

Motif catcher in the rye analysis assignment

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Human beings crave acceptance; if one feels as if they do not have the acceptance of others, they begin to doubt if they should accept themselves and they lash out as a coping mechanism. This, in fact, is one of the most triumphed theories regarding why people bully others or try to make others feel inferior; in short, people try to make others feel inferior when they feel inferior themselves.

This interesting observation is presented through the main character Holder Coalfield by J. D. Slinger in his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. Slinger illustrates the motif insecurity through Holder's constant name-calling of others and himself. Holder's pessimistic descriptions of himself translate into his negative attitude towards others and towards life. In various parts of the story, Holder blatantly addresses his insecurities. Holder constantly thinks of himself in a negative light, which plays a role in why he flunked out of Pence and why he is in such a depressed state.

When explaining to one of his previous professors why he flunked out of school, he says that it " hasn't really hit him yet" that he has flunked out of school; Holder blatantly states " I'm a moron" (Slinger, 14). On a different occasion, Holder describes himself as " the only dumb one in (his) family" after describing his other two siblings as " a wizard" and " a genius" (Slinger, 67). Both these previous statements obviously show that Holder does not hold himself in high regard. His self-inflicted name-calling and berating implies he feels alienated from his family and peers, thus enforcing his insecurities about himself.

Holder later speaks again about how he feels estranged from his peers, in a lengthy rant in which he criticizes the boys at his school in a foul mouthed and name-calling fury while on his date with Sally Hayes. He rants, "(A boys school) is full of phonies, and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddamn Cadillac some day, and you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses, and all you do is talk about girls and liquors and sex all day, and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddamn cliques.

The guys on the basketball team stick together, the Catholics stick together, the goddamn intellectuals stick together, the guys that play bridge stick together' (Slinger, 131 Through the various curses and mean names Holder rapid fires at the prep school boys, he subconsciously lists all of his insecurities about going to such a prestigious school; he mentions the part about becoming smart enough to own a Cadillac because he feels as if he is not smart enough to complete such tasks; he includes the part about the cliques to reveal how he feels like he himself does not fit into one specific clique.

This lengthy rant shows how insecure Holder truly is at his school, he feels as if he plainly does not fit in with others. As a result of this, Holder's coping mechanism is as follows; if he can make everyone else feel as miserable as he does through name calling, he will finally share something in common with his peers; the utter misery that Holder feels inside. Since Holder primarily beats himself up all the time, the only way for him to cope is by verbally abusing everyone around him. Holder demonstrates his insecurities

in one of the most classic ways possible; through the harassment and excessive scrutiny of others.

He constantly describes almost everyone he meets in thorough yet negative detail. On one of his nights out in New York City, Holder meets three girls in a club called the Lavender Room. When he sees them, he immediately begins a negative description of them. He describes, ' The whole three of them were pretty ugly, and they all had on the kind of hats that you knew they didn't really live in New York... I am not kidding, some of these very stupid girls can really knock you out on the dance floor... God, could that dopey girl dance" (Slinger, 69-71).

Not only is the description rude, but it is very critical of the women, even though none of them said anything inherently stupid or dopey to Holder, thus giving him no reason to be so critical. Holder just cannot help but immediately point out the faults in others since he primarily focuses on his own faults. Holder presents many other examples of this overly disapproving attitude of the world. When he visits a different bar in New York, he describes the piano player there in very negative terms, although he does not know the man personally enough to be able to justifiably say those things.

He describes, " Ermine's a big fat colored guy that plays the piano. He's a terrific snob and he won't hardly even talk to you unless you're a big shot or a celebrity or something... He sounds like the kind of guy that won't talk to you unless you're a big shot" (Slinger, 80). Holder is once again demonstrating how his own negativity influences his attitude towards others. Holder is so down on himself that the only way he can see past it is to make

everyone else feel the same exact same emotions that he feels. Holder even reacts this way towards people he knows personally that re supposed to be his friends.

His roommate at Pence, named Seedeater, often receive the brunt of Holder's negativity. Holder repeatedly insults Seedeater, saying, "... L heard his goddamn stupid footsteps coming down the corridor... He was so goddamn stupid not to realize it was a Saturday night... He started stroking his bare chest and stomach with a very stupid expression on his face... He was mad about himself" (Slinger, 41). This attack at " stupid" Seedeater shows that Holder spares no one from his negativity attacks- he is even willing to totally degrade his so-called friends to improve his own self-concept.

In Holder's mind, the only way to fit in with the others and feel better about himself is to demean others. Through his use Of name-calling the protagonist Holder Coalfield illustrates the motif of insecurity throughout J. D. Clingers The Catcher in the Rye. Not only does Holder's use of name calling prove how deep his insecurity really goes, but Holder truly shows that misery loves company and that some people will go to any lengths to make others feel as miserable as they are.