An Analysis of Holden’s Predicament in the Modern Urban World in *The Catcher in the Rye*

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Class 320
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**Introduction**

*The Catcher in the Rye* has attracted critics’ attention ever since its publication. I read this novel at the age of seventeen, just about as old as the protagonist Holden. Being an adolescent as well, I find Holden’s story powerful and touching. The two of us, Holden and I, both hold some similar personalities, and because of our similarity, I was absorbed in the novel at once.

Holden’s experiences fascinated me. I was interested in how Holden interacts with the world around him----the world that is undoubtedly too different from the world he believes in. Therefore, in this small thesis, I would like to first discuss Holden’s personalities which make him special and account for his difficulties. Then I would discuss what the reality of the modern urban world is like -- the world Holden lives in and observes. Following those would be some further discussions about the conflicts between Holden and the reality of the world, and about Holden’s ideal world. Besides, I would talk about the attempts Holden has tried to get help or company and the results of his attempts. With this analysis, I hope I can better understand Holden’s predicament as an adolescent in the contemporary urban world.

**Thesis**

When *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951, it caught critics’ and book reviewers’ attention at once, and became an instant best seller. The story is told as a “flashback” by a 16-year-old adolescent, Holden Claufield, who is confessing to a psychoanalyst at a mental hospital. The first-person narration is full of digression and asides, which reveal the protagonist’s psychological state.

The story covers a span of three days, from the day Holden leaves Pencey Prep, the fourth school he has flunked out of, to the day his watching his sister Phoebe riding carousel in the rain at the zoo. It is the fourth time Holden gets expelled from school. Not wanting to stay in the dorm and also being unwilling to let his family learn about his situation, Holden packs his belongings and leaves Pencey on Saturday night, wandering aimlessly in New York City. He intends to go home four days later like other students when the Christmas vacation begins. During the three days he spends roving, his encounters build up his already-intense pressure and desperate helplessness. This buildup becomes the last straw upon Holden’s shoulders and eventually leads to his breakdown.
Born into a typical middle-class family, Holden is brought up with the standard values of the contemporary society. His father is a well-paid corporation lawyer. Holden’s elder brother, D.B., is a talented writer who has gone to Hollywood writing scripts in order to make more money. Allie, Holden’s two-year younger brother, died at the age of eleven. Holden’s mother has not felt too healthy since Allie’s death. And Phoebe, Holden’s youngest sibling, is described by Holden as “You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life” (67). Holden and Phoebe are very close to each other.

In this thesis, with Holden as an example of a contemporary adolescent in the modern urban world, I want to analyze Holden’s predicament by examining his personality traits and how he interacts with the contemporary world portrayed in the text.

I. First, I want to discuss Holden’s personality traits which make him special and account for his difficulties. The followings are the traits I find about Holden:

A. Holden has the sense of justice and morality:

This trait is shown strongly in his character. Holden cannot accept the reality of the world as it is. He bitterly opposes and criticizes the injustice and the unreasonable he encounters or observes. When Mr. Spencer, Holden’s history teacher at Pencey, tells him that “Life is a game that one plays according to the rules” (8). Holden, however, doesn’t agree and thinks to himself, “Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it’s a game….But if you get on the other side, where there aren’t any hot-shots, then what’s a game about it? Nothing. No game” (8).

At some point, Holden sees the flaws of the world which many people might not even notice. For instance, when he arrives at Ernie’s, a night club, the waiter gives him a table against a wall and behind a post partly because he is not an adult. It is a table “that if the people at the next table don’t get up to let you by – and they never do, the bastards—you practically have to climb into your chair” (85). To Holden, the lack of thoughtfulness of people and the feeling of being looked down by the waiter once again support his observation of the world around him, unfriendly and cold.

We can also see Holden’s sense of justice in his school life. For example,
Holden has a classmate, James Castle, at Elkton Hills, who was a “skinny little weak-looking” guy with “wrists about as big as pencils” (170). He called Phil Stabile a conceited guy. So Stabile, with about six friends of his, go to James’ room to make him take back his words. However, he refuses and jumps out of the window. Once again, Holden sees the injustice in this event: “All they did with the guys that were in the room with him was expel them. They didn’t even go to jail” (170). I think that Holden is, at a degree, stunned by the injustice shown without the slightest disguise. Even in school, Holden is forced to discover and face the unfair and cruel reality, which is so different from those values he was taught to believe in.

