

# Human fear taking responsibility over their life and

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Human beings are reluctant to mature as they fear taking responsibility over their life and their actions.

In *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger, Holden Caulfield struggles through the difficult transition from adolescence and immaturity to adulthood and independence. Salinger uses symbolism throughout the novel to reinforce the idea that Holden fears change and resents the adult world. Holden portrays this fear as he holds onto the past, feels comfortable only in the places that never change and he avoids growing up.

To begin, Holden does everything in his power to avoid growing up too. He describes the hat that he always wears, “ It was this red hunting hat, with one of those very, very long peaks” (10). The hat’s color, red, the same as that of Allie’s and Phoebe’s hair. Both his siblings are young children and the hat reminds him of youth. By looking similar to them, it is a way of showing that he is still a child and immature. Likewise, the ducks in the pond of Central Park also symbolize that Holden avoids growing up.

He always questions, “ I was wondering if it would be frozen over when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go” (7)? The ducks come back over and over again, no matter how harsh the winter is. Holden gets kicked out of many schools and does not know where he is going to go or do but he knows he wants to stay a child and go back to the environment and circumstance that he used to be in, with Allie. Carrousels are another symbol to show that Holden does not want to grow up. When he brings Phoebe to the park he notices, “ It played that same song about fifty years ago when I was a little kid.

That's one nice thing about carrouseles, they always play the same songs ...

Then the carrousel started, and I watched her go around and around. " (113).

Once again, he enjoys that the songs they play are still the same and unchanged. The carousel goes around and around without ever going anywhere symbolizing not wanting to move forward, or on, with his life.

Symbols that show Holden avoids growing up are the red hunting hat, the ducks and the carrousel as they all represent Holden wanting to stay a child. Moreover, Holden's fear of change, explains his desire to hold onto the past.

When Holden was in his room bored, " I went over to my window and opened it and packed a snowball with my bare hands. ... I started to throw it. At a car that was parked across the street.

But I changed my mind. The car looked so nice and white. Then I started to throw it at a hydrant, but that looked too nice and white, too. Finally I didn't throw it at anything." Holden sees the snow, he packs a snowball, however he does not throw it at anything. This is because Holden does not want to shatter the peacefulness and he does not want to disturb or change anything so that the future is different from the past.

Similarly, when Holden was running away from Pencey, he mentions, " I did have a goddam Pencey sticker on one of my Gladstones" (30). Even though he despises that school and has been kicked out of the school, Holden still remains attached to the sticker and keeps it. The sticker symbolizes Holden's unwillingness to move onto change in the future. Furthermore, Holden finds mummies very intriguing, pointing out, " They wrapped their faces up in

these cloths that were treated with some secret chemical. That way they could be buried in their tombs for thousands of years and their faces wouldn't rot or anything" (109).

Holden admires how nothing changes for them after decades. He wishes that he could remain as sustained as the mummies, and be able to have the past preserved so that the future does not need to change. The baseball mitt, the Pencey sticker and the mummies all represent Holden's reluctance to change, and the act of holding on to the past so that change can not happen or be avoided. Another aspect of Holden is that he is only comfortable in places that never change. Whenever Holden is going through a stage of overwhelming change, he goes to a telephone booth and calls childhood friends.

Soon after he gets off the train from Pencey Prep to home, "The first thing I did when I got off at Penn Station, I went into this phone booth. I felt like giving somebody a buzz" (32). After being kicked out of school, Holden goes to the phone booth to relive the past and call his past friends. The phone booth gives Holden a sense of comfort as he can call anyone he is familiar with and comfortable around. Another indication of Holden's habit of going only to areas that never change is the Museum of Natural History. On his way to the museum, Holden describes, "The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers would still be drinking out of that water hole, with their

pretty antlers and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket.

Nobody'd be different." (65). Holden enjoys his visits to the museum so much because none of the exhibits change, and every visit, he can expect the same thing.

He wants everything to be unchanged and eternally fixed, like the statues of Eskimos in the museum. Additionally, Holden always visits Central park.

Holden exclaims, " I know Central Park like the back of my hand, because I used to roller-skate there all the time and ride my bike when I was a kid" (83). One night, when Holden is drunk, it is cold and dark outside, he has no place to stay nor much money left and yet he still decides to go to a park where he has good childhood memories.

Even in the horrible situation that he is in he goes to a place that has not changed since his childhood to go to as it gives him a sense of security and predictability. Whenever Holden is in a rough situation he goes to either the telephone booth, Central Park or the Museum as those places never change and are comfortable and familiar to him. Above all, J. D. Salinger uses symbolism to reinforce the aspects that Holden holds onto the past, is comfortable only in the places that never change and he avoids growing up.

The reason for this is all due to his fear of change and growing up. Although change is difficult, trying to avoid it will do anything as it is a necessity to growing up and maturing.