

To catch a genius
coming through the
rye



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

To Catch A Genius Coming Through The Rye Does the most ostracized novel in the world have more to criticise than we think Once a novel has been written, it's fate is no longer condemned to the hands of the author. They have no authority and no responsibility. With every new reading of every new mind, the characters, plot and supposed inner meaning begin to develop into the face of the novel. Although every single person in the world would read and interpret exactly the same words differently, it is always the author that seems to face the humiliation and the ridicule from their piece of work.

Now if every person in the world were to read the same novel seven billion different ways. How is it that we know whether a novel is considered an acceptable piece of literature or not How is it that The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger, one of the most beloved and ostracized novels of the 20th century, could be regarded as the best piece of Western literature of all time If so many people disagree on so much, what is it about this novel that they whole-heartedly agree on Holden Caulfield is the typical confused and bewildered teenage boy who seems to have suddenly snapped and decided to act out and take a stand against society. The emotional state that Holden seems to be in throughout the novel is somewhat the exact definition of the paradox between the innocence of childhood and the maturity of adulthood. He feels as if he has lost the innocent eyes that he once held as a child but is also alienated from the adult society. Due to being outcast from his normal social groups, Holden begins to reject the way of life of every person around him by claiming that they are all phonies. His

search for himself can be seen in terms of those he understands and their loss.

He is deeply affected by the death of his brother Allie. He idolises the faultlessness of Allie's memory and makes judgements of people based on this 'perfect person' that he has conjured up from clearly affected memories. He constantly tries to become responsible and mature like an adult by drinking, cursing and buying prostitutes, but quickly reverts back to being a sixteen year old kid when he decides that he only wants to talk to the prostitute instead of having sex. From this encounter Holden realises that his inner-adult wants to have sex whilst his inner-child is afraid to do it. Holden's frustration with the accepted 'language' of society is portrayed through his use of words such as 'goddamn', 'hell' and 'crap'. Holden feels that he is being individualistic by shunning out society and deciding to act out on his own. He creates his own rules of conduct and moral by taking everything that is 'expected' by society, and doing the complete opposite. What he doesn't realise, is that he is not alone.

This is the common thoughts of every other teenaged person in the world. It is said that 'a drunk man speaks like a sober man thinks'. This is equally interchangeable by saying 'Holden Caulfield acts like every teenager wishes'. Although in the novel it is noticed that this clearly isn't the way for a sixteen year old boy to act because he ends up in a mental clinic.

Was this, however, the submission of Holden himself because he realised the error of his ways Or was it society forcing out an ??? obstacle??™ that defied the social norms expected of him ??? It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society???

– Krishnamurti

In the 1950s the actions of Holden Caulfield would have been considered a disgrace and to have disrespected the moral values of the generations before him. With its initial release in 1951, there was much speculation that the novel was in fact too vulgar, too immoral and too immature to be considered a respectable piece of literature. This was unfortunately the very dry and conservative way of thinking of the 1950s. If ??? The Catcher in the Rye??™ were read by people within the 21st century, however, the values and meaning behind Holden??™s actions would be much more accepted. The world as a whole has developed more since the 1950s and have learned to respect and even encourage individualism. It is more noticed these days that the greatest breakthroughs in history are all thankful to the minds of people that dared to shun out society and flow against the stream in the way that their mind thinks and how they perceive certain situations. We have seen many more detrimental actions that people can bring themselves to take against other people (terrorism), which causes us to feel that how a teenaged boy feels he needs to express himself is rather trivial in comparison. Perhaps the reasoning for this is that as the years have flowed on, the people within the world have slowly all turned into their own interpretations of a newer Holden Caulfield.

Maybe our way of thinking is now just as confused and manipulated as Holden??™s was. While Holden used a red hunting hat to separate himself,

many of us do the same now to separate ourselves into our own niches within the greater community. Examples would be the black clothing worn by gothics to represent their personality and emotions and how teenagers use technology as a way to differentiate themselves from their parents. With all these types of ??? groups??™ circulating our population now, it??™s as if we all have done what Holden attempted to. We have created our own rules and morales to live by and made it unique to our certain personality.

This is indeed very different to the ??? one size fits all??™ approach that was taken in the 1950s. The fact that we can now accept what he does as a normal thing gives us the impression of the very great shift that our society has experienced over the years. Our generation, unlike that of the 1950s, would applaud Holden for his actions and almost see his rejection of other people??™s way of life as a positive thing. Maybe it is.??? Our modern society is engaged in polishing and decorating the cage in which man is kept imprisoned??? - Swami Nirmalananda, Enlightened Anarchism Perhaps there is in fact more to Holden Caulfield than we originally think. Perhaps he is more than just a confused teenager that has a hard time dealing with his emotions.

... maybe he is just afraid of them. Some would say that to truly understand the reasoning behind Holden??™s actions, we must ask the right questions. We must ask the right questions about his personality and his past, much in the way a psychologist would.

That is, after all, who he tells his story to within the novel. How would that psychologist react He would understand and empathise with the metaphors

used as symbols to represent the elephantine discomfort that Holden experiences with his loss of innocence and his rebellion against the adult society. He would realise that the red hunting hat that Holden wears throughout the novel would not simply be used to separate himself from society, but also represents Allie. The blood shed from his long lost brother is represented in the red hat as well as it standing out within a very black and white community to represent his idolisation for Allie and the flawless values that he possessed. This also would have represented Holden's cynicism. It was used as something to shield him from all the pains that he encountered within his life.

To remind him and hold onto the memory of Allie. The carousel towards the end of the novel would be described as a metaphor for Holden's childhood. Holden chooses not to get on the carousel with Pheobe because it reminds him of his childhood. The very childhood that he held onto so dearly, yet has lost. The lack of change to the carousel, however, does appeal to him and his perspective on the world.

Holden wants everything in the world to stay the same. Although, this could be viewed as a contradiction within Holden's mind. He hates society and everything that it stands for. He wishes it would change and stop being so phony. Yet he loves it when things don't change at all.

It would be noticed though, that the only things he doesn't want to change are in fact the things that he loved when he was a child. Holden is subconsciously constantly trying to hold onto the innocence of his childhood, even though he knows he must let go and face the alienating world of

the ??? mature??™ society. No matter how much criticism this novel faces throughout its lifetime, it will in fact always be as relevant to the teenage mind as it was back in the 1950s. Societies will constantly be changing, but the paradoxical emotions of its teenagers will not. The only way in which ??? The Catcher in the Rye??? can be considered truly great is through the individualistic perspective of its reader. Simply because this novel has caused so much speculation, so many different view points as to its meaning and caused people to actually ??? think??™ about their views on society is proof enough that it is one of the best novels ever written. I think it is true genius, ??? if you want to know the truth??™ .

??? Society exists only as a mental concept; in the real world there are only individuals???. Oscar Wilde