

# Catcher in the rye critique essay

Literature, American Literature



An unhappy Epiphany In contemporary society, loss of Innocence Is obvious during the transition of childhood to adolescence. Today's view on losing this kind innocence is actually deemed to be what would the "cool" thing to do; thus, many people around the same age as Holder Coalfield, conform to this norm and try to act as if their own innocence Is lost. Throughout Catcher In the Rye by J. D. Slinger, examples of the loss of innocence are shown in various scenes where Holder Coalfield, the main character, is with a symbol of innocence.

For example, Holder is seen in a Natural history Museum, and no matter how much time has passed, the inside never changes. This symbol represents that no matter what has happened In Holder's life, he Is able to return to this museum, where as If a freeze-frame picture of his own childhood comes back to life. J. D. Slinger develops the corruption of the young by introducing several scenes in Catcher in the Rye where Holder's previous views of innocence are challenged by the adultery and corruption that he experiences in real world situations.

An idea that can be interpreted from the fear of losing innocence that Holder eels is actually Holder just being afraid of getting older, even more so that he finds adulthood repulsive. I said no, there wouldn't be marvelous places to go to after I went to college and all. " Open your ears. It'd be entirely different. We'd have to go downstairs in elevators with suitcases and stuff. We'd have to phone up everybody and tell 'me good-bye and send 'me postcards from hotels and all.

And I'd be working in some office, making a lot of dough, and riding to work in cabs and Madison Avenue buses, and reading newspapers, and playing bridge all the time, and going to the ivies and seeing a lot of stupid shorts and coming attractions and newsreels. Newsreels. Christ almighty. " (Slinger 133) Various adjectives and phrases can be taken that can describe the atrocities of what Holder would call a " phony. " These include being concerned with money, social formalities, and parties.

What Slinger uses is the breakdown of Holder at this point of the book where he finally gets fed up with Sally, and releases a bit of what he feels on the inside. Slinger puts Holder in this kind of confrontation to allow the reader to realize that Holder does not want to come older, and eventually, a phony. Another example of this kind of Acrophobia (fear of aging) is, again, in the example of the Museum. " The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody's move.

You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the Deere would still be drinking out of that water hole. A part of this quote that should be dissected, that relates to the theme of this fear of getting older, is: " The only thing different would be you. Just to restate, this reminder of the museum is the snapshot in time where Holder keeps precious, which relates to Innocence. Through this, Holder's visits to the museum allow him a break from his perceptions and the changing world.

Holder loves it because everything is constant - the Eskimo, birds, etc and he would feel, " Nobody be different. The only thing that I'm putting forth a

symbol that every reader is familiar with and that museum constant and never changing inside is the way that Holder wants to keep all children at. And through this kind of preservation we are able to interpret this innocence as omitting that we too cherished at a young age, being the museum. Another way that Slinger develops this theme of loss of innocence is through Slinger introducing what Holder Coalfield wants to do; He wants to save kid's lives. You know that song 'If a body catch a body comic' through the rye'? I'd like - " " It's 'If a body meet a body coming through the rye!' " old Phoebe said. " It's a poem. By Robert Burns. " " I know it's a poem by Robert Burns. " She was right, though. It is " If a body meet a body coming through the rye. " I didn't know it then, though. " I thought it was 'If a body catch a body,'" I said. Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all.

Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff- I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy. " (173) Within this quote contains the first symbol of " catcher in the rye. However, Holder misinterprets this idea and actually interprets it to be Holder wanting to catch a body coming through the rye, instead of a body were to meet a body coming through the rye. Also, instead of saying people's lives, he states that he wants to save kid's lives, and actual irony occurs because the song is actually about sex. Anyways, Slinger

presents this scene where he opens up his true side and consults with his sister about what he actually wants to do in life. Also, But while I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody's written " Buck 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 written it. I figured it was some perverts 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 mash his head on the stone steps till he was good and goddamn dead and bloody.

But I knew, too, I wouldn't have the guts to do it. I knew that. That made me even more depressed. " The most significant part of this quote is where Holder again admits that he is continually feeling more and more depressed due to the curse words on the wall. This shows that he is protective over the young and innocent children who are becoming more and more corrupted with this kind of terrible writing of the wall. Slinger portrays a character of wanting to retain the innocence that Holder Coalfield holds in such high regard.

Slinger presents Holder Coalfield in a way such that Holder truly just wants to stay a kid. Holder wants to prevent what's happened to him, and his own loss of innocence, to the kids around him. This is why Holder reacts the way he does when he surrounded by what he calls " phonies" who are adults,

already corrupted and the museum and how he finds that place a safe haven, due to it representing stillness of his past innocence. Finally, the "Catcher in the Rye" song symbolizes the literal catcher in the rye who will capture the kids and save them before their own innocence is lost.