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The Happiness Holden finds in his Depression in The Catcher in the Rye ✓

One cannot know happiness without knowing the feeling of sadness. Holden Caulfield, the main character in J.D. Salinger's novel The Catcher in the Rye is in a constant state of sadness throughout the entirety of the novel. As Holden tries to navigate through his depression in the streets of New York City he is able to find one thing that makes him happy, and its childhood innocence. In the novel The Catcher in the Rye Holden exhibits symptoms of depression. The only way Holden can find happiness in his depression is when he feels he is preserving childhood innocence. ✓

Holden has a severe lack of interest on his own life. Holden exhibits this symptom of depression when he stops applying himself in school and ends up flunking out for the fourth time (Salinger, pg. 4). Holden's lack of care in his school life is evident in his not to Mr. Spencer that states it is alright for Mr. Spencer to flunk him as he is flunking every other subject (pg. 12). Holden's anhedonia (loss of interest or pleasure) (Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing for Canadian Practise) does not only apply to his schooling but his own life as well. Holden's lack of concern in his own life is vividly seen in his suicidal thoughts. Holden has frequently brought up the concept of suicide throughout the novel. His last thought of suicide is when he is in Central Park, imagining all the family that will show up to his funeral (pg. 155). What stops this train of thought is when he thinks of his kid sister Phoebe and how bad she would feel if he died (pg. 155). Just the mere thought of children is enough to bring Holden back from his suicidal thoughts and make him care about his own life. ✓

Holden's suicidal thoughts and depression seem to disappear when he is showing kindness to children. Holden goes out of his way to buy Phoebe a record (pg. 114). Not only was this record out of

his way to get, the record store overcharged him for it (pg.116). Holden though did not mind it as he states "Boy, it made so happy all of a sudden" (pg.116). Holden was clearly was feeling depressed prior to purchasing the record, but doing that one small kind act for his sister made him happy. Holden does this again when he helps a little girl tie up her skates in the park (pg.119). He noticed that her hands were red and cold, and, he selflessly helped her (pg.119). The girl's polite manners afterwards made Holden all the more happy (pg.119). Holden undoubtedly is able to find happiness in his depression when he displays acts of kindness towards children. Despite the happiness Holden finds, his depression leaves him isolated and alone. ✓

Holden continuously tries to connect with people in the adult world, but fails. Holden's depression causes Holden to feel immense loneliness. Due to this Holden reaches out to past friends and ex-girlfriends in order to ease the loneliness inside him. Holden's first attempt at a connection is with his ex-girlfriend Sally Hayes (pg.106). Holden though cannot form the emotional connection he needs with Sally. Instead of trying to connect with Sally he ends up scaring her with the idea of running away with him (pg.132), promptly followed by an insult towards her (pg.133). Holden's inability to connect with people in the adult worlds does not stop there. Holden reaches out to an old classmate Luce, in hopes of forming that sought out for connection (pg.136). Just as it went with Sally Holden fails at connecting with Luce, choosing to act immature on the topic of sex (pg.144-146) he eventually drives Luce away (pg.148). Although Holden cannot connect with people he views in the adult world, he is able to find a light in his depression with his connection to children. ✓

no value words

Holden can only seem to make meaningful, emotional connections with children. Holden shares a distinct connection with his childhood friend Jane Gallagher. Jane was a part of Holden's childhood, still is or more so the memory of her still is. Holden holds Jane very close in his memories as seen when he remembers the small detail of her always keeping her kings in checkers in the back row (pg.31-32).

Despite Holden having this deep connection with Jane he refuses to go see her, claiming he is not in the mood for it (pg.33). Holden's mood further darkens when he finds out that Jane is going out with his roommate Stradlater (pg.40). Stradlater alludes to Holden that he and Jane had gotten intimate in the back of a car which pushes Holden over the edge (pg.43). In Holden's mind he was preserving Jane as a young child, innocent and happy. Going to meet her now as a young woman after finding out what may have transpired between her and Stradlater would forever shatter Holden's perfect illusion of childhood innocence he has of her. Instead of that memory being a light in Holden's depression, it would only deepen it. A connection Holden has that shines a light in his depression is with his sister Phoebe. Phoebe is the only one Holden shares an emotional connection with through the entirety of the novel. Phoebe accepts Holden as he is (pg.162). She does not expect anything from Holden and willing to help him as perceived when she gives him her Christmas money (pg.179). Not only does Phoebe show Holden kindness, but essentially saves him from himself. It is because of Phoebe that Holden realizes he needs to get help (pg.212). Due to this deep connection with children Holden wants to protect them from the cruelty in the adult world. ✓

avoid colloquialisms

Good point!

