

## **Chapter III**

### **Holden's Immaturity, Which Leads to His Insecurity to Find the Shamness in the Society**

#### **3.1 Holden's Extreme Perception About the phoniness in the Adult World.**

Holden's adolescence year, lacks a certain maturity, he views his world in extremes black and white. He perceives the adult to be phony, while his perception

of a child is one of innocence. "He appears to be sceptical about the world; when in fact, he is really just bewildered" ("Novel Guide Novel Analysis" 1). Holden's view of the adult world is negative. It is filled with dishonesty, and phoniness. The child's world however, is pure, innocent and sincere. Holden cannot accept the reality of the adult world and the child world for what they really are; he completely rejects the adult world as he elevates the world of a child. The gap between those two worlds is within Holden himself. Holden projects the child world will always be the way Holden thinks.

Seemingly Holden distrusts of the adults leads to his avoidance of things from that world. Holden sees adults as people who are too compromising and become something that they are not ("Catcher in the Rye Themes" 2). Therefore, the writer is going to discuss Holden's disapproval attitude toward the phoniness in his family, friends and people whom he acquaints' behaviour and attitude. Since to Holden, they tend to compromise their sense of authenticity to impress others.

### 3.1.1 Holden's Family's Phony Behaviour and Attitude

Holden's intense dislike about adult's behaviour and attitude is apparent in his speech about his family. It gives the reader a direct view of Holden's thought surrounding each member of the family ("Holden and His Phony Family" 1). Holden begins to refer to his parents as distant and he is over critical to both his father and mother by mentioning the weaknesses of his parents. However, he still wish to be respectful

"...My parents would have about two haemorrhages a piece if I told anything personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like

that, especially my father. They're nice and all – I'm not saying that – but they're also touchy as hell" (1).

By telling the reader that both his parents are pretty sensitive people, he underrates his parents' character. Holden thinks it would too much for them to find out that Holden had flunked the Pencey Preparatory School, after flunking from other schools.

From Holden's critical comments to his parents above shows his disapproval of his parent's insincerity. Even so, Holden in some ways still respects them. Holden's likes and dislikes of his parents' attitudes illustrate his sense of bewilderedness.

'Lawyers are all right, I guess – but it doesn't appeal to me,' I said. 'I mean they're all right if they go around saving innocent guys' lives all the time, and like that, but you don't do that kind of stuff if you're a lawyer. All you do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars and drink Martinis and look like a hotshot...how would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is you wouldn't'(155)

"Holden's father is a lawyer, Holden considers him 'phony' because he views his father's occupation unswervingly as a parallel of his father's personality" ("Holden and His Phony Family" 1). In Holden's view, his father is a person who seems to lack authenticity. His job as a lawyer is not because he really wants to save innocent people but he does it to impress others. Here Holden states it more clearly

"Even if you did go around saving guys' lives and all, how would you know if you did it because you really wanted to do was be a terrific

lawyer, with everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you in court..." (155).

Holden has a low opinion of lawyers; a lawyer should be such a liar. A lawyer does not really save somebody's life, even if he does; he does it for money and pride. To Holden a lawyer is a phony occupation; he works to have a good impression from a certain community after being a kind of hot shot in court. When Holden describes his mother, he always seems to do so with a sense of compassion yet also with jeering, mocking tone. Holden makes his mother sound predictable and insincere. These phony qualities are shown on two different occasions. First when Holden is hiding in the closet of D.B., his brother's room, as his mother walks in to tuck in Phoebe, Holden's younger sister:

"‘Hello!’ I heard old Phoebe say. ‘I couldn’t sleep. Did you have a good time?’

‘Marvellous,’ ‘my mother said, but you could tell she didn’t mean it. She doesn’t enjoy herself much when she goes out... ‘Good night. Go right to sleep now. I have a splitting headache,’ my mother said. She gets headaches quite frequently. She really does” (159-160).

Holden sees his mother is insincere. Instead of telling the truth that she did not enjoy herself, because of the headache she had, his mother tells lie that she did enjoy the time. Holden's mother lied to Phoebe makes Holden depressed on such occasion apparently.

The other member of Holden's family he considers phony is his brother D.B, a screenplay writer. Holden does not like his brother D.B because D.B is into something Holden thinks is phony. Holden thinks that movies or shows are not real.

