

# Ferris bueller and catcher in the rye



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Salinger's 1951 novel, "The Catcher in the Rye", and John Hughes' 1987 teenage comedy film "Ferris Bueller's Day Off", both reflect the lives of teenagers in a time span of nearly 40 years. The two authors successfully convey society's values on materialism and education in the two different eras using language and a variety of techniques. These values have affected both Holden Caulfield and Ferris Bueller, the former negatively and the latter positively, as will now be discussed. Salinger was born in New York in 1919 and wrote *The Catcher in the Rye* in 1951, and the values in the book reflected values in America at that time.

A major value which society followed during that era was "Life is a game that one plays according to the rules" and living up to expectations also influenced the book. In the 1980's when *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* was set, the biggest value of society was materialism. This is evident with the recurring motif of cars, such as when Ferris says "I wanted a car I got a computer". The value of materialism was from society's attitude where power, money and status was what everyone was trying to achieve.

Salinger presents the three day journey of the main character, Holden, and his attitude towards change in society. Holden is rather reluctant to growing up and becoming an adult because of his belief that the adult world was "phony" due to the presence of materialism. During Holden's short stay at Pencey Prep, he says that they "always had the same meal on Saturday nights, steak" and that the only reason why the school gave them steak was so that when the parents came to visit on Sunday and asked their son what they had for dinner last night, the answer would be steak.

Holden found this act to be very “phony” due to this reason. Salinger’s use of first person writing allows the readers to experience Holden’s thoughts and actions. This also allows readers to break through Holden’s “facade” due to his hypocrisy as he does not like phonies but he is one himself. In Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Ferris has a positive view of change as he accepts change in order to manipulate others. Unlike Holden, Ferris is depicted as a character who accepts the values of society in order to accomplish what he wants.

Hughes’ successfully uses camera techniques such as low camera angles and strong music to show the confidence Ferris possesses. Ferris breaks through the fourth wall when he explains to viewers how to act sick and that it is his “final chance to have a good time”, showing acceptance for the changes in the future. What Ferris says, such as “If I’m going to be busted, it’s not going to be by a guy like him” and “So I can have a fruitful life” reveals his arrogance and disrespect for the values of society. By setting the movie in Chicago, Hughes reflects on the values of society.

The wide aerial shot of Chicago and then scenes of modern music and high rise buildings, and the camera shot from the top as Ferris goes to the Sears Tower shows people all rushing to work, but no faces are seen, which represents the lacking of individuality as they all try to aim for the highest in a city full of materialism. As teenagers start to become rebellious after WWII, the private education system is seen as a corrupt system. The education system is introduced via the Pencey Prep motto “Since 1888 we have been moulding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men. On the same advertisement, Holden talks about the “guy on the horse playing polo” and <https://assignbuster.com/ferris-bueller-and-catcher-in-the-rye/>

says that he has never seen a single horse around that place shows false advertising and corruption in the private education system after WWII. The story of the death of James Castle backs up the impacts of corruption on the education system. The fact that James Castle was “ forced to take back what he said” shows the kind of students that come out of what are supposed to be fine, high-class private schools. Salinger effectively conveys Holden’s thoughts on the quality and standards of the corrupt private schools.

In Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, the education system is also portrayed as negative in the 1980’s. As materialism was such a large value in society at the time, the education system reflected the commercialisation of American society. The school in which Ferris Bueller goes to has a subject called “ consumer ed”, which shows the amount of consumerist values in society. The juxtaposition of the scene of Ferris at home with loud music and high spirits and the classroom scene of the monotonous teacher marking the roll makes the audience agree with Ferris when he says that school “ is a little childish and stupid”.

Ed Rooney is the Dean of the school but is portrayed as a character of little class and of comedy value. His repeated use of cliches during the phone call with Mrs Bueller, such as, “ wake up and smell the coffee” further proves that he has no class. Ed Rooney is only concerned about punishment and “ sniffing out the bad apples” rather than the quality of education. The scene showing Rooney running and stopping at every class window shows that he is only interested in the appearance and order of the school and catching Ferris. Both Salinger and Hughes successfully portray corruption in the education systems in their two eras.

Through the evaluation and comparison of the fictional narrative, "The Catcher in the Rye" with the teenpics film "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" it can be seen that the American teenager has evolved through the 20th Century. By comparing values of slipping educational standards and materialism, the teenager has learnt to adapt and thrive as shown by Ferris Bueller's active, energetic pragmatism as contrasted to Holden's sensitive, guilt-ridden pessimism. Whether a better world has been created by Hughes as opposed to Salinger's, however, is far more questionable.