

Catcher in the rye song project

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



The Life Song

The Catcher in the Rye and My Name is Asher Lev voice how society is a song, each member having his own verse. However, Holden Caulfield and Asher Lev demonstrate different and unique interpretations of their lines. Both books by J. D. Salinger and Chaim Potok use mediums, specifically Salinger's profanity and lies and Potok's Ladover Hasidic lifestyle, to show routine consistency, the protagonists' integrity, and how society suppresses the individual.

To begin, profanity and Hasidism are used in their respective novels to create a rhythmic consistency of daily life. When the pattern breaks, the words notify the reader of a change of pace. Throughout the story, Holden Caulfield utilizes an unpleasant vocabulary which includes "like hell" and "goddam [sic]," among others. In this fashion, Salinger establishes a habit where the character finds comfort and familiarity, akin to the Levs' tradition of Shabbos and singing the zemiros. Both authors break away from this uniformity to reveal a transformation in each character's or family's thoughts. For example, within the large part of a paragraph, Holden forgets his ubiquitous swearing when describing pleasant childhood memories about the Indian Exhibit in the Museum (Salinger 156-158). Similarly, because of the recent Lev family death, Aryeh does not remember to ask Asher "to say the Krias Shema," as he usually does each night before bed (Potok 48). Both situations signal a divergence from routine, like when Holden remembers

cheerful times instead of anger towards phonies and Aryeh's heavystresswhen dealing with his wife's tragedy.

Next, both authors define a personal boundary to indicate that the main characters do not blindly follow a pattern, displaying their own judgment. To further explain, Holden sees the F-word written twice on different walls at Phoebe's school. Interestingly enough, even with his tendency to use strong language, the curses obviously trouble Holden, especially their meaning. He tries to remove them but concedes that he " couldn't rub out even half the '[F-word] you'" signs written out there (Salinger 262). This feature is shared with Asher Lev who, despite being an observant Jew, still opts to paint stripped to the waist and later cut off his side curls, both taboos in his religion (Potok 225, 299). Both examples portray the characters' integrity to their own principles simultaneously with conformity and flexibility towards the world: Holden tries not to spread his lexicon to younger children. Asher follows all Hasidic lifestyles respectfully save the ones constraining his true desires and soul.

Finally, the presentation of lies and Judaic lifestyle express how individuals conform to the rest of the world in spite of their truthfulness towards themselves. Holden himself states that he is the " most terrific liar you ever saw," an example being the time he tells his classmate's mother his name is Rudolf Schmidt-- his dorm's janitor (Salinger 22, 71). Holden lies to hide his true persona in the same way Hasidic Jews are expected to conceal their bodies using " long-sleeved dresses and fancy wigs" for reasons of modesty (Potok 6). Both situations depict the realistic irony of modern society as

individuals struggle to identify themselves yet attempt to fit in. Holden voices disdain for phonies-- the same people influencing his false façade. While Jews promote the Hasidic lifestyle, Rivkeh exemplifies her community's obvious discomfort when she " perspired a great deal" in the middle of summer due to her long sleeves (Potok 7).

To tie it all together, Salinger and Potok expertly construct a setting out of words where each action shows near-perfunctory repetition, the limit each protagonist is willing to follow such repetition, and how that limit is nonetheless molded by the constant pressure of society. The Catcher in the Rye and My Name is Asher Lev use paradoxical mediums like profanity, lies and the Ladover Hasidic lifestyle analogously. In the end, Holden and Asher sing their parts of the song with their own voices, making sure they're heard above the rest of the chorus.