

## TREACHEROUS DESERTION IN J.D SALINGER'S THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

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### ABSTRACT

Treacherous Desertion in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is an exploitation of Holden, the protagonist who is caused by teenage depression and alienation. The novel depicts alienation and loss of innocence of adolescence. Holden struggles much in the world of because of phony adult society and teenage depression. Salinger has woven the wandering experience and mental default of Holden in this novel. Holden is isolated from society and parents and he is the only cause for his idleness. He even fears to talk to his parents. He simply wants to retain his individual identity and does not wish to behave the way his society expects him to. Salinger depicts the loss of innocence, phony adult youth of American society and stresses upon the need of parental guidance for teenagers. Jerome David Salinger was born in New York City in 1919. The son of a wealthy cheese importer, Salinger grew up in a fashionable neighborhood in Manhattam and spent his youth being shuttled between various prep-schools before his parents finally settled on the Valley Forge Military Academy in 1934. He graduated at New York University, Ursine College and Columbia University. His debut short story entitled as *The Young Folks* about sveral aimless youths. His full-length novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951.

Alienation is a major theme in Salinger's popular novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. The novel covers the incidents happening within the period of three days almost around Christmas time when Holden, a sixteen -year-old teenager, is expelled from his third prep- school due to his inability to pass from his subjects. He does not want to go home and confront his parents, so he travels to New York with an aim of reaching at a decision about his future.

Holden Caulfield, the novel's adolescent central character, seems alienated from most of his teachers and schoolmates, much of his family, and much of society at large. He has no real or deep friendship; most of his interactions are superficial, and many of his relationships are insincere. People do not listen to Holden because he alienates himself from people, such as his parents, whom he is afraid to talk and repeatedly avoids meeting them. He is isolated from every character in the novel with whom he is associated with the exception of Phoebe.

Holden seems fundamentally frustrated and unhappy with his life and most of the people around him. Most of those people, in turn, appear to exist at least as they are perceived and Holden-in-shallow, unfulfilling, and insubstantial relationships, not only with Holden but also with one another. Very few characters in this novel appear to be content and purposefully progressing, instead, they are living that are essentially self-centered, calculating and insincere-lives. The most word Holden used in this novel, considers fundamentally, "phony"(Salinger, 115).

Holden considers everlasting childhood to be a way of getting away from the phony culture and the adult world. He is quite reluctant to go down crazy cliff and to dive headlong into the world of adults which appears to be so phony, dreadful and challenging. His repulsion intensifies when he says “guy carrying crucifixes and stuff all over the place... I said old Jesus probably would’ve puked if he could see it all those fancy costumes and all” (Salinger, 178). Holden himself felt so nauseated that he almost becomes physically sick. He is thoroughly depressed and dejected with the world of adults and it makes him so repulsive that he feels like vomiting at it and everything else in it. He does not belong want anything to do with it.

His isolation and estrangement originate from his sense of being disconnected from his parents, friends, school and community. Ernest Jones asserts that Holden’s predicament has been quite common to every emotional adolescent for the last two centuries. He regards it as a phase of growing up, an indication and insight of alienation. Explaining Holden’s reason for nausea, Jones states that,

With his alienation go assorted hatreds-of movies,  
of night clubs, of social and intellectual pretension,  
and so on. And physical disgust: pimples sex, an old man  
picking his nose is all equal cause nausea.(Jones,7)

Holden’s loneliness in the psychiatric ward marks the ironical incongruity. It is not Holden’s who should be examined for a sickness of the mind, but the world in which he has sojourned and found himself an alien. To cure Holden, he must be given the contagious, almost universal disease of phony adultism: he must be pushed over that “crazy cliff” (Miller, 10). Even though he fails to communicate and blend in with the people he sees around himself, Holden has somebody in his life that he can depend on and ask for guidance. It is Mr. Antolini, a young , intelligent, supportive, and charming person, and Holden has genuine respect of him for advice. He pays him a visit after he leaves Phoebe. Mr. Antolini was very kind and nice to Holden. After listening to Holden’s side of incidents befallen upon him, he feels genuinely concerned and provides him that the following advice:

I have afeeling that you’ re riding for some kind of a terrible,  
terrible fall. But I don’t honestly know what kind... This fall I  
think 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 bottom. (Salinger,201)

After this excellent advice, Holden goes off to sleep and wakes and suddenly finds Mr. Antolini caressing his head. Paternal love appears to be very frightening and unusual for Holden that he starts wondering if Mr. Antolini has evil intensions, and the following bothers him so much that he abandons him and hurriedly flees to home. Holden goes to Grand Central Station, sleeps on the bench feeling “more depressed than he ever was in his whole life” (Salinger, 209). Holden hits rock bottom, he

wakes up in the morning, he starts to think, and he jumped to hasty conclusions about Mr. Antolini's conduct. Holden appears as if he has lost all his purpose and reason. He says "Everyday I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, and nobody's ever see me again" (Salinger, 213).

The novel ends in an enigmatic and unclear manner. It is vague whether Holden will be sure to the assurance of recovery that is indicated as he looks at the carousel Holden's towards the end of novel says "Don't tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody" (Salinger, 230). It implies that he is still troubled by the very problems he has encountered with from the beginning of the novel. He appears to be frightened and lonely and he still feels dreadful of human interaction. The Ohmanns might be correct in seeing *The Catcher in the Rye* as partly an indictment of a materialistic, competitive society in which individuals put their own interests first, leaving many people alienated, estranged, and cut off from deeper attachments to others.

Salinger also deals about the teenage depression in this novel. The reason for Holden's teenage depression is adult phoniness and family surrounding. As the novel opens with the note that he wanders throughout the city of New York, since he was expelled from his school, caused him to feel insecure and fear towards his parents. The solution for Holden is, he has to mingle with society and parents without concerning his fear. Especially his parents must take care of him and moreover he needs proper counseling and guidance from them rather than others. During adolescence period everyone needs parental guidance. Without parents' support the teenager will deceive their life because of the phoniness of adult world.

Family is the place where person always gets love and care. So the family bondage and parental care are essential for children especially for the teenagers like Holden. Through this novel, J.D. Salinger pictures teenage depression like a kind of social issue. The only solution to this problem is to provide parental care and have a good rapport among friends.

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