocence against the phoniness of the adult world.

This can be seen when Holden tries to erase curse words from the walls of an elementary school. Holden believes that children are innocent, and that childhood is a world of sincerity. He strives to protect this by inventing a fantasy in which symbolically, childhood is a field of rye in which children play, while adulthood is a deadly fall over the edge of a cliff. He imagines himself on such a cliff, catching innocent children who accidentally fall off the edge, bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood. Holden's flawed perception of adulthood allows himself to be shielded with a protective shell of skepticism.

However, Holden loses his own innocence while trying to maintain it on his trip in New York as he encounters characters such as Sunny and Mr. Antolini. The end of the novel expresses considerable growth for Holden, as losing a part of childish innocence is also a part of growing up. The characters in I Am Sam also undergo the idea of protecting, but essentially losing childish innocence. As Lucy Dawson strives to protect her father's innocence, she in fact loses a bit of her own, as at the age of seven, she is faced with the internal struggle of acting older than she is due to her father's mental state. She consciously makes decisions to diminish her own intellectual capacities

such as being literate, to protect her father's na?? vet??. While Lucy fights to protect her father's childish innocence, Sam himself finds his own virtue to be compromised when he is put on the stand to testify to his parental aptness.

It is this testimonial that allows Sam to justify that it doesn't matter which world he belongs to, and that his childish tendencies have no correlation to poor parenting. I Am Sam illustrates the notion of childhood versus adulthood, and how both characters find themselves sharing middle ground between being a child and an adult. A bildungsroman tells the story of a protagonist's voyage from youth to psychological or emotional maturity. This development is an unrelenting process involving discrepancies between the protagonist's desires and the standpoints imposed by society. The Catcher in the Rye can be classified as a bildungsroman, as the novel exemplifies Holden Caulfield's growth from childhood into adulthood. Although Holden restrains himself from this inevitable maturing process, we clearly see the common characteristics that place Holden into this classification. Holden has reservations about change and wishes everything to be eternally fixed, like those of the statues found in the Museum of Natural History.

This desire to hold onto the moment and linger in childhood makes it hard for Holden to remain mentally and emotionally stable, as he fights a continual battle with both himself and society who pressures him to ascend into adulthood. Just as a bildungsroman suggests, Holden is urged by those around him to make the plunge into adulthood by characters such as Mr. Antolini. Mr. Antolini advises Holden to stop opposing the adult world and

apply himself in the pursuit to find his own voice in the world. In the end we find Holden essentially defeated by a nervous breakdown, due to the overwhelming pressures he feels from society to grow up. It is evident within the text however, that Holden successfully makes his way through this personal growth and change. This process is just like that of I Am Sam, as Sam and Lucy Dawson both find themselves on a voyage from youth to psychological and emotional maturity.

Sam Dawson undergoes a maturing progression of sorts, as he is urged by society against his desires to remain a child and surrender to his juvenile tendencies. Sam continually finds himself resisting the natural maturing process, as he is a forty year-old man with autism whose mental capacity is equal to that of a seven year-old. At the age of seven, his daughter Lucy is more intellectually inclined than her father, and is taken by the Department of Child Services who believe that Sam cannot effectively care for her. In these terms, I Am Sam lends itself as a bildungsroman, as the development process of the protagonists involves discrepancies between their desires and the views of social order. However, Sam is a prime candidate for a pro bono case, and is able to prove to society that he is able of growth and proves to be able to live in the adult world and provide for a child. In conclusion, both works deal with the bridge between adolescence and adulthood, and how the protagonists of each fight for its protection.

The morals found in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *I Am Sam* further illustrate this through the inevitability of adulthood and the ways in which society favours this natural transition.