B. Holden is compassionate and has sympathy for the poor and people in trouble:

So when Holden visits Mr. Spencer, he feels depressed seeing the old man’s “very sad, ratty old bathrobe that he was probably born in” (7). He knows Mr. and Mrs. Spencer are not wealthy.

At Pencey, Holden has a classmate, Ackley, who is very sloppy and unpopular. On Saturday night, Holden decides to go to a movie with a friend. Holden invites Ackley to join them since he knows “Ackley never did anything on Saturday night” (36). Holden sympathizes with Ackley because of his unpopularity.

Holden’s sympathy shows even when he gets a prostitute in a hotel. The prostitute, cherishing her dress, asks for a hanger in case her dress gets wrinkly. Holden feels sad. He “think[s] of her going in a store and buying it, and nobody in the store knowing she was a prostitute and all” (96). His compassion for her makes Holden sad and depressed, and also discourages his sexual desire.

Still, Hold has a roommate, Dick Slagle, at Elkton Hills, who has “those very inexpensive suitcases” (108) which depresses Holden. Not to make Slagle feel inferior, Holden puts his suitcases under his bed, “so that old Slagle wouldn’t get a goddamn inferiority complex about it” (108).

Also, it depresses Holden as he meets two nuns who carry a “beat-up old straw basket” (113) and have toast and coffee only as a simple breakfast. For him, he does not feel right to have bacon and eggs while “somebody else is only
eating toast and coffee” (110). Again, Holden feels sympathy for people who are not wealthy. From these incidents mentioned above, we can see that deep in Holden’s heart, he has never stopped caring for the people around him. He is sensitive to the difficulties of others and is always willing to help. However, most of the time, Holden’s kindness is either unnoticed or not appreciated.

C. Holden is observant and sensitive:

Holden is sensitive and observant of something trifle, simple and beautiful. He notices that when he plays checker with Jane Gallagher, “she wouldn’t move any of her kings” (31) simply because she “liked the way they looked when they were all in the back row” (32). Holden also notices Jane’s difficult situation with her stepfather, but finds himself quite unable to help.

In the novel, Holden mentions his concern towards the ducks in the lagoon of the Central Park several times, “I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away” (13). Holden proposes the similar questions to the cab drivers he meets and shows his worries about the ducks. Both drivers couldn’t understand Holden’s peculiarity. To Holden, Gallagher’s troubled soul and the whereabouts of the ducks are both things worth caring for, while to others, these are simply trifle things that can be mostly ignored without even knowing.

D. Holden’s attitude to girls is sincere:

In contrast to Stradlater, “a very sexy bastard” (32), who has only sexual interest in girls, Holden is sincere in his attitude to girls, including Jane and the prostitute. After he agrees with the elevator guy to call a prostitute, he goes to his room preparing for the girl. He puts some water on his hair and even tests to see if his breath stinks (91). His preparing himself to meet a prostitute in a way a man does for his girlfriend shows his inexperience and sincerity.

To Holden, he has to love or like a girl first if he wants to have sex with her. “I know it’s supposed to be physical and spiritual, and artistic and
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all. But what I mean is, you can’t do it with everybody—all girl you
neck with…” (147) says Holden to Carl Luce. “I can never get really
sexy…with a girl I don’t like a lot….If I don’t, I sort of lose goddam desire
for her and all” (148). His attitude towards girls is partly the reason why he
can not have sex with the prostitute.

II. What is the reality of the modern urban world where Holden lives?

As a sixteen-year-old adolescent, Holden is going on his way to
adulthood. Obviously, he does not or cannot like this adult world around him.
To Holden, the modern urban world, the adult world, which he knows is a
world full of phonies, indifference, and a world lack of compassion, sincerity,
and justice. Therefore, in the second part of the thesis, I am going to discuss
the reality of the modern urban world where Holden lives. What is the
reality of the world like?

A. The world is full of phonies:

Holden categorizes many things he detests in the world as “phonies.”

What are phonies? Throughout the text, we can find examples which
Holden defines as phonies:

1. anything insincere or dishonest:

   Holden finds the ads of Pencey Prep in magazines not true.
   They show “some hot-shot guy on a horse jumping over a fence” (2) but
   actually there is never any horse at Pencey. The ads also say that “we have
   been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men” (2). Holden
   thinks the ads phony since he believes Pencey does no more molding than
   any other schools.

