

Use of imagery in the catcher in the rye

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



Authors use symbolism in their books to explain to the reader what the character is learning or feeling. Throughout the novel, the reader is presented with many different symbols. These symbols are clearly seen by Holden's constant repetition of their importance. Like, when Holden kept asking people what happens to the ducks, when he writes about Allie's glove or his constant visits to the museum. The symbols are so important and their symbolism help us understand how Holden is learning and feeling.

At many points during the novel Holden asks what happens to the ducks, who are normally in the pond at central park, when winter comes and the water freezes. On page 60 Holden asks " You know those ducks in that lagoon right near central park south? That little lake? By any chance do you know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you know by any chance?" (Salinger 60). When he asked all he gets in return is a cold answer from the cab driver when he tries to explain that the ducks stay under the ice like the fish. Despite the answer he gets Holden is never satisfied with the reply. Holden doesn't realize that the ducks relate to him. Whether he will admit it or not Holden is scared. He's been kicked out of numerous schools, he gets bad grades and his parents are disappointed with him. Holden spends his days wandering through New York City because he doesn't know where to go while reflecting his question about the ducks. Maybe if he knew where the ducks went then he could follow their example.

Allie, Holden's younger brother who died of leukemia years ago was a major symbol throughout the story. When Holden remembers incidents from his past involving Allie, his attitude changes. Such as when he writes the composition about Allie's baseball glove or when Holden broke his hand after

punching all the windows out of his garage when Allie died. “ I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all the goddamn windows with my fist for the hell of it” (Salinger 39). He feels that Allie was one of the few people who weren't phony in a world full of phonies. Allie also represents the innocence and childhood that Holden strives to find throughout the book. Holden believes that Allie represents the purity that he looks for in the world. Holden admits that he admires Allie more than he admired Jesus and even prays to Allie at one point rather than Jesus. Allie is Holden's role model who he judges the rest of the world to. When Allie dies it rocked Holden's world for the worst.

While wandering through New York City Holden arrives at the museum of natural history. He says that he likes the museum because things never change and they stay in their glass cases like when he said “ The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move.” (Salinger 121). Holden wishes he could put parts of his life in glass cases because they won't ever change. He enjoys going to the museum because he used to go there all the time when he was younger every Saturday. He associated these memories with happiness. Since the glass cases inside the museum don't ever change, it is the one place Holden goes when he wants everything to be like it was during his childhood. However, Holden decides to stay outside because he's afraid that there's a possibility that the museum could have changed. Jane Gallagher changed since his childhood and Holden thought that it could never happen. Jane was a friend of Holden's and when they would play checkers she would always keep her kings in the back row for some odd reason. Holden thought that if

Jane could change then the museum could change with her. He knows that if the museum does not stay the same, it could hurt him, so he makes the conscious decision to not go inside even though his reasons are subconscious.

Catcher in the Rye was a very symbolic book that could be taken many different ways. Important symbols in the book were the ducks at Central Park, his brother Allie, and his constant inner turmoil with the museum. These symbols helped to show how Holden is feeling and how he is changing as a person by repeating the importance of said symbols.