

Catcher in the rye analysis book

Literature, American Literature



In the book *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger, a young boy named Holden Caulfield is trying to find who he really is on the streets of New York City. Holden is a self-inflicted loneliness, judgmental, and obsessive 16-year-old who was kicked out of Pencey Prep due to him not caring about anything. That was the case for the four other schools as well. He goes through a growing period throughout the book. He tries to force himself into adulthood. Holden constantly tries to do what he thinks an adult does (smoking cigarettes, drinking, and cussing). Holden tries to go to the club or bar and pick up older women. Due to Holden losing so much at a young age and the fact he never reached out for help he is mentally and physically damaged. Holden is going through the awkward period in which he is leaving childhood and entering adulthood. As I stated Holden's three main flaws they lead to him going on a downfall. He had to be psycho-analyzed. This is all directly contributed to his brother's death. The trauma in which he got from that event causes his weaknesses to overpower his strengths.

Holden is a judgmental character.

Specifically, Holden is almost always criticizing someone. He generally targets adults who he believes are phonies and criticizes, and philosophizes about people who are boring, people who are insecure, and, above all, people who are phony.. Holden believes phonies are those who are too conventional or too typical" for instance, teachers who act like teachers by assuming a different demeanor in class than they do in conversation, or people who dress and act like the other members of their social class. While Holden uses the label phony to imply that such people are superficial, his use of the term indicates that his own perceptions of other people are superficial.

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For example, Holden says the following about ministers. If you want to know the truth, I can't even stand ministers. The ones they have had at every school I have gone to, they all have these Holy Joe voices when they start giving their sermons. God, I hate that. I do not see why the hell they can't talk in their natural voice. They sound so phony when they talk. (Salinger #131) This proves how Holden sees the world. In this quote he is willing to criticize a religious leader. Who else is he willing to criticize? In almost every case, he rejects more complex judgments in favor of simple categorical ones.

Holden also is an obsessive kid. He primarily obsesses over sex. Holden is a virgin, but he is very fascinated by sex, and, in fact, he spends much of the novel trying to lose his virginity. At the same time, he feels greatly that sex should happen between people who genuinely care about and respect one another, and he is upset by the recognition that sex can be casual. This is demonstrated by the disgust that Holden shows when he says that personality didn't interest Stradlater, though. Only very sexy stuff interested him (Salinger #41). Stradlater's date with Jane doesn't just make him jealous; it angers him to think of a girl he knows well having sex with a boy she doesn't know well. Furthermore, he is disturbed by the fact that he is aroused by women whom he does not respect or care for, like the blonde tourist he dances with in the Lavender Room, or like Sally Hayes, whom he refers to as stupid even as he organizes a date with her. Lastly, he is agitated by the fact that he is aroused by peculiar sexual behavior—particularly behavior that is not respectful of the women he is doing it with, such as spitting in one's partner's face. Although Holden refers to such

behavior as crummy, he admits that it is pretty fun, although he doesn't think that it should be.

Besides being obsessive and judgmental, Holden has a special type of self-induced loneliness. Most lonely people choose to hide away by themselves and are too shy to have a lot of human-interactions. Holden is the complete opposite. He makes it clear that he is lonely by blatantly making plans with other people every chance that he can get. He always finds a way about them that he dislikes which leads to him being let down and wishing he never would have asked them in the first place. For example, Holden says this statement; "almost every time somebody gives me a present, it ends up making me sad" (Salinger #67). This reversal of a stereotype is much like a depressed person always acting happy to avoid being noticed. Holden states that he is lonely too many times to count in the book. He desperately interacts with other people to fulfill his longing for a person he enjoys being with. He seems to be lonely because he isolates himself from the world of "phonies" which is basically everyone he meets.

Overall, Holden Caulfield remains lost the entire novel and never finds his true path in life. He does not have much of a future in store for him at this point in his young life. When Holden goes home and talks to his younger sister, Phoebe, he finds a shining sliver of hope in life. He finally has something go his way. He makes a large stride into adulthood when he allows Phoebe to stay a child. When he lets Phoebe go on to the carousel. This exemplifies a strong point in his character which is the never-dying urge to keep trying to find happiness. Though Holden has gone through

many traumatic events he finds a way to fight out of it. One that sticks out the most is Allier's death. Unfortunately, his weaknesses overpower his strengths in the end, causing his life to spiral out of control.