2. anything show-offy and pretentious:

   Holden hates showing off and being pretentious. His dislike for
   both is shown clearly when he mentions a colored pianist, Ernie, who
   plays “so good he’s almost corny” (80). When he plays, he puts
   “show-offy ripples in the high notes, and a lot of other very trick stuff
   that gives me a pain in the ass” (84).

   Holden does not like actors, either. He thinks they are phoney. He hates actors because “[t]hey never act like people. They just think
they do….And if any actor’s really good, you can always tell he knows he’s good, and that spoils it” (117).

3. anything snobbish and hypocritical:

   Holden left Elkton Hills because he “was surrounded by phonies” (13). The headmaster, Mr. Haas, “the phoniest bastard” (13) flatters the parents who dress nicely and look wealthy while being cold to those “little old funny-looking parents” (14). The snobbery and hypocrisy of Mr. Haas are intolerable to Holden and makes him depressed.

   Also, at Pencey, there are quite snobbish students who would not let some people, like Ackley, join them just “because he was boring and pimply” (167). Holden points out that the school is “full of phonies. And mean guys” (167).

4. anything done with the secret intention of gaining fame and profit:

   Holden does not want to be a lawyer because he fears he would become a phony. To Holden, being a lawyer is all right if he saves innocent guy’s lives. However, mostly “all you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hot-shot” (172). Even if you did save some guy’s life, you are not sure if you did it “because what you really wanted to do was be a terrific lawyer” (172). Thus, being a lawyer is to get either wealth or fame. Holden will not want himself to be such a phoney.

   Since Holden is such an adolescent as described in the first part, he cannot stand anything insincere, dishonest, pretentious, snobbish, hypocritical, and phoney, in the world.

B. The world has standard value system:

   Holden, born into a middle-class family, is surrounded by the middle-class value system which most people in his world pursue. Parents who have enough money send their children to private schools and expect them to be professionals. The schoolmates around Holden come from families of similar social status, the bourgeois. They are sent to Pencey, a private school, which, according to Holden, “has a very good academic rating” (4) and “quite a few guys [come] from these very wealthy families, but it [is] full of crooks anyway” (4). According to Christopher Brokeman,
throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, single-sex boarding schools like Pency “became places where the young future professionals of the middle and upper classes experienced an extended period of training and socialization” (Brookeman 59). To them, the definition of being successful is to make a lot of money, buy good houses and cars, and so on. However, Holden would not accept this kind of value system. He dislikes “those Ivy League bastards” and “wouldn’t go to one of those Ivy League colleges, if [he] was dying…” (85). He does not want to be a lawyer for fear of becoming a phony pursuing wealth and fame. Furthermore, he does not like money much since “it always ends up making you blue as hell” (113).

C. The world has standardization and regimentation:

Holden cannot tolerate standardization, regimentation and discipline, which are sometimes inevitable in the society, such as in the army and schools. Holden mentions that if he goes to war, it wouldn’t be too bad if they just shoot him, but he does know “it’d drive [him] crazy if [he] had to be in the Army and be with a bunch of guys like Ackley and Stradlater and old Maurice all the time, marching with them and all” (140). As John Seelye points out, Holden says this “…not because he is a war hater, but because he detests regimentation” (Seelye 30).

Another example happens at school. There is a course called Oral Expression at Pency where every student in the class has to make a spontaneous speech, and if a boy digresses, others will yell “Digression!” at him. It drives Holden crazy (183). It is the brutal rudeness and the disrespect of others shown in the yelling action that Holden considers unforgivable. He thinks that “it’s dirty to keep yelling ‘Digression!’ at him when he’s all nice and excited” (184). Holden complains to Mr. Antolini that the Oral Expression teacher, Mr. Vinson, keeps asking students “to unify and simplify” (185) when they make a speech. Holden says “you can’t hardly ever simplify and unify something just because somebody wants you to” (185). He hates standardization or being forced to do something he is requested to do by the teacher’s standard.

