

Internal error

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



the is guilty of the same sins he criticizes others of committing and because there are many things he does not understand. Holden's deep emotional turmoil as he tries in vain to come to terms with his coming adulthood is evidence of the theme of how painful growing up is in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Self-protection through Isolation Holden, who is self-conscious of himself, afraid of those around him, and who does not understand the life around him, isolates himself on the pretense that he believes he is above everyone else around him, is better than them, and has no need to interact with them. The reader, upon gaining a better understanding of Holden, can see that this is not the case. Holden isolates himself not because he believes he is better, but because being around other people and interacting with them confuses and overwhelms him. Thus, his cynicism and superiority in his isolation are Holden's form of protecting himself.

Notes PLOT SUMMARY *The Catcher in the Rye*, a novel about a teenager named Holden Caulfield, takes place somewhere in the eastern United States during the 1950s. At the beginning of chapter 1, Holden has received his final grades in his classes at the boarding school he attends, Pencey Preparatory. His grades are terrible and are the basis of his expulsion from the school. It is almost Christmas time, and Holden has a few days to spare before he is supposed to be back at his parents' home in Manhattan. He goes to visit his old history teacher, Spencer, whose reprimanding and subsequent lecture irritate Holden. Holden returns to his dorm, where he finds his neighbor, Ackley, and his roommate, Stradlater, who also get on Holden's nerves. Stradlater irritates Holden because he is dating a girl that Holden used to see and still has feelings for. A brief fist-fight with Stradlater causes

Holden to leave Pencey Prep three days early for Manhattan. On the bus into New York Holden meets the mother of one of his schoolmates, and although Holden dislikes the boy, he says many good things about him to the boy's mother. When he gets to the city, Holden takes a cab to the Edmont Hotel. During the cab ride on the way to the hotel, he pesters the driver with questions about where the ducks in Central Park go during the winter. At the hotel, he can see other guests through their lighted windows and is disgusted by their sexuality. Bored and lonely, he calls up a woman he has never met, to see if he can convince her to have sex with him. Because she insists on meeting him the next day and Holden doesn't want to wait that long, he hangs up on her. He then goes down to the Lavender Room, where the waiter won't serve him because he is a minor. Holden sits at the table and flirts with three older women, who eventually abandon him to pay their tab. Holden leaves the hotel and goes to a jazz club, where he sits alone at a table and leaves after running into one of his deceased brother's ex-girlfriends. He goes back to the hotel, where he accepts the receptionist's offer to send up a prostitute. When the girl comes, Holden refuses to have sex with her, only wanting someone to talk to. He pays her anyway, but she leaves angry and returns with the receptionist to demand more money from Holden. In the morning, he telephones one of his old girlfriends, Sally Hayes. She agrees to meet him and he takes her to a play. Afterwards, they go ice skating, and when she refuses to run away with him, he becomes angry and raises his voice at her. Sally becomes offended and leaves. Lonely, Holden calls up his old student advisor at Pencey, Luce, who meets him at a bar. Luce quickly grows irritated and offended by Holden's immature remarks and

makes an excuse to leave. Holden, now drunk, calls Sally again and talks about their Christmas Eve plans. He goes on a walk in Central Park to see the ducks, and he is freezing cold. He goes to his parents' apartment, where he finds his little sister Phoebe. They talk, argue about his expulsion, and make up.

MAJOR THEMES A Phony Adult World Over and over again in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden uses the adjective "phony" to describe things that exhibit hypocrisy and superficiality in the world around him, using it as the basis for his cynical outlook. Characters such as Spencer, Carl Luce, Sally Hayes, Maurice, and Sunny exemplify the pretentious, phony qualities Holden is so critical of. While these characters may or may not actually be phony, the point is that while Holden is very observant and sensitive to the fake fronts of those around him, he never confronts or admits the fact that he is phony as well, and thus is a hypocrite himself. This shows the reader a sort of paradox that exists in the novel; although Holden wants the world to be simply classified into two black and white categories of real and fake, it cannot be. The adult life is not that simple, and Holden himself, who searches for the truth but is a cruel, phony hypocrite, is an example of how fake the world can be. Growing Up Holden, like many other characters throughout literature and throughout history, is afraid of maturity because it will throw him into the world of adulthood. He is afraid of change and is overwhelmed by things that cannot be contemplated on one level alone. His attachment to the unchanging Museum of Natural History shows his resistance to change and his reluctance to grow up. Holden is scared because

