

Literary analysis of catcher in the rye essay sample



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Many people think about a situation so much that almost any solution can seem like the right one. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield's overanalyzation of events leads him to rationalize many of his own decisions. He rationalizes why he has not had sex, why he ordered the prostitute, why Sally did not want to go with him, and why he only gave the nuns \$10.

Detailing his own intimate opportunities, Holden considers why he has never had sex. Trying to explain why, Holden just comes up with excuses. “

Something always happens...her parents always come home at the wrong time...there's always somebody's date in the front seat” (Salinger 92). By saying always, it appears as if he has been foiled every single time he has tried, by something out of his control. For Holden, this is one method of his rationalizations. Holden says that he has had many opportunities to “lose my virginity and all” (92) but never seems to quite finish the job. Holden gives the impression of being inexperienced with girls, and thus does not know the right steps. “... she keeps telling you to stop. The trouble with me is, I stop. Most guys don't” (92). He is rationalizing why he has never had sex, through his many encounters with girls.

Once he returns to New York, Holden is unsure of himself after ordering a prostitute. Holden remembers a book he read at one of the schools that he has been to, specifically the suave and sexy guy that was in it, and realizes that he is definitely lacking in that department. He remembers trying to get a girl's bra off, and failing miserably. He desperately needs practice, saying “I wouldn't mind being pretty good at the stuff” (93). While waiting for the prostitute, Holden reexamines himself and his decision. However, the more he thinks about it, the more he isn't so sure about the prostitute. “I sort of

just wanted to get it over with" (93). Holden is prone to overanalyzing his actions, and this leads him to be unsure of his decisions.

After having his plan to move away rejected by Sally, Holden rationalizes why she refused to go with him. He is mad at her for refusing, and conjures up reasons why it was beneficial that she would not go with him to New England. " If you want to know the truth, I don't even know why I started all that stuff with her" (134). Holden is trying to convince himself that he should not have even asked her in the first place. " I probably wouldn't've taken her even if she'd wanted to go with me. She wouldn't have been anybody to go with" (134). He honestly thinks that she should have been honored to go with him and that going with him to some cabin in Massachusetts or Vermont should be a privilege. Holden's use of detail shows that he is just trying to think up excuses of why the outcome of his evening was beneficial.

Holden even fights with himself over a small amount of money that he donated to nuns. When Holden donates to a few nuns, he reanalyzes the situation to rationalize his decision. " After they left, I started getting sorry that I'd only given them ten bucks for their collection" (113). Most people would not think twice about donating money to a charity. Holden, on the other hand is mad at himself for not giving more. However, Holden soon remembers "...the thing was, I'd made that date to go to a matinee with old Sally Hayes, and I needed to keep some dough for the tickets and stuff" (113). He remembers that he himself needed the money, and that he did indeed make the right choice.

Holden was prone to overanalyzing things in his life. He overanalyzed having sex, ordering a prostitute, his relationship with Sally, and even why he only gave \$10 to a group of nuns. Holden must rationalize everyday occurrences and as a result is lead to inaction and bad decisions. By rationalizing everything he does, Holden is convincing himself that he is doing the right thing.