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English 11 AMA

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The Trials and Tribulations of Growing Up: An Analysis of J.D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye*

Growing up is hard to do. INSERT STORY HERE. In J.D. Salinger’s coming of age novel, *The Catcher in the Rye,* exposes the feelings, both positive and negative, that accompany growing up.

PHONINESS

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ALIENATION AND MELTDOWN

As stated earlier, Holden falls into depression due to the death of his younger brother Allie. This event is the beginning of Holden’s alienation and meltdown because “this loss combines with trauma to complicate the survivor's healing process; … trauma which also occurs may range from having witnessed or experienced forms of violence or abuse, or from having been overlooked through a benign kind of neglect by the parents” (Corso 92).

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WOMEN AND SEX

To escape his loneliness, Holden has agreed to “a throw” with a prostitute courtesy of the bellhop of the Edmont Hotel named Maurice. When the prostitute shows up, Holden declines to engage in sexual activity.

CHILDHOOD AND GROWING UP

Holden assumes Phoebe will be roller skating in the park on Sunday, but she isn’t, so he decides to saunter over to the Museum of Natural History anyway. Holden delights in visiting the museum for many reasons: “The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move. You could go there a hundred times., and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south…and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same same blanket. Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different is you” (Salinger 135). Holden finds comfort in the familiar, the people, events, and places that stay the same when the world around him is changing. Holden reminisces to times when he would go on field trips with his class to the museum, which reminds him of a safe and simpler time before his problems began. He doesn’t want to grow up. He wants to hide behind the walls of his childhood when everything was predictable; he wishes he could put his life behind a big glass case and protect if from the evils of the world, particularly “growing up” and dealing with Allie’s death.

As each teenager, a misfit to a certain extent in each story, attempts to take control of their lives to discover their own identity, and their values and beliefs, they fall under the influence of questionable adults whose motives seem less altruistic than theirs. Their need to be understood is very evident in each novel. (Corso 97)

MADNESS, DEPRESSION, AND SUICIDE

The story opens with Holden retelling his life to an unknown listener within a mental hospital, which proves off the bat that something is “off” with Holden’s mental state. The reader learns that his depression and resistance to get close to people stems from the death of his brother Allie. Stradlater asks him to write a composition for him, “Anger, depression, sadness, and the idea that there is no one who truly understands drive him to spill this angst out on paper” (Privitera 204).

“This fall you’re riding for—it’s a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn’t permitted to feel or hear himself hit the bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement’s designed for men who, at some time or another in their lives, were looking for someone or something their own environment couldn’t supply them with…So they gave up looking” (207).

# CONCLUSION

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