Movies are portrayals of realism, which are exaggerated. The actors in a movie or show are not really what they are, that is why he dislikes them.

In the first place, I hate actors. They never act like people. They just think they do...and if any actor's really good, you can always tell he knows he's good, and that spoils it (107).

Since his brother is a screenplay writer for movie, Holden's dislike for D.B. goes deeper. A screenplay writer or an actor of a movie is a kind of "perversion of realism". Corbett says 'his brother, D.B takes part in these perversions of realism, and he is a 'phony' ("Holden and His "Phony" Family" 2).

Up to this point, Holden fails to interact with his family particularly the adults. He has conflict with them but actually is within himself. Holden without reasonable excuse perceives the adults family as negative. His perception about them makes himself confused. Actually Holden's real enemy is not the adults member but in fact his own mind itself.

He does however a very good form of relationship with his younger siblings, Phoebe and his deceased brother, Allie. Every time Holden feels depressed he turns to his younger siblings for comfort and support. He talks a lot to a psychoanalyst about his younger sister, Phoebe. It shows his love, admiration and the comfort he feels when talking about her. His mental stability can be traced every time he starts talking about her. Nearly there is no critical or offensive comment in his speech except compliments about her.

You should see her (Phoebe). You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life. She's really smart (62).

The way Holden talks about his younger sister shows how much he likes and is proud of having that kind of sister. Even though his younger brother, Allie has died, Holden seems to keep thinking of him when he feels depressed. When his roommate, Stradlater asks him to make a composition the first idea that comes out of Holden's mind is Allie.

The thing was, I couldn't think of a room or a house or anything to describe the way Stradlater said he had to have...so what I did, I wrote about my brother Allie's baseball mitt (37).

Thinking of Allie is a kind of medicine for Holden when he falls into depression, he holds on to Allie's image when he feels insecure. This example shows how Holden counts on Allie a lot

Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I'd say to him, Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie don't let me disappear. Please, Allie (178).

Holden's speech above signifies that at a time when he feels fear of disappearing, he would call his brother, Allie to get some comfort. Holden at the moment is about to faint because of his sickness and it scares him that he might die alone. He needs someone to hold on to through the hard time together. His mind is unstable, that he wants to rely his feeling of insecurity to Allie because he thinks Allie would be the one who would help and understand him sincerely.

Practically Holden's searches for comfort during his insecurity and anxiety are from his two younger siblings, his younger sister Phoebe and his deceased younger brother, Allie. From Holden's point of view, the older members of his family are seen as phonies and the younger members are icons of truth and innocence (Corbett,

“Holden and His “Phony” Family’ 2). That point of view indicates Holden’s premature judgement of the world around him, which shows his lacks of maturity.

### 3.1.2 Holden’s Friends and People’s Phony Behaviour and Attitude

Holden observed the disingenuous behavior of his friend, Sally Hayes.

‘Holden!’ She said. ‘It’s marvellous to see you! It’s been ages.’  
she had one of these very loud, embarrassing voices when you  
met her somewhere. She got away with it because she was so  
damn good-looking, but it always gave me a pain in the ass  
(113).

Holden scrutinizes Sally’s voice because he thinks that she should not yell on somebody out loud which to Holden is phony. Holden feels that Sally should not greet him with such a loud voice. Her loudness, he feels is simply a way of drawing attention from others to know how pretty she is and Holden does not like it. Holden’s lack of confidence and his deep sense of insecurity makes him critical of others. He is overly scrutinizing the things he disapproves without considering another’s point view.

Holden’s interaction with people proves him of the phoniness in society. When Holden sees phoniness in Elkton Hills, he wants to leave.

Mr. Haas, that was the phoniest bastard I ever met in my life.  
Ten times worse than old Thurmer---He’d be charming as hell  
and all. Except if some boy’s mother was sort of fat or corny-  
looking or something... then old Haas would just shake hands  
with them and give them a phony smile and then he’d go talk, for

maybe a half hour, with somebody else's parents...it drives me crazy. It makes me so depressed I go crazy. I hated that goddamn Elkton Hills (16).

