

# Catcher in the rye



**ASSIGN  
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Catcher In The Rye It would be an under ment to say that the novel under discussion was a wonderful read. It was much more than a wonderful read! It was a book that spoke to you, it had a story that made you think, it had a protagonist that looked you in the eye when he spoke the most outrageously honest realities of life without so much as a blink. Although the action and events of the novel were vital in making the book into a complete whole and the language of the book contributed in giving it a most unique evocative quality, yet it was the protagonist himself who carried the burden of the story on his shoulders. It is my opinion that Holden Caulfield became such a universally loved fictional character simply because of his humanity - equally because of his faults and his sensitivity. Sensitivity, yes, as strange as it might sound, but Holden did possess an astute mind, a keen eye, an unadulterated understanding of human nature and at times betrayed a sensitivity towards others that he usually hid under layers of abrasiveness and insolence. This rudeness was a defense mechanism employed by Holden to intentionally protect himself from his fellow men. In order to reach a deeper understanding of Holden, it is imperative to analyze the reason behind his rudeness. It is my opinion that Holden usually brushed people off and never showed them his true inner feelings because he was afraid of opening up and making himself vulnerable to others. He understood that human beings were just as capable of hurting as they were of loving and he did not take a chance with any of his relationships simply because he dreaded being hurt by the ones he chose to love. After Holden's passage from childhood to maturity he became increasingly aware of the "phoniness" of the world around him and craved the innocence and purity of his childhood days. I believe that it is this longing and of Holden, along with his

vulnerability and weaknesses, that make him one of those rare characters in fiction with whom the reader can relate to easily as we all have, to some extent, our own inner yearnings, longings and insecurities that force us to build walls of isolation around us.

One of the most revealing quotes of Holden that give us a glimpse of this self-alienation tendency of Holden is when he says, " I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible" (7). These words of Holden prove how he shuns contact with others simply because even the least manner of intimate interaction with anyone simply overwhelms and confuses him. At another time he shows his own sensitivity towards others feelings (although he regularly tries to make us believe he does not care about such trivialities) is when he says, " The thing is, it's really hard to be roommates with people if your suitcases are much better than theirs - if yours are really good ones and theirs aren't. You think if they're intelligent and all, the other person, and have a good sense of humor, that they don't give a damn whose suitcases are better, but they do. They really do. It's one of the reasons why I roomed with a stupid bastard like Stradlater. At least his suitcases were as good as mine" (43). These words of Holden show he is not only perceptive about what hurts and pains others but also tries not to needlessly put others in discomfort.

One question that I believe should be discussed and deserves closer attention is how the structure of the novel and the action taking place within its pages mirror the confusion of the central character and the manner in which it reflects how Holden leads an aimless life and conducts himself as a

boat without a rudder.

#### References

Salinger, J. D. *The Catcher In The Rye*. Bantam, 2001.