

The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D Salinger, depicts how a lonely teenager, Holden Caulfield, deals with alcohol, sex, and violence. Teenagers must also deal with these problems daily.

Alcohol is very predominate throughout the novel The Catcher in the Rye. Alcoholic beverages are a readily available, and relatively inexpensive for minors to get. Over the past couple of years, teenage consumption of alcohol has risen dramatically. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism states that more than 1.3 million teenagers have a drinking problem. The National Institute also reports that the reason for underage teenage drinking is they believe in a mixture of rebellion towards their parents and a sign of maturity. Another reason for teenage drinking is it represents a daring gesture. According to Dr. Joseph Franklin, "The way drinking starts is, one kid dares another kid to take a drink of alcohol, and the kid doesn't want his friends to think he is a coward so he does. Then the rest of them follow."

In the book, Between Parent and Teenager, it states the substance abuse is the number one cause of death amongst teenagers. Studies show that among high school students age 14 - 17, 60% of the students use alcohol once a week, 75% use it at least once a month, and 85% have used it once in the year.

In the novel, Holden Caulfield has very easy access to alcoholic beverages. Throughout the novel, it seems that every time Holden gets depressed, he turns towards alcohol. in Chapter 12, Holden is at Ernie's night club and he got served even though he was only a minor. In Chapter 20, Holden gets drunk. The way he acted when he was drunk shows how pathetic you are when you can not function properly.

The next topic, sex, is a very common word nowadays. Sex is so common it is on television screens, blown up on billboards, and used for commercial enticement. It also seems that teenage men are purchasing cars and teenage girls are receiving more freedom from their parental figures. A couple years back, women did not have the same freedoms as they do today. It also seems that there is a lack of parental supervision and kids are getting away with a whole lot more, than in recent years. Sex isn't a forbidden topic, like in the sixties. Parents today either tell their kids about it or they totally avoid the subject. According to Between Parent and Teenager, one unidentified mother said, "Whenever my son asks me something about sex, my face turns crimson and I avoid his question."

According to The Search for Structure , in 1979, 53 % of the teenage boys were not virgins. In 1985, 46% of the boys were not. That is a good sign. It means boys are becoming more aware of teenage pregnancy and the consequences. In 1987, one million teenage girls became pregnant. Out of this, 470,000 were birth's, 400,000 were abortions, and 130,000 were miscarriages.

Holden talks about and encounters sex constantly in the novel. In one of the chapters, he even has an opportunity for a prostitute to come to his hotel room. He jumps on the opportunity, but doesn't commit the act of sexual intercourse. After his encounter with the prostitute, an act of violence is committed. This will be talked about in my next paragraph. In about every chapter, he talks about how he or one of his friends did something to a girl. He talked about his neighbor a bunch of times in the novel. Her name was Jane Gallagher. One time he talks about how he kissed her. He is always looking for a girl to talk to. In a chapter, he talks with one of his friends about his sex life. He tells him how terrible it was.

Finally, the last dilemma that teenagers face daily is, violence. Violence is another one of those topics which is all over television shows, movies, and printed materials.

Example of printed materials are, newspapers, and magazines. Violence is something, no matter where you go, you will still encounter it. Even in our

harmless halls of Keystone Oaks, violence is an event that happens every now and then. According to The Teenage Survival Book, the innocence of children and teens is corrupted by television. Watching horror movies only promotes violence. A way to keep violence down among teenagers is, to tone down the blood and gore seen on television, and on the movie screen.

Within the novel, Holden gets beat up twice. Once by Stradlater, and once by the pimp at the hotel (mentioned above). The reason why Holden gets beat up by Stradlater is Stradlater asked Holden to write him a paper and Holden did. When Stradlater read the paper, he told him it was all wrong. That made Holden mad, so he ripped the paper up and kept taunting Stradlater by calling him a moron. Holden took a punch at him and Stradlater jumped on him and kept telling him to shut up. He let him up and Holden said something again. Stradlater punched him right in the nose. That knocked Holden to the floor. He received a bloody nose from that.

The other time was at the hotel. The pimp showed up at Holden's room and demanded that his prostitute get paid the five dollars he owed her. Holden already paid her and he told that to him. The pimp kept demanding the money, and then he punched Holden in the gut.

So, in conclusion, this novel really shows how a teenager lives a life. Throughout a teenager's life, they either already knew or saw the things mentioned or they were introduced to the topics. Alcohol prevention is now being taught at an early age so that kids won't make any bad or harsh mistake which they will regret when they are older.

Sexual education is something that either the young person will learn about on their own or their parents will discuss the matter with them. Remember, ignorance is not the key in this matter, as mentioned earlier. Violence is something that will always be around. There is no way of getting rid of it. Young people will probably learn about it through the television or on the news.