The reader can detect Holden's anger toward Mr. Haas whom he considers the biggest phony in Elkton Hills. Mr. Haas' behaviour makes Holden depressed that he does not want to know the reasons why Mr. Haas behaves the way he does. To Holden Mr. Haas is an adult who conforms too much to society's norms and becomes someone he is not. He is a person who puts a mask on his face to cover up his frailties. Holden cannot yet see beyond his narrow point of view. He fails to see that there are certain responsibilities and ideals that are expected of adults ("Catcher in the Rye Themes" 2). On the way to meet these expectations, adults compromise even though they do not wish to. Holden does not see this part because he is not quite mature. What he sees is his truth only. This kind of superficial thought of an adolescent leaves him with little ability to communicate. "He relies so heavily on simple words and thoughts to express his feelings" <"The Language of Catcher in the Rye" 1>. For example, Holden claims that the reasons he hates Elkton Hills is the phony environment he finds there. ' One of the biggest reasons I left Elkton Hills was because I was surrounded by phonies. That's all' (16). "Holden makes a statement then feels compelled to clarify that he is not making it up but is, in fact, telling the truth. These mannerisms may point to several aspects of his character" ("The Language of Catcher in the Rye" 2). For instance, he seeks the approval of the reader who becomes the psychoanalyst.

Holden's intense dislike of the adults' actions, stems from his inability to see the other's point of view.



Old Ernie turned around on his stool and gave this very phony, humble bow. Like as if he was a helluva humble guy, besides being a terrific piano player. It was very phony---I mean him being such a big snob and all (78).

Holden's sarcastic remarks indicate his strong dislike of disingenuousness. Here the reader might see Holden's character, he is angry and hostile toward the phony society he views. His anger stems from his dissatisfaction and distrust over the condition in the adulthood. The way Holden thinks of adult society causes his unwillingness to further analyse why the old Ernie, a piano player, acts the way he does. Instead of accepting adults just as they are, even if he disapproves of their behavior, Holden sees Ernie's action as lacking in authenticity. Holden's premature judgement of people's behavior stems from his still narrow point of view of an adolescent.

Holden tends to be over sensitive to things he should not be. He criticizes things he does not like at all sometimes in a very sarcastic way.

I started giving the three witches at the next table the eye again--- what they did, though, the three of them, when I did it, they started giggling like morons (63).

Holden here is a very sensitive boy that Holden uses the terms, such as "Witches", "morons". These indicate Holden's sensitivity to something he thinks he does not like. The more Holden dislikes the phoniness he observes, the stronger words he uses to convey his emotion.

Holden's speech also helps the reader to understand him better. According to Costello, Holden's profanity may be excessive but it helps to convey his attitude toward dishonesty of the adult world ("Catcher in the Rye Analysis" 2).

When the next act was over, they continued their goddamn boring conversation... the worst part was, the jerk had one of those very phony, Ivy league voices, one of those very tired, snobby voices... he didn't hesitate to horn in on my date, the bastard (116).

Holden's hostile attitude emerges more and more to something he really hates. This kind of hostile attitude is reflected in his language usage, which sounds very cynical. In fact the profanity Holden uses demonstrates his dislike toward phoniness he observes in the adult world. He relates poorly to others and tries to bridge the gap between adolescent and the adult world with his use of profanity ("The Language of Catcher in the Rye" 3).

Holden takes an extreme view between adulthood and childhood, which apparently gives him a wrong understanding to both worlds. That kind of perception emerges Holden's own conflict, which is seemingly the conflict is with the society but in fact his own mind or perception is Holden's real enemy. He tends to mock the adult world he perceives as insincere; on the other hand, he tends to elevate childhood, which in Holden's eyes is of promising sincerity and innocence. Holden's extreme view about those two worlds indicates his immaturity.

### 3.2 Holden's Attitude toward the Squalor Society He Observes

Holden seems to perceive his friends as sometimes phony and mean. Even though his friends are about the same age as Holden, he finds that his friends are already

influenced by the adult life. They become so mean and wicked. Therefore, Holden is angry to see that adulthood has made the children lose their innocence.

Holden's dislike is apparent in his speech about his friends' behavior and attitude. Holden goes for a trip on train where he meets his friend's mother. She is the mother of his Pencey Preparatory School friend, Ernest Morrow. Ernest Morrow's behaviour and attitude in Pencey is not genuine enough to Holden.

Her son was doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey, in the whole crumby history of the school. He was always going down to corridor, after he's had a shower, snapping his soggy old wet towel at people's asses. That's exactly the kind of a guy he was (52).

