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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. Just recently, I got my driver’s license. I was so excited to be able to drive wherever I wanted and really feel independent. I was running an errand for my mom, when I accidentally hit a BMW. Now I have to spend the next four months working ot pay off the damage. I was jamming out to music too loudly that I was paying attention when I was driving. What makes me really feel like an adult now is the fact that I have to fix my own problems now. J.D. Salinger’s coming of age novel *The Catcher in the Rye* exposes the triumphs and tribulations of growing up.

PHONINESS

Throughout the story, Holden points out “phonies” or fake people. He does not want to grow up because he doesn’t want to become the fake adults he is accustomed to interacting with. Holden remembers the time that his former headmaster Thurman would suck up to the rich parents on Sundays but ignore the parents of less affluent students ( Huber and Ledbetter 250).

ALIENATION AND MELTDOWN

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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. EMBED A QUOTE AND EXPLAIN IT

EBSCO QUOTE AND EXPLANATION

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 safer 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.

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. Holden exposes his “anger, depression, sadness, and the idea that there is no one who truly understands [him, which] drives him to spill this angst out on paper” (Privitera 204). Holden rips up the essay about Allie because Stradlater disrespects Holden by cursing about the essay. This causes Holden to get depressed and lead him towards his downward spiral of madness.

Right at Holden lowest point, Holden visits Mr. Antolini, who gives him some life advice: “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” (Salinger 207). Holden has decides to abandon all hope and run away from his problems. Mr. Antolini knows that Holden is near a psychological break, and he wans Holden to see that he needs to start looking for answers and dealing with reality.

# CONCLUSION

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