

The Catcher in the Rye

The characteristics of Holden from the book *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, will be compared to the "modern teenager". The characteristics of both sets of teenagers are basically similar, but in some parts, they are different. I chose myself as the modern teenager to be compared to Holden. There will be four major subjects to be talked about in the essay. The main subjects that are going to be discussed in this essay are academics, family, experiences and slang. I thought these four categories are interesting and easy to explain.

In school, we are very similar in many ways. Both of us do not do well academically. We both have problems with grades in our classes. Holden failed four out of five of his classes while I failed none. But instead I received four "C's" from four out of eight of my classes. Although Holden has problems with grades, ironically he does well in his English. Holden stated, "I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot." (p.18) Reading books improves your grammar and vocabulary. This was the reason why Holden does well in his English class. I do not read much and therefore I have problems in my grammar.

The family background of Holden and I are fairly similar, both of us come from opulent families. Holden and I are both very lucky to be studying in eminent institutions. Unfortunately, Holden does not take this advantage. Holden's mind is elsewhere in a reverie, day dreaming how to save the virtuous children from the evil. While studying away from his family makes Holden's relationship with his family worst. I study in a private school with my sister and we go home every day and meet our parents when we get home. Since Holden does not spend quality time with his parents long enough, he rarely talked about them in the book. Holden even wrote about his brother in a negative way, "Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute." (p.2) Using the word prostitute means a lot, maybe he did not know him as much as he needed to. Unlike me, I will never insult my sister a prostitute because that is like insulting yourself.

Holden's experience to independent living is very strong; he can handle himself economically. Holden has no problem in money and therefore food is not a major problem and concern. Socially, Holden has a wide range of problems that needs to be solved. Problems from saving children from the malevolent to growing up. For me I do not have as much as Holden does. I will not have to worry about growing up because I think everybody has to move on. Unfortunately, Holden can not face the reality; himself troubles him because he thinks of not growing up. He wants to save children from learning bad ideas. Holden has no one to talk to, his problems circle around his head on and on. This will give him more and more problems that he cannot overcome and therefore he will feel depressed all the time.

A lot of slang is used through out the whole novel. For me, I use slang in my everyday life. I can say that I use slang in every other sentence when I am

talking to my friends. Slang for modern teenagers is very common, although they are changing through out the time most of the old slang are understood. Phrases like, "I mean I could shoot the old bull to Old Spencer"(p.13) This sentence can be hard to understand at first but after reading it over several times, I can kind of get the meaning of it. To "shoot the old bull" means to give him "lies" in other words, say whatever comes up to your mind. Holden and I are similar, we use slang very often because we are used to talking freely, as in no one stopping you or caring. Because both of us come from opulent families, we therefore should be more concerned with our manners. There are limits sometimes; talking to adults is one good example. To show respect to the elder, teenagers like Holden and I do not use slang in front adults because it is very disrespectful. We are supposed to be well mannered people, and therefore we should be more concerned about our reputations.

From the four main points that I have stated, I think Holden and I are more similar then different. The book *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger makes Holden sounds like a problem child, but if you compare Holden with a modern teenager closely, you will find that there are a number of similarities between the two teenagers. Holden is more experienced in independent living, but his school performance and his way of talking to his peers is the same the modern teenager. The only difference of Holden compared to the modern teenager is that he views about his family. This is basically because he is not close in touch to his family as much as we are. Holden goes to boarding school and therefore he will have less quality time with his family.

Word Count: 859

Bibliography

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991.

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English 2B
Subj. 2-4

Mr. Pleasants

October 7, 1997