Through Holden's commentary the reader would get an idea that Ernest Morrow is not a good boy anymore by his wicked manner to others. He has been influenced with adult experience, the nastiness, and cruelty.

You take a guy like Morrow that's always snapping their towel at people's asses---really trying to hurt somebody with it---they don't just stay a rat while they're kid. They stay a rat their whole life (54).

In Holden's eyes, Ernest Morrow's cruelty would remain in his life. It is apparent that Holden makes a premature judgement to somebody he does not know well enough. That way Holden tries to seek approval of what he has said. Through Costello's opinion, "Holden wants people to believe him so he speaks to seek approval" ("The Language of *Catcher in the Rye*" 2). He should not judge Morrow whether he would be a crook or something in his whole life because nobody would

know it till the time comes. Holden's harsh accusation and premature judgement indicates his lacking of maturity.

There is another example that fraud and cruelty in the society exist in Holden's previous school, Elkton Hills, which it should be no wicked behavior since they are children. However, some of them who do the bad things, to Holden such manner can only be found in the world of adult.

'There was one boy at Elkton Hills, named, James Castle, that wouldn't take back something he said about this very conceited guy, Phil Stabile...so Stabile, with about six other dirty bastards, went down to James Castle's room and went in and locked the goddamn door and tried to make him take back what he said, but he wouldn't do it. So they started in on him...finally, what he did, instead of taking back what he said, he jumped out the window...all they did with the guys that were in the room with him was expel them...they didn't even go to jail' (153-154).

Holden wants to tell the reader that the wickedness lives up in his school. It is apparent that Holden is worried to see such environment. He thinks that the one who has done wrong is not yet punished and the one who has done right is forgotten. It seems as if there is no fair ending for both sides. Those occasions really make Holden feel much insecure. He sees some children are changing because adult's experiences have affected them to be bad people. Holden once again cannot mingle with the situation. What he sees is that the children world should be "white" all the time, if it is not anymore; the adult world is the sole cause that makes it that way. His inability

to mingle with such situation is actually the result from his immaturity. His lack of acceptance toward the changes he views.

### 3.3 Holden's Failure to Accept the Reality

Holden distrusts the world of adult, which for him is full of phoniness and fraud. He is very annoyed with such society where he lives in. That is why he attempts to avoid such society badly that he wants to commit suicide. He thinks that the death is one way to stay away from phoniness and fraud society. Another way is to leave the city where he lives in now. Holden wants to be alone where nobody would recognize him in his new place. His other attempt is being a catcher in the rye. Keeping the children from falling off the cliff is Holden's purpose. The innocence of a child is what Holden wants to protect. Those attempts are the result from his failure to accept the reality.

#### 3.3.1 Holden's Dream of Going Away

Knowing that the adult world is insincere, Holden wants to run away. It entails to Holden's proposal to his date, Sally Hayes, to go with him in New England (Vermont and Massachusetts) where he thinks no phonies there. 'What I could do is tomorrow morning we could drive up to Massachusetts and Vermont... we'll stay in cabin camps and stuff like that till the dough runs out' (120). Holden's desperation in finding phoniness in the adult world comes to his intention to escape. The society, which he considers, is phony and cruel.

Holden cannot accept the reality and lives with it; instead Holden alienates himself into his own world. He pretends to go out west (Colorado) and to be a deaf-mute, which nobody would give much care about Holden.

If anybody wanted to tell me something, they'd have to write it on a piece of a paper...they'd get bored as hell doing that after a while...and they'd leave me alone (179).

Holden's dream of alienation comes from his desperation of not being able to bridge the gap between the adult world and the world of a child. Holden is disgusted with the condition he sees in the world of adult that is why he wants to leave such world for keeping his innocence.

### 3.3.2 Holden's Intention to Commit Suicide

Holden attempts to commit suicide when he feels like no one cares for what he has been through. Some ordeal he has been through makes him sceptical to live his life further. He has an idea to commit suicide in order to release his pain. Holden thinks prematurely that the death is sometimes a better solution to end up a torment of life in the world of squalor.

“What I really felt, though, was committing suicide. I felt like jumping out the window” (96). To Holden, the death is as if a way out to escape from a cruel world of adult. “So I figured I was getting cancer...I'd figured I'd be dead in a couple of months because I had cancer. I really did. I was even positive I would be” (176).