The Museum During the story, Holden mentions the Museum of Natural History many times and even goes there to reminisce. He feels a

special attachment to the museum because he finds it comforting; he states in the book that the good thing about the museum is that the displays never change. They are unfaltering and always the same every time they are viewed, regardless of whether or not the viewer has become different. The Museum of Natural History represents Holden's ideal world, a world in which nothing every changes and where everything is simple and easy to understand. Red Hunting Hat Holden's character is defined, in part, by his red hunting hat. This odd hat symbolizes Holden's need to be different from everyone else; he wants to be his own person and the unusual hat helps him to define his own character. The reader can also see, however, Holden's insecurity and fear through his defensiveness and evident self-consciousness about the hat. The red hunting hat thus represents the social conflict in Holden's personality; he wants to be alone and different from the people around him but also has an intrinsic need for companionship. The hat, which is bright red, is also the same color as Phoebe's hair and Holden's dead brother's hair. The color red represents innocence to Holden, and in wearing the hat, he is trying to connect with the purity that he believes his siblings are, or were, in touch with. The song, "The Catcher in the Rye" As the very title of the book, this song appears multiple times in the novel. There is a boy in the street singing it early in the book and later, Holden uses the song to explain himself to his younger sister. He is attached to this song because it lights in him an image of children playing in a field of rye, children whom it is his job to prevent from accidentally falling over the cliff at the edge of the field. The image Holden has through this song is a symbol for Holden's desire to preserve childhood innocence, and save other people from entering the

cruel adult world. During his conversation with Phoebe, however, she points out that Holden has the words wrong, and the song takes on a whole new sexual meaning when the lyrics are changed. The original lyrics suggest a sexual encounter, while Holden's abridged version suggests the prevention of adult things, such as sex. The dual meaning of the song in the novel adds depth and symbolism to the theme of the need to preserve purity. J. D.

SALINGER Jerome David Salinger was raised in Manhattan and began writing short stories at a young age. His stories were published in many magazines out of New York such as *Story* magazine and *The New Yorker*. In 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* was published, stirring controversy amongst the public. The novel was an immediate success, especially liked by adolescents and drawing the suspicious of adults. The unwanted attention Salinger received after the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye* sparked him into reclusion, avoiding interviews and other publicity. He published short stories less frequently after the release of his novel, now having a fear of public scrutiny. He underwent a few legal battles in the 80s and 90s over copyright infringements and biographical discrepancies. J. D. Salinger died on January 27, 2010 in Cornish, New Hampshire. Next, Holden calls one of his ex-teachers, Mr. Antolini, who invites him over. Mr. Antolini talks to him about life and about what he is doing with himself. Holden falls asleep on Mr. Antolini's couch and wakes up to his teacher stroking his forehead. Mistaking this affectionate gesture for a homosexual one, Holden leaves on short notice. He goes to Phoebe's school and leaves her a note informing her that he is planning on running away. When he meets her later, she brings a suitcase and tries to convince him to let her come with him. He won't let her

come, and she becomes angry. Holden buys her a ticket to the carousel in the zoo in attempt to win her over; he cries with happiness watching her ride on it. The narrative ends there, with Holden mentioning, but not explaining, how he went back home and got "sick" and is dubiously optimistic about starting at a new school in the coming fall.

SYMBOLISM The Ducks in Central Park The ducks in the frozen pond during the winter symbolize Holden's view of his own situation in life. He views life as inhospitable and hard, and he can relate to the ducks, who deal with the harshness of the freezing winter over and over again. Also, Holden sees the pond when it is only partially frozen, which symbolizes his state in life. He is halfway between childhood and adulthood during the story, stuck in a state of transition just like the pond is.