

"catcher in the rye" by jd salinger

Literature, American Literature



In JD Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, a teenager named Holden Caulfield has a hard time understanding that everyone has to grow up. Holden did not want children to grow up because he feels that adults are corrupt. This is known when Holden tries to take away bad words from the walls of an elementary school where his sister Phoebe attended. " While I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody'd written ' Fuck you' on the wall. It drove me damn near crazy. I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them- all cockeyed, naturally- what it meant, and how they'd all think about it and maybe even worry about it for a couple of days. I kept wanting to kill whoever's written it. I figured it was some perverty bum that'd sneaked in the school late at night to take a leak or something and then wrote it on the wall. I kept picturing myself catching him at it, and how I'd smash his head on the stone steps till as good and goddam dead and bloody." (201)

Holden was really concerned with what would happen if they saw it and caused him to make stereotypes of a kid that would try to corrupt the children of an elementary school. Holden thought that children were innocent because they saw the world and society without any problems. Phoebe asked Holden to name something that he would like to be when he grew up, the only thing he wanted was to be a " catcher in the rye." Holden had an illusion for himself of a strange fantasy. Holden said that he would like to follow a poem written by Robert Burns: " If a body catch a body coming through the rye." Holden kept " picturing all these little kids playing a game in a big field of rye. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around.

And he's standing on the edge of some the cliff and he has to catch everybody if they start to go off the cliff.

In the beginning of *Catcher in the Rye*, the book takes steps and the forces of change take a toll on Holden's childish ways. In the end, he seems to be changed into a man. Holden is immature in the beginning of the book. He calls almost every person he meets as a phony. Holden feels that he is surrounded by hypocrites and fake people. Principal Thurmer,, Pencey, was the start of this charade. Principal Thurmer only said hello to the wealthy parents of students. Therefore he is a phony for doing so. Holden does not maintain responsibility throughout the whole book. He was the equipment manager of the fencing team at Pencey, and ended up losing all the equipment on the subway. He also failed out of two schools because he didn't give effort and not showing up for classes. Holden also had a daydream about two children who never grew and they lived be in a perfect world. This happened because his younger brother Allie died. Holden needs to get over Allie to maintain his sanity. Holden life revolves around childhood, which shows all the time. His love for children shows why he cares so much for Phoebe, And why he can't get over his dead younger brother.

In the middle of the book, Holden is waiting for an old friend of his, he had the sudden feel to go to a museum that he would go to while still a child in school so he could bring back memories of his childhood. When Holden reached the museum, he decided not to. " Then a funny thing happened. When I got to the museum, all of a sudden I wouldn't have gone inside for a million bucks. It just didn't appeal to me..." (122) This shows that Holden is

becoming an adult. Holden did not want to enter the museum because he knew that he was too old to do so. When Holden takes his sister Phoebe to the carousel later in the book, he decided not to ride on it, or even stand on it during a rainstorm, he felt too old to get on. Holden also had another one of his kiddish fantasies for his future. Holden wanted to go and be a deaf mute somewhere in the west, so he wouldn't have to deal with all the phonies and hypocrites. Phoebe said to Holden that she wanted to go with him, but he denies her because of his responsibilities as an adult. He told her, " I'm not going away anywhere. I changed my mind." (207)

At the end of the book, Holden seems to be more mature. One step was when Holden did not go on the carousel with phoebe. In the center of the carousel, there was a gold ring. The kids riding on the carousel would have to reach it to get a prize" All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them."(211) This carousel shows life, and life from childhood to adulthood. Children would sometimes fall when trying to reach the gold ring in the center of life, or their complete success or adulthood. Holden would have yelled out to the children that it was dangerous to try to achieve this goal. Throughout the book, Holden tries to not grow up and lose his child innocence, but when Holden tried to attempt it did nothing for him overall and ended up making his condition worst. This shows that you can't force things to happen you have to just let it happen.