

Protagonist holden caulfield in "the catcher in the rye"

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An immature child's experiences allow his transformation into a responsible man. In J. D.

Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, the protagonist, Holden Caulfield, revisits his transition from his young self. Holden, a junior at Pencey Prep, has just been expelled for failing four courses. Holden's inability to deal with the chasm between childhood and adulthood leaves him close to an emotional collapse. Although intelligent, Holden's cynical nature compels him to shield himself from the realities of adulthood. Salinger imbues many factors to depict how Caulfield matured from a scared, dependent boy into a self-reliant man.

Holden depicts his coming of age when he accepts his inability of solving every issue, leading to Holden's growth in maturity. After Holden's interaction with his sister, Phoebe, he diverts from the protector of innocence. As a result of Holden's mental breakdown in his transition to adulthood, he tries to prevent other children from experiencing the "phoniness" of the world and the forced corruption by society. In a conversation with Phoebe, he reveals that he would like to be a catcher in the rye – keeping children innocent – hence the title of the novel. Salinger's use of catcher in the rye serves as a metaphor to Holden's hopes of saving children from the inevitable tough phase from childhood to adulthood. Contradictory to Holden's intentions, he comes to terms with himself when Phoebe rides the carousel. When she reaches for the gold ring, Holden worries that she will lose her innocence. However, Holden finally reveals that the thing with kids is, if they want to grab the gold ring, you just 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). The gold ring symbolizes Phoebe's attempt to attain maturity, and Holden realizes that the impossibility of stopping that from happening. The vital setting of the carousel represents Holden's desire for things to stay stagnant. While Holden may seem rude and act only in his self-interest, he shows his sensitivity. Holden, now a grown man, wanted purity with the "" astonishment capacity"" of his youth. Now at the end of the novel, Holden exhibits his coming-of-age, as he accepts that he can no longer be a catcher in the rye. Holden's problems also arise when he calls everyone phonies. Holden explains that all adults are phonies in order to provide an excuse for him to withdraw into his cynical isolation. By the end of the novel, Holden realizes his need for human relationships. However, he still fears interactions, reminding himself, Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody (214). Holden's obsessiveness with himself conflicts with his reclusiveness, but he learns to accept both. Holden represents the coming of age prototype, as he develops from a naive boy, unsure of how to deal with his emotions, into a mature adult.

Holden's coming of age fosters a deviation from quick judgments allowing his character development growth. Over the course of the novel, Holden changes his attitude towards his former teacher, Mr. Antolini. Holden identifies with Mr. Antolini, and Mr. Antolini in return validates Holden's suffering. Mr. Antolini deepens his relationship with Holden by revealing his private life; his drinking addiction and his messy home. However, Holden's perspective of Mr. Antolini dilutes after Holden wakes up revealing Mr.

Antolini stroking his forehead. Holden immediately jumps to the conclusion of Mr. Antolini's sexuality and worries he may become one. Later on, Holden reflects on his encounter with Mr. Antolini: I wondered if just maybe I was wrong about thinking he was making a flirty pass with me. I mean I started thinking that even if he was a flit, he certainly'd been nice to me (186).

Holden regrets his quick judgment of Mr. Antolini, knowing that he ruined his friendship as a result. He begins to question his swift perception of people, and this allows Holden to develop in his change to adulthood. Salinger's employs a first person omniscient perspective, creating sympathy in the reader for Holden. Unlike Holden's late encounter with Mr. Antolini, the book starts off with Holden meeting with Mr. Spencer. Holden visits Mr. Spencer, a former teacher, when he falls ill. Mr. Spencer initiates a pattern of unproductive adult interactions that define Holden's experience throughout the book. Mr. Spencer introduces the idea that life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules (8). Taking into account of Mr. Spencer's remarks, Holden applies himself into current time and seeks assistance from adults, signifying Holden's change for the better and the hope he resembles. At first, Holden takes Mr. Spencer's suggestions as a form of punishment, but later on decides it is for the better. Over the course of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden learns to be less judgmental and condescending. In the past, Holden quickly rationalized other people's actions, but later comes to age by acknowledging his own mistakes.

Holden changes from a recluse into a more sociable person, characterizing his coming of age. At first, Holden possesses a lack of individuality, while

feeling excluded from and victimized by the world around him. Later on, Holden divulges from his alienation from others as a form of self-protection. Holden purchases a new hat remarking, the way I wore it, I swung the old peak way around to the backvery corny, I'll admit, but I liked it that way. I looked good in it that way (34). The unique hat symbolizes Holden's desire to isolate himself from others. Holden's loneliness always causes him to seek relationships, but his need for isolation leads to him to ruin those relationships, evident in his date with Sally Hayes. Contrary from his prior self, Holden uncovers his warmer feelings for people saying, I sort of miss everybody I told about (230). Holden also unveils his decision to return to school the next semester. These sequence of events represent Holden's coming of age to becoming more social. Holden leaves the story with a sense of optimism and a renewed hope. Holden deduces that his emotions are extremely complex, but he believes he can finally attain happiness. The tone remains cynical across the book and Holden maintains his negative view of mankind up until the end.

Throughout the novel, Holden struggles to find his passion. However, he grows and discovers that change must begin within himself. Salinger imbues many factors to depict how Caulfield matured from a scared, dependent boy into a self-reliant man. Holden's coming of age is represented by his acceptance towards his inability of solving every problem. By the end, Holden also deviates from his quick judgments and becomes a more sociable person. Holden's coming of age exhibits how a character's change propels growth and allows a deeper understanding of one's self.