III. Discussions about the conflicts between Holden and the reality of the

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1 Brookeman, Christopher. p.59
2 Seelye, John. p.30
world, and Holden’s ideal world embodied by children:

As Joyce Rowe says:

…[Holden is an] upper-middle-class adolescent who is entirely dependent upon institutions that have failed him. (79)

…From beginning to end of his journey, from school to sanitarium, Holden’s voice...conveys his rage at the inability of his contemporaries to transcend the corrosive materialism of modern American life. (78)

…as the heir of all the ages, blessed with the material splendors of the Promised Land, Holden feels more victim or prisoner than favored son. (91)

The features of the modern urban world Holden has observed are so different from the values Holden believes in that he feels very depressed all the time. He can not take the reality of the society as it is. According to Pamela Louise Hunt Steinle,

…Holden expresses his disappointment and often disgusts with much of the post-war adult world. His definitive sense of American life is that it is largely “phony”—a term he applies repeatedly throughout the tale to various contemporary definitions of success…. (21-22)

He resists the sophistication, phonies, standard value system, regimentation and standardization in the real world. As Maxwell Geismar says, “The Catcher in the Rye protests, to be sure, against both the academic and social conformity of its period” (Rowe 93). Holden, while not yet ready to compromise with the reality which he finds distasteful, he chooses to simply reject it, meanwhile struggling to find himself an exit for a better world. Throughout the years, “Holden…has become a mythic figure of adolescent rebellion in American culture” and is regarded as “a rebel against the conformist pressures of post-Second World War American society” (Brookeman 57). Thus, Holden can be viewed as a “nonconformist asserting his nonconformity” (Salzman 9).

What Holden believes in is a world, his ideal world, of purity, sincerity,

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1 This quote is found in “Holden Caulfield and American Protest” in New Essays on The Catcher in the Rye by Joyce Rowe.
2 Brookeman, Christopher. p.57
3 Salzman, Jack. p.9
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simplicity, justice and beauty, which is embodied by children, contrasting with the phony adult world lack of compassion as the text shows. To Holden, most children are pleasant. He helps a little girl tightening her skate shoes because her hands are all red and cold (119). The little girl thanks him, being “a very nice, polite little kid” (119). Holden “love[s] it when a kid’s nice and polite” (119). Compared with the depressing world, the little girl is so on the opposite.

When Holden arrives at home at night, he finds Phoebe asleep, with “her mouth way open” (159). Holden does not wake her up immediately. Instead, he chooses to look at her for a while thinking that adults “look lousy when they’re asleep and they have their mouths way open, but kids don’t. Kids look all right. They can even have spit all over the pillow and they still look all right” (159).

Since children symbolize the ideal world of Holden’s where everything is simple, sincere and beautiful, and everyone cares about each other, Holden wants to protect them and love them. Holden wants to “be the catcher in the rye” (173) where thousands of little kids playing in a big field of rye while “nobody’s around nobody big. . . except me [Holden]” (173). He would stand “on the edge of some crazy cliff” and “catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff” (173). “The children falling off the cliff are said to symbolize a fall into adulthood, from which Holden imagines himself sparing them even as he would spare himself” (Peter Shaw 103). A good example of Holden’s children protector urge happens when he goes to Phoebe’s school and finds that “somebody’d written ‘Fuck you’ on the wall” (201). Later, Holden saw some more graffiti in the school which is scratched on. This nearly drives Holden crazy when he thinks of “how Phoebe and all other little kids would see it, and how they’d wonder what the hell it meant…” (201). He wants to protect the children in case they lose their innocence some day. As Seelye comments, “For Holden, the urban world is full of signifiers of adulthood, and he is less eager to rub out the Maurices of that world than he is to stop kids before they enter it … Holden mostly hates adulthood, from which he seeks to rescue all children . . .” (Seelye 29).

In fact, Holden is more like one of the children than the phony

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1 Shaw, Peter. p.103
2 Seelye, John. p.29
grown-ups. Even Holden himself points out that “it’s really ironical” (9) because he is six foot two and a half and has gray hair (9). Perhaps we may say that the reason why Holden “act[s] quite young” (9) is because that, in a way, he does not want to grow up and become one of the phonies he hates so much.

