




Elements of Fiction


The Catcher in the Rye



Topics in The Catcher in the Rye:



innocence- Holden tries to protect the innocence of children



family- Holden's relationships with his parents and siblings have deteriorated.



loss- Holden lost his brother, Allie.



betrayal- Holden

constantly feels betrayed throughout the novel.

alienation- Holden feels alienated from society.

adolescence- Holden is an adolescent in search for an identity.



maturity- Holden is very immature, but believes that he is mature.

mental deterioration- Holden ends up in a psychiatric hospital.



failure- Holden is constantly being kicked out of schools.

sexual experiences &

frustration- Holden is a “typical” hormonal teenage male, yet he doesn't have sex with the prostitute when she offers. He is conflicted about sex.



Key Issues in The Catcher in the Rye:

■ Holden is alienated from society. He feels that no one understands him and that everyone is a "phony". To Holden, no one is honest, and everybody wants to be something else.



■ **Holden has to deal with loss.** He loses his brother, Allie, to leukemia, and feels a tremendous loss. Holden regards D.B. as a "phony". He regards D.B. as a figurative prostitute, who writes only to make money, and not for intellectual redemption.



- **Holden constantly feels betrayed.**
Early in the novel, Mr. Spencer betrays him. He was one of the few teachers at Pency that Holden liked. Spencer broke the news of Holden's expulsion, and Holden felt betrayed.
- Stradlater betrays Holden by dating his best friend, Jane, whom Holden also had a crush on.
- When Holden returns home to see Phoebe, she is disappointed in him that he failed out of Pency. He thinks that she should accept him unconditionally, so he feels betrayed.



More Key Issues:

- **Nervous Breakdown** - The book begins as Holden is recovering from his nervous breakdown. He tries to save all children from growing up and losing their innocence, and when he realized that he can not, he goes insane and can't deal with it.
- **Death** - Death is a major issue in this novel because of the death of his brother Allie. It is the death of his brother which fuels his desire to save children from growing up and becoming corrupt.



- **Dealing with Others** - Holden has a very hard time dealing with people that are not known to him. He feels that most people are phonies and finds it hard to open himself up to others. He is very insecure as well as being very immature.
- **Immaturity in sexual relationships** - Holden's immaturity is shown when he invites the prostitute, Sunny, up to his hotel room for sex. When she arrives he cannot go through with it. Holden also rarely had a girlfriend for an extended period of time because of his fear of commitment.



- **Resentment towards parents -** Holden disliked his parents because they sent him away to a private school. He thinks that they feel he is useless and give up on him and send him away. He also wouldn't face his parents until the very end of the novel.
- **Holden's Hypocrisy -** Holden calls other's phonies but in actuality, Holden is the biggest phony in the novel. He despises those who value material things but he himself prides his possessions.

Major Conflicts in The Catcher in the Rye:

- **Holden vs. himself:** Holden has a hard time dealing with everyday life, and feels that everyone around him is a "phony".
- This is one of the reasons for his mental breakdown. His own mind working against himself caused him to have internal problems and turn against himself.
- His internal conflict also led to his seclusion from the outside world. He became introverted and could no longer cope with life.








- **Holden vs. society:** Everyone is a "phony" to him and he never realizes the good in anyone.
- This is due to Holden's strong opposition to material wealth, which is a dominating characteristic of the society which he could not accept. He can't communicate with anyone.
- Holden cannot function as a normal part of society because of his hatred towards all "phonies", which he believes everyone to be.



Theme: a complex truth or mystery about life expressed in a literary work

Themes in The Catcher in the Rye:

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- **Loss of Innocence** - Holden did not want children to grow up because he felt that adults are corrupt.
 - This is seen when Holden tries to erase naughty words from the walls of the elementary school that his sister Phoebe attended. Holden believed that children were innocent because they viewed the world and society without any bias.
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Theme:

- **Rebellion From Society**- Holden, throughout the whole novel, differs from society which results in his rebellious nature. Holden does not have any friends and cannot keep relationships. This is because he finds and exaggerates any negative aspect of all the people he knows or meets. Holden also rebels because he feels that all adults are phonies.



- **Succumbing to Mental Instability-** Holden's instability has derived from various events and personality traits.
- Early in his life his brother Allie died. This had many negative effects on Holden.
- He believes his parents are phonies and that they neglected him. They send him to many different private schools and do not supply him with the love and affection he needs.
- Holden has either been expelled from or has run away from these schools. His incapability of living in society has led to his admission into a mental institution.

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Moral: a simple uplifting or warning lesson expressed in a literary work

Morals and Life Applications

- **Everyone has to grow up. It is an inevitable fact. Holden cannot grasp this concept and therefore has a nervous breakdown.**
- **We must deal with the ways of our society in order not to seclude ourselves from it.**