

The

Catcher

in the Rye

Author: J. D. Salinger

SUMMARY

Holden Caulfield is living in California, looking back on events which happened around Christmas. Having been expelled from Pencey Preparatory he visits Mr Spencer, his history teacher. Mr Spencer tells him that he's got to change because his scholarship is pathetic. Holden leaves and returns to his room in Pencey. In his room he is visited by Ackley and by Stradlater, who beats him up. Holden, after the fight, finishes packing up and leaves.

On the train to New York he has a conversation with a woman who is the mother of a friend of him. In New York Holden checks into a hotel. Around midnight, in the hotel's club, he dances with three girls who are quite boring. In the lobby he recalls an afternoon with Jane Gallagher during which they played checkers and Holden got annoyed with Jane because of her way of playing.

Next morning, at a bar near Grand Central Station, he meets two nuns and tries to steal their hand-bags. Then he has a date with Sally Hayes. Holden tries to make her go with him to Vermont in the future and live in a cabin camp in the woods and surprisingly she agrees.

In the evening Holden finally decides to go home and see Phoebe, his younger sister. They talk for a while and then leaves. Although it is quite late, Holden then visits a former teacher of his, Mr Antolini.

In the morning, he tries to meet Phoebe at her school. She is holding a big suitcase with her, intending to go with him to the west. They then change their mind and decide to go to the carousel in Central Park. Phoebe goes for a ride on it while Holden watches her go round and round and then decides to take a bus to California in order to visit his brother D.B. in Hollywood.

RELATIONSHIPS

–Holden as an outsider

Holden has problems getting on with people and adapting to the educational system mainly because he is a rebel. He feels lonely and thinks that everything that goes wrong is caused by society, which he thinks is too materialist and corrupted.

–School

As I said before, he likes rebely and therefore he cannot adapt himself to an educational system. He gets bored of schools too quickly and as a result he always gets expelled.

–Adults and parents

Holden tries to make older people and his parents talk the way he does because he wants the society be the way he thinks is best as. He thinks everything is wrong, language included, and therefore he wants to change

it. He would like people to follow him and his thoughts.

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

–Society and materialism

Holden thinks society is too superficial, he thinks that everything is based on money and social classes. He wants to change this using his way of speaking, his rebely to the world

–The values of school

Holden finds anything interesting in school and therefore he thinks its no worth going to it. This is because he always manages to get expelled and try new schools to see if there is one that fits his needs.

CHILDHOOD AND ADULTHOOD

The novel's title comes from Holden's dream of playing guardian to children playing in a rye field near a cliff, catching them before they fall. This means that Holden wants to protect children from the ugly world, a world no better than falling off of a cliff, a world full of corruption, of materialism. Holden thinks he was born to protect all children everywhere. This is why he is always around kids, why he goes out of the way to make Phoebe happy, why he is ashamed to tell her he got expelled from Pencey.

CHARACTERS

Holden Caulfield

Holden has trouble with school and friends because he doesn't like the way people act "phoney" and the things people do to try to impress one another. Holden's vocabulary includes a number of words and phrases he uses over and over; such as "Phoney", "People getting sore over stuff", various types of "Morons", he also says "and all" quite a bit.

Holden doesn't take an interest in any of his school subjects, except English, and he is a very good composition writer. English was the only class he took an interest in and passed at any of the schools he went to. Throughout the story Holden keeps coming up with these madman ideas as he calls them, like running off to Massachusetts and Vermont and living in a cabin, or running off and building a cabin on the side of a highway, pretending to be deaf and dumb and pump gas for people. And in the end he gets really close to trying something like that as he considers hitch hiking out of New York

Phoebe Caulfield

Holden's younger sister, whom he loves and respects completely. She is ten, but very clever and passionate. Throughout the book, Holden thinks Phoebe is the only person in the world who understands and loves him completely. Towards the end of the plot, he is disappointed that Phoebe scolds him for being expelled from school and questions what he is going to do with his life. She makes it up to him, however, when she packs her suitcase and wants to run away with him

Allie Caulfield

Holden's younger brother who died of leukemia on July 18,

1946. Allie was extremely close to Holden, and Holden believes that Allie was "about fifty times as intelligent" as anyone Holden has ever known. Allie had a fielder's mitt that he had written poems all over in green ink, to give him something to read when he was in the outfield all alone. Holden keeps the fielder's mitt with him wherever he goes.

Robert Ackley

This is another student at Pencey that Holden finds extremely annoying. Ackley is annoyed by everything, especially Stradlater.

Ward Stradlater

This good looking athlete is the room mate of Holden at Pencey High. Holden finds him annoying.

Mr. Spencer

Holden's history teacher at Pencey Prep school. Holden visited him just before he left for Manhattan.

James Castle

Holden tells a story about how this student at Elkton Hills committed suicide by jumping out of his window after an argument.

Mr. Antolini

Holden's English teacher from Elkton Hills who is now teaching at New York University. Holden holds him in the highest regard and believes him to be a guardian of morality. In his hour of need, Holden goes to Mr. Antolini for help. Mr. Antolini is a sensitive man, about D.B.'s age, married to a wealthy older woman.

The nuns

Holden meets these two at the train station where they are collecting money. Holden decides that they are only the only adults that have not become phony and therefore can retain their innocence.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Salinger was trying to capture the speech patterns of a typical teenager of the 1950s. Holden's language is trite, imprecise, and imitative because of his own lack of self-definition, and because of his inability to communicate with others. His use of the word "really" and his repetition of the expression, "if you want to know the truth", reflect his drive to dissociate himself from the so-called phonies, who use language to hide from their feelings (digressions, vulgarism like "hell, ass, bastard", obscenity and slang)