IV. The attempts Holden has tried to get help or company and the results of them:

For the fourth part of the thesis, I am going to discuss the attempts Holden has tried to get help or company and the results of them. Throughout the story, Holden is mostly “depressed and lonesome” (153). He is depressed by the phonies and coldness of the society which he rejects but can not change. “Holden is not in the midst of the ‘untracked American forest’ but rather in the urban ‘jungle’ of the mid-twentieth century, an environment in which Salinger emphasizes the coldness of institutions...” (Steinle 36). The indifference of the world makes him feel lonely. For example, Stradlater has not given Holden a word of concern even though he knows that Holden has just been expelled. Instead, he asks Holden to write a composition for him while he himself goes out dating. Then, after Holden has a fight with Stradlater, he goes seeking Ackley’s company. All Ackley cares is taking a sleep. It is obvious that Holden’s friends at Pencey actually do not really care about him.

When Holden gets out of Pencey at night, he goes into a phone booth but “couldn’t think of anyone to call up” (59). This shows that Holden, while wandering the huge New York City, is becoming disconnected from the world around him. As Brookeman says, “Holden “is endlessly in pursuit of company, calling people on the phone, both acquaintances and strangers . . .” (62-3). Holden has made many attempts to find help or company through making phone calls, but the calls are usually either unanswered or picked up by the wrong persons. Sometimes, Holden is simply not “much in the mood” (150) to call the one he previously intends to call. In the end, those completed calls are mostly the calls to the ones that cannot really offer Holden much help.

Take Sally Hayes and Carl Luce for example. Sally, as a typical middle-class girl, cannot understand the way Holden thinks and therefore, is unable to help Holden. When Holden asks her to join his retreating fantasy, to

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1 Steinle, Pamela Louise Hunt. p.36
2 Brookeman, Christopher. p.62-3
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“get the hell out of here” (132) and “live somewhere with a brook” (132), Sally thinks that they should at least wait until Holden goes to college, gets a job, and gets married. Sally says what Holden suggests is “so fantastic” (132). It is clear that Sally cannot understand the difficulties Holden is facing, and their meeting becomes a communication failure. After meeting Sally, Holden called Carl and the latter agrees to come and meet Holden but can only “stay a couple of minutes” (144) since he has a date. Apparently, Luce cannot see the desperate situation which Holden is in. He does not care much to stay even when Holden pleads him to have just one more drink: “Please. I’m lonesome as hell. No kidding” (149).

Besides the phone calls, Holden also has tried other ways to keep his mind from focusing on his own condition. His asking cab drivers to have a drink is an action of getting away from loneliness and looking for company. However, the two drivers Holden invites both decline his offer.

When Holden goes to say good-bye to Mr. Spencer before he leaves Pencey, Mr. Spencer also wants to help him, and Holden knows that, but they are “too much on opposite sides of the pole” (15).

When finally Holden arrives at home, he talks with his ten-year-old sister Phoebe about his stress and depression. Phoebe is even more practical than Holden. Nevertheless, she is too young to offer Holden any actual help, but Holden still appreciates her understanding: “But she was listening, at least. If somebody at least listens, it’s not too bad” (172).

Later, Holden goes to visit Mr. Antolini, a teacher he likes very much at Elkton Hills. Mr. Antolini is the only one in the story who can see through Holden’s problems clearly and analyze them accurately. His advice for Holden is to the point. He suggests Holden to “find out where you[Holden] want[s] to go to” (288) and to start going there immediately. He also says that Holden will have to “apply yourself [himself] in school…whether the idea appeals to you [Holden] or not” (189). Mr. Antolini then consoles Holden, saying: “…you’ll find that you’re not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior.” (189). Though Mr. Antolini knows what causes Holden’s difficulties, his approach to Holden’s problem is too academic. What Holden needs are practical help, compassion and understanding. That is why Holden cannot understand Mr. Antolini’s words.
Still, after making these attempts, Holden are frustrated----more depressed, more lonesome, and more desperate----since they hardly help. Besides that, Holden even could not find much support at home. He says he has “no home to go to” (152). As Brookeman says, Holden’s “closeness to his brothers and sister is in stark contrast to the relation with his parents, who are absent, shadowy figures” (71)\(^1\). Also, Rowe points out that

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\ldots \text{His [Holden’s] mother, as he repeatedly notes, is too nervous and anxious herself to do more than pay perfunctory attention to her children’s needs. His father is a shadowy abstraction -- a corporate lawyer, defined by his preoccupations and vexations. We hear from Phoebe that “Daddy’s going to kill you,” rather than experience the father directly through any memory of Holden’s. (89)}
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Rowe concludes that “Holden’s anxiety, then, is of a specifically contemporary kind. Those adults who should serve as moral tutors and nurturers are neither wholly absent nor fully present” (89).

