

Casey Stadnyk

Ms. Smith

EN40SLE

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Symbolism in *The Catcher in the Rye* ✓

One may see a carousel simply as an amusement park ride for children, however in literature, it can have a deeper meaning than just some horses spinning in a circle. Authors view the carousel as an opportunity to incorporate symbolism into their writing (Puglisi). Symbolism is defined as, "an object, person, situation or word to represent something else, like an idea, in literature." (Thomas). In the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, J. D. Salinger utilizes symbols to give the reader insight into the mind of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. He is an immature teenager who loathes the phony adult world. He does not want to grow up and wishes he still had, "a childhood where there are no fears, only joy and protection." (Miller). Salinger uses symbols to represent Holden's fantasy world of innocence, protection and subsequently accepting the real world. ✓

The Museum of Natural History symbolizes Holden's ideal world, a world that never changes. When Holden was in elementary school, he went on field trips at the same museum almost every Saturday (119). He has a deep connection with this museum because it has never changed since the first time he went there (121). It is a place of comfort for Holden as he is unwillingly going through the change of being a child to an adult (Kestler). Exploring the museum as a teenager makes Holden reminisce his childhood, "Nothing'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south..." (121). Demonstrating Holden's wish to never grow up and

the world to stay constant. Holden believes the only factor that alters one's view of the museum is not age, but maturity. How one changes physically does not matter, it is how one changes mentally that results in how they see the museum (^{cite specific webpage} Shmoop Editorial Team). Holden states that situations such as parents arguing, substitute teachers and a friend getting ill are various situations that can alter a person's perspective of the world and, respectively, the museum (121). Their opinion does not change due to how many birthdays they have had since their last visit to the museum, but the life events that mature them. Holden refuses to grow up, but he knows it is inevitable, he wishes someone would guide him into adulthood.

Holden desires someone to securely enter him into the world of adulthood, but his child-like thoughts hold him back. Holden wants to know where the ducks go when the lagoon freezes over (60). His theory is, "someone come[s] around in a truck or something and take[s] them away..." (82). Demonstrating Holden's concern regarding the ducks getting to safety, with assistance. This symbolizes the want he has for anyone to guide him into adulthood guaranteeing his success and security, just like he thinks the ducks should have. It is a child-like question to ask, showing his innocence. Adults would not typically ask or care where the ducks go or how they get to their destination (Yates). Holden asks his inquiry to his taxi driver (82). The taxi driver is a mature, grown adult who does not spend his time thinking of ducks, "How the hell should I know a stupid thing like that?" (82). Showing Holden's immature mentality and child-like curiosity. He is not prepared to grow up and he does not know how to do it on his own (Yates). Holden wants to provide the protection he wants to his little sister, Phoebe, and her peers at her school.

The graffiti on Phoebe's elementary school walls symbolize Holden's inability to protect children from lose of innocence. Holden discovers "fuck you" signs covering the school walls

and he wants to hide it from the children, so they are not exposed to the profanity used in the adult world. Holden thinks, "about how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it...and how they'd all think about it for a couple of days." (201). Showing Holden feels responsible for shielding children, including the ones he does know, to maintain their innocence. Holden could not protect his brother, Allie who died as a child, resulting in his need to do anything to protect children. Holden would kill whoever wanted to ruin their innocence," I kept picturing myself catching him at it... I'd smash his head on the stone steps til he was good and goddam dead and bloody." (201). Demonstrating his anger and commitment to get justice on the person who tried to terminate their childhood. He discovers another "fuck you" sign, but it was scratched permanently into the wall (201). That is the moment he realized, "if you had a million years to do it in, you couldn't rub out even half of the 'fuck you' signs in the world." (202). This represents Holden's dream to protect children is unrealistic. There are threats towards innocence everywhere, and he will only find more as he searches for them (202). Many threats, like the one scratched into the wall, cannot be removed and Holden can do nothing about it, but accept it. Holden begins to realize he is unable to protect children from the world and he must let them go.

The carousel and gold ring represent Holden accepting the fact everyone must grow up. Holden concludes to the idea that one must allow a child to reach out into the world, even if they may fall and get hurt, independently (Shmoop Editorial Team). Before Holden would have tried to protect Phoebe from falling off the carousel, in attempt of grabbing the golden ring, but this time he does nothing to stop her (211). Demonstrating Holden's realization that when a child is ready to mature, they will reach towards the gold ring, fail, and keep trying until they grasp it in their hands and grow up. Holden cannot stop this process of life; therefore, he decides to let it happen. The carousel is also in the shape of a circle and it is rotating, symbolizing the circle of

Any secondary sources to this support paragraph?

life that will never stop moving (Chung). Finally, Holden accepts that everyone's childhood ends while he watches Phoebe spin round and round on the carousel. It made him feel so joyful, he almost bawled (213). This shows Holden's new understanding of how life works and how he cannot prevent a child from entering adulthood. ^{Previously} Before, he was angry at the thought of his ^{run-on sentence} childhood and ending, but as he watches Phoebe live her childhood playing on the carousel, while Holden watches from a distance, he feels at peace with his future. Holden lets go of the urge to protect innocent children and willingly watches them mature into adults. ✓

Salinger uses symbols to represent Holden's fantasy world of innocence, protection and subsequently accepting the real world. Holden never directly informs the reader that he never wants to grow up, he desires aid becoming an adult and his wish to protect children from the world. It is demonstrated through symbols such as a museum, ducks and graffiti. Finally, the carousel symbolizes Holden's realization one cannot avoid adulthood, nor can he protect children's innocence, therefore he decides to accept reality. ✓ Symbols make these events in the novel have a deeper meaning. Resulting in the reader gaining insight into Holden's true feelings concerning adulthood, without him saying it. This is important to society because everything is not always exactly what it seems to be. ✓ A person who is depressed and searching for help may display different symbols such as loss of interest in activities, sleeping problems, change in appetite and weight (Healthline Editorial Team). One may not say they are depressed, but may show the signs they are. One must watch and become aware of these signs to help someone in need. ✓

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Sample: Explaining Your Writing Variables

Day 2 or 3



Explaining Your Writing Variables

Explain how the writing variables you identified on page x fit together to make an effective plan for your written text.

5 marks

108

My essay is about symbolism used in The Catcher in the Rye. The purpose of my essay is to inform and educate people who are new to analyzing literature. An essay regarding symbolism is appealing to these people because they are interested in looking deeper into the text and educating themselves on how to recognize symbolism when it is used. My essay can be found at popular bookstores, such as Chapters and Barnes and Noble, at the check-out area. People can pick up my essay, bring it home to learn about different symbols as they read their new pieces of literature. I chose to write about symbolism in the form of an essay because essays give the reader a clear layout of the symbols used in The Catcher in the Rye. Each organized paragraph contains information regarding a specific symbol. My variables work together to properly and efficiently to inform and educate people who are new to analyzing literature, to the topic of symbolism.

Why would
you all audience
in interested
this
topic?