

Catcher in the rye response essay example

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What are the differences between how adults and teenagers think when they read the book?

I believe there are substantial differences between the reactions of adults and teenagers when reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. The tale of a disaffected teenager desperately trying to find his place in the world, while also bucking authority at every turn, reads as different things to different generations. This, perhaps, might be at the crux of the argument regarding censorship and banning of the book; adults either do not understand the book's message or believes it glorifies Holden's behavior, while teenagers may find Holden's lack of identity and adolescent confusion relatable.

When teenagers read *The Catcher in the Rye*, they may find a kindred spirit in Holden. Teenagers are naturally entering a rebellious phase in their lives, where they seek to set themselves apart from the norm and find out who they really are. They have enough agency to disagree vehemently with the orders of their elders, and have reasons why; they are beginning to understand the world while not having a full understanding of how it works. This is Holden in a nutshell; a lost boy, doing what he wants, challenging authority and doing things that teenagers may only dream of. Teenage rebellion is an attractive prospect to a teenager, and so Holden might be able to vicariously do the things they want to do themselves. Holden's feeling of distance from the world around him, and his feeling that he is special, resonates with many teenagers who desperately want to set themselves apart.

Meanwhile, when an adult reads *The Catcher in the Rye*, they may have one of two major readings from the book. Holden is no longer a romantic figure,

but a tragic one; constantly alienated from other people, constantly lost and fooling himself into thinking he is unique, he is actually quite sad in his way. Holden engages in objectionable behavior merely in order to feel something, since his life is terrible enough that he must do terrible things to be alive. Other adults, however, may actually hate Holden as opposed to feeling sorry for him; he is the rebellious child they would never want to have, or would dread having. He would never listen to a thing they say, he doesn't quite understand the ways of the world but pretends he does, and does not respect authority. Because of that, adults have no control over Holden. The difference between adults accepting the book and feeling threatened by the book depends on their perspective on the book's usefulness. Adults may believe that teenagers should be shown Holden's story, to show them that everyone feels alienated, but that will pass in time and you should recognize its negative aspects. However, others may simply want to nip any rebellion in the bud, and not show teenagers exactly how to do it. The thought is that, if they are not shown drinking, smoking, swearing and sex, they will not want to do it. Depending on what your perspective is, *The Catcher in the Rye* shows the destructive or the attractive side of danger, as teenagers may find themselves in Holden Caulfield, while adults see him as a cautionary tale (or one to simply avoid).