While Holden rejects the adult world, he also feels rejected by it. The brutalities and harshness he faces, the failure of reaching out for help or company, and the lack of compassion and understanding in the society all build up the pressure within Holden, forcing him finally to retreat to his ideal idyllic natural world in order to get away from the harsh reality he is in. Holden realizes “the apparent futility of attempts to make one’s individual life fully distinctive as well as the absurdity of trying to prevent the loss or perversion of innocence . . .” (Steinle 37)\(^2\). Since Holden cannot “find a place that’s nice and peaceful, because there isn’t any” (204), he resorts to fantasy, deciding to “hitchhiking my [Holden’s] way out West” (198). As Rowe puts it, Holden’s ideal “lies in a sunlit childhood Eden” (Rowe 80)\(^3\). Holden imagines himself moving to somewhere “pretty and sunny” (198) and getting a job there while at the same time pretending to be a “deaf-mute” (198) so that he “wouldn’t [won’t] have to have any goddam stupid useless conversations with anybody” (198), and he will marry a deaf-mute girl. The reality disappoints Holden so much that he wants to get away from it and cut off every possible way of connecting with the rest of the phony world. Holden’s urge of protecting the children shows again when saying that he, in his fantasy world, will hide his children if he had any [of course, from the depressing world] (199). In Holden’s retreating fantasy, he

\(^1\) Brookeman, Christopher. p.71

\(^2\) Steinle, Pamela Louise Hunt. p.37

\(^3\) Rowe, Joyce. p.80
even makes the rule that “nobody could [can] do anything phony” (205) when they visit him so that there will be no phonies in his ideal life. Though his fantasy is Holden’s last and most desperate way of resisting the harsh reality, Holden knows the pretending is crazy (206) and quite unfeasible. Holden’s evasion is “a hopeless hope” (Rowe 80). Holden “is committed to a hopeless vision that makes all the more acute his disgust with the actual” (Rowe 80).

Conclusion

Holden is such a good adolescent by nature that he would not throw a snowball at a car because “the car looked so nice and white” (36). Why, then is he caught in this predicament? It is clear that the world cannot offer Holden what he wants. Holden rejects the world, and, meanwhile, he does not feel accepted by it. However, this is the world that he must lives in and face everyday. This is “a society that Holden can neither accept nor escape. His encounter has only served to increase his sense of himself as a creature at bay. His anxiety is never allayed” (Rowe 90). He is unable to go against the unstoppable force of the harsh world. Being both unable to change the world and unwilling to come to terms with it, Holden’s stress, depression, loneliness, and sense of helplessness build up, and in the end, lead Holden to his somewhat inevitable breakdown. As Steinle points out that “[a]lthough he wishes to prevent the fall of others, Holden cannot ‘catch’ himself from his own fall—indeed, the ‘catcher in the rye’ itself is a fantasy” (32). 

In this story, the protagonist Holden, as a specimen of a contemporary urban adolescent, shows what difficulties an adolescent might face in such a world. According to Steinle, . . . The greater difficulty in the post-World War II period, however, lies in the ever-widening distance between traditionally held American ideals and values (democracy, freedom, individualism, equality, voluntary social responsibility) and the actions and expressions of Americans—as individuals, as a people. In exactly this sense, the narrator of The Catcher in the Rye sees his own adolescence as a precipitous jump from the cherished ideals and beliefs of childhood to the inauthentic and cynical social reality of adulthood. (5-6)

His predicament appears because there are too many great differences between

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1 Rowe, Joyce. p.80
2 Rowe, Joyce. p.90
3 Steinle, Pamela Louise Hunt. p.32
the real world and the world he believes in.

Also, Holden can be a reminder to people of how they can try to care and offer adolescents more company, tolerance and listening in order to help them get over this period of difficulties. Most people might think they are not able to change the world, but, at least, company and understanding are something they can offer.

As for the adolescents at Holden’s age, reading this story and taking Holden as an example, they would probably realize that, just as Mr. Antolini says to Holden, “…many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now” (189). They can then examine themselves more clearly and learn from the experiences of Holden’s, knowing that they are “…by no means alone on that score…” (189).
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**Works Cited**


