

# A sophisticated character of holden caulfield

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## **The Catcher in the Rye: A Coming of Age**

In literature, a character's unique perspective on common human experiences can both engage the reader, on experiences that are common to humanity engages the reader and vastly contribute contributes vastly to a text's endearing value and significance. J. D Salinger's ' The Catcher in the Rye' was written after WWII and takes place set in 1950's New York City during the 1950's. As one of the most memorable and important novels of the 20th century, The Catcher in the Rye This is a unique and highly valued text that captures the distinctive voice of a young man:, Holden Caulfield, who is struggling with issues of both personal identity, his identity and his unresolved grief, as he transitions is transitioning from childhood to adulthood. The textbook offers a rich portrayal of such themes as the impact of alienation as a form of self-preservation, as well as the resistance of to change, and the psychological effects of unresolved grief. By telling the story directly through the first-person narration of Holden Caulfield Through the opulent rendering of this bildungsroman, Salinger offers an unusually in-depth emotionally complex perspective of an emotionally complex character, who is struggling to find his place in the world. Unlike many coming of age stories, the reader of Salinger's novel is left with a strong sense that Holden will continue to struggle with the protective wall of bitterness around him, as he is caught between holding onto the past and freeing himself from his anguish so that he can move onwards towards adulthood and personal growth. Although the themes explored in The Catcher in the Rye are common to the human condition, the perspectives offered by Holden are

unique and it is the distinctive style of his narrative that ensure this text remains an esteemed piece of literature.

The *Catcher in the Rye* is a venerated literary piece that comprehensively explores the psychological repercussions of alienation as a form of self-protection and consequently were able to gain insight into Holden's unique perspective through his reception to the common human encounters he has throughout the novel. The most compelling symbol of Holden's disconnection is the red hunting cap. He wears it when he wants to feel independent, separated and protected. Salinger captures Holden's building emotions through the use of short sentences and polysyndeton which creates emotional amplification as Holden is leaving yet another school. "When I was all set to go when I had my bags and all, I stood for a while next to the stairs...I was sort of crying. I don't know why. I put my red hunting hat on, and turned the peak around to the back, the way I liked it..." A motif from the novel is loneliness which is a direct manifestation of Holden's alienation and to him, it is a source of both pain and protection. However, his loneliness has a destructive consequence on his mental health and therefore he suffers from great mental instability that we assume becomes debilitating for him later on. From the very beginning of the novel, we can see that he is isolated "The reason I was way up on Thomsen Hill, instead of down at the game... The whole team ostracized me the whole way back on the train. It was pretty funny in a way." Salinger has created a very sophisticated and realistic voice that captures the struggles of not only our protagonist but all of humankind. Holden is using a passive voice and sardonicism to deny the pain he feels

from his alienation and it is this reaction to his marginalization that provides a powerful insight into Holden's perspective.

The resistance to change is a central theme of the novel that is explored thoroughly through the eyes of our protagonist who is very much trapped in the past. Holden has an idealistic view of childhood and associates all things that are bad or corrupt with adulthood. However, we are able to see that Holden's struggles against growing up only cause him distress. Throughout the novel, we see that Holden is constantly drawn to things that are unchanging or cyclical because of his desire to remain innocent. The most notable example of this is when he is pondering about the ducks in Central Park Lagoon. " You know those ducks in the lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you know where they go? The ducks, when it gets all frozen over?" Salinger uses a rhetorical question to show Holden's youthful immaturity. The ducks and the pond are symbolic of Holden's concerns for the future and his ideas and the pond being half frozen represents Holden's current state: adolescence, He is halfway between adulthood and childhood. It is also important to note that throughout the novel, whenever Holden thinks about the ducks his maturity levels have augmented since the last time. Salinger's use of allusion to the poem by Robert Burns, ' Comin' thro the Rye.' emphasizes Holden's desire to protect the innocent and he fancies himself a ' catcher' to ' catch' all the children as they fall down the cliff to adulthood. This quote is also ironic because the poem itself is about two people meeting in a field to have sex, a very adult activity that Holden most definitely not approve of. "“ Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in the rye and all. Thousands

of little kids and nobody's around – nobody big I mean – except me... What I have to do is catch everybody if they start going over the cliff..." Holden's desire to protect innocence and resist change is depicted and investigated throughout the novel and we are shown that his resistance to change, no matter how good-natured it is, is only repressing Holden. He is unable to grow because of his resistance to change and this is made clear throughout the novel as Holden's mental state become weaker.

The psychological impacts of unresolved grief are pervasive and extremely detrimental and the result of their damage on the psyche are explored in great detail through Holden's perspective of the world. Much of Holden's inner turmoil comes from the lack of closure he had from his brother's death. From Holden's unresolved grief regarding Allie, we can see that he struggles a lot with death and depression in general and we are shown this multiple times throughout the book. " I don't even know what I was running for – I guess I felt like it. After I got across the road, I felt like I was sort of disappearing. It was that kind of crazy afternoon, terrifically cold and no sun out or anything..." This quote is important to the theme of unresolved grief because it reveals the fragility of Holden's mental state. Salinger often uses a second-person address in the novel and this is to show us that Holden is trying to disconnect from his problems and emotions by addressing the reader. This also helps to make him feel less lonely. The personification of the " crazy afternoon" is a subtle nod to Holden's damaging mental state. Throughout the novel, windows are symbolic of a transparent and fragile barrier that is keeping him from moving forward. "...because I broke all the windows in the garage. I don't blame them. I really don't... and I broke all the

goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it." This is a crucial part of the novel where Holden is revealing how much his brother really meant to him and how much his death affected him. The windows are mentioned often and symbolize a barrier between himself and the people and world around him. When he breaks all the windows he is trying to disconnect himself from the world and to move on from his grief he needs to open a window. The impacts of his unresolved grief are obvious and shown throughout the story as we see the world through his perspective and see his mental stability decline.

Conclusively a character's unique perspective is fundamental to the reader's connection to the story and insight into the thematic concerns. Salinger has very successfully created a sophisticated character with an unparalleled view on the world and because of the dexterous formation of this character and viewpoint, the reader is gifted with an excellent piece of literature that delves into the topical concerns about humanity and psychology.