Holden trying to ease the hopelessness inside him strives to protect childhood innocence from the adult world. Holden desperately wants to protect children, and he does this by giving his red hunting hat to Phoebe (pg.180). The hat being a form of protection for Holden is now given to Phoebe (pg.180). Holden cannot protect himself any longer, but he can protect Phoebe. By giving her his hunting hat he feels that he is doing something to protect childhood innocence, thus taking away that hopeless feeling inside him. Holden not only wants to protect Phoebe, but all children and their childhood innocence as seen in his catcher fantasy (pg.173). Holden tells Phoebe the only thing he wants to do in life is be the catcher in the rye (pg.173). His dream is to save children who fall off a cliff's edge (pg.173), the cliff being the line between childhood and adulthood. This fantasy of Holden's is the only thing he wants to be, a savior of childhood innocence (pg.173). This idea eases the hopeless feeling

avoid vague words

inside Holden. The thought of protecting children from becoming adults brings him joy in his depressed state of mind. Holden continues on this path of trying to be the catcher, when he erases the "Fuck you" on the school wall (pg.201). Holden cannot stand to see children lose their innocence to the adult world, so he erases the "Fuck you", embracing his dream of being the catcher in the rye (pg.201). Holden though realizes that no matter what he does to protect childhood innocence, he cannot stop them from eventually losing it. Holden himself states that if you had a million years you could not get rid of half of the "Fuck you" signs in the world (pg.202). This realization translates to children and no matter how much time Holden has he will never be able to stop them from one day becoming adults. Despite this emerging realization, Holden's idea of being the catcher in the rye (pg.201) does make him feel he is doing something in his life. This sense of contribution made Holden lose that hopeless feeling within him and in turn he again can find that happiness in his depression as he preserves childhood innocence. ✓

Through the protection and preservation of childhood innocence, Holden is able to deal with his depression and find some semblance of happiness within him. Holden, despite having depression finds happiness through the connections he makes with children and his willingness to help and protect them. Throughout life, one will always experience sadness and in some cases depression. In those moments it is important to try and find those hobbies or people that bring joy and happiness in life, whether it is in the form of reading or helping one out. It is important to remember that it is the simple things in life that can bring joy and Holden Caulfield was able to realize that. ✓

Works Cited

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Explaining Your Writing Variables

Identify the five writing variables you have chosen for your writing task

Central Idea: The happiness one can find in depression
 Form: Essay
 Purpose: Despite being depressed you can still find happiness
 Public Audience: Teenagers who have experienced or are experiencing depression
 Context: Guidance councillor offices in schools

Explain how your chosen writing variables work together to make your text effective.

5 marks

The central idea is one worth discussing as depression is very prevalent in today's society. If you are experiencing depression it can be very hard to experience any happiness in your life, this essay though give an insight on how that can be achieved. An essay is a great form for this central idea as each paragraph deals with a symptom of depression and how the main character Holden Caulfield was able to deal with it and find happiness in his depression. The purpose of this essay is to show the intended audience, teenager who have are experiencing depression, that happiness can be found. As Holden Caulfield is a teenager other teens can relate to him and the things he has to deal with. Teens can see how Holden coped with his depression and they themselves might follow his example and find that one thing in life that makes them happy and hopefully start to heal with their depression. I would post this essay in a guidance councillor's office in junior high and high school as teens themselves will be experiencing change in their life at that time that may lead to depression. They will need someone to talk to and that's what guidance councillors are for. They can show them this essay and hopefully be able to reach the teen through it.

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One cannot be happy without knowing what sadness feels like. Holden Caulfield, the main character in J.D. Salinger's novel The Catcher in the Rye is in a constant state of sadness throughout the entirety of the novel. As Holden tries to navigate through his depression in the streets of New York^{City}, he is able to find one thing that makes him happy and it is childhood innocence. In the novel The Catcher in the Rye Holden exhibits symptoms of depression. The only way Holden can find happiness in his depression is when he feels he is preserving childhood innocence.