Holden figures himself to die every time he feels depressed with the distress he has.

His inability to face the reality brings him into a mental failure. He is bewildered by what he sees in his eyes. His problem actually is that he does not understand and

does not want to understand the world around him. The gap comes from him, not from the society essentially.

The nastiness; malice; wickedness are part of the world. The squalid society is a part of society sham. His failure to understand the reality makes him feel lost and insecure, which is common to find in adolescents.

### 3.3.3 Holden's Dream of Being A Catcher in the Rye

Yet, from Holden's perception, he attempts to create a world of sincerity by keeping the innocence of a child. Up to that point, Holden begins to fantasize himself of being a catcher in the rye. He dreams of catching every child who is going to fall of the cliff; the cliff symbolizes the adult world.

'Anyway, I keep picturing all these kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day' (156).

His speech above demonstrates his efforts to be a catcher in the rye. Holden's idea of being a catcher in the rye can be seen through his attachment with his younger deceased brother, Allie. Holden adores his brother because he represents the innocence that Holden strives to find in the world of phoniness and squalor. "He feels that Allie is one of the few people who are not phony in a world full of phonies"

(“Symbols Maybe so” 1). “You’d have liked him...he was terrifically intelligent . . . but it wasn’t just that he was the most intelligent member in the family. He was also the nicest” (38). Such adornment is likely rare to find, as Holden only makes a compliment to someone whom he perceives as genuine enough. On the other hand, Holden can mock or scold somebody or people he thinks is not sincere enough. Holden’s tendency to judge other is a mark of his immaturity.

Yet, Holden’s compliment about his little sister, Phoebe, shows Holden’s admiration to the innocence of children. Like the way Holden adores his deceased brother, Allie, Phoebe also has the same quality as Allie’s in Holden’s eyes. Holden describes briefly but frequently how nice and cuddling Phoebe is. “ You should see her. You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your life. She’s really smart. I mean she’s had all A’s ever since she started to school” (62).

Holden conveys to the reader the good side of Phoebe rather than her bad side. Holden tends to explore the positive side of a person he likes in order to convince the reader that Phoebe is a person who deserves such compliment.

Holden does such compliments because he perceives Phoebe as somebody who does not conform too much to society. Her behaviour is not phony, she behaves the way she likes with no pretending.

She’d wear white gloves and walk right between us, like a lady and all. And when Allie and I were having some conversation about things in general, old Phoebe’d be listening... she’d interrupt you all the time. She’d give Allie or I a push or something, and say, ‘who? Who said that? Bobby or the lady?’



and we'd tell her who said it, and she'd say. 'Oh,' ... she killed Allie, too. I mean he liked her, too...she still kills everybody--- everybody with any sense, anyway (64).

Holden's description about Phoebe shows his impression and adornment to sincere actions of a child. Apparently, Holden looks both of his brother, Allie and sister, Phoebe as white lily, pure and innocence creatures. Holden wants to keep them and other children that way, pure all the time. This is what he dream of being a catcher in the rye, keeping the purity of a child.

Holden's visit to the museum is a mark of his intention to protect the genuinely of a child. It is shown when he stops in front of the museum of Natural History and begins to reminisce. He thinks about the way he visits the museum when he was younger. "He also tells that every time one visits the museum, he is changed in some way, but the figures in the exhibits always stay the same. He wants to preserve some things in glass" (Nuccio, "Various English Essays").

Certain things they should stay the way they are, you ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and leave them alone. I know that's impossible, but it's too bad anyway (111).

"Holden wants the innocence of children to be frozen behind the glass" (Nuccio). It also shows his reluctance and inability to accept change. The static nature of the museum reminds him how much he fears change and maturity that mark adult life.

When Holden visited Phoebe's school, he notices two instances of slank writing on the walls. He was depressed with that, he thinks that that kind of graffiti might spoil his little sister, Phoebe and other students. He says how worry he is seeing them on Phoebe's school walls: "somebody's written 'Fuck you' on the walls. It drove me damn near crazy. I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it" (181). Holden is worried if some adult students will tell them the meaning of the term "Fuck you" naturally and how the young students would worry to think of them. He rubs off one of them eventually but does not succeed with the other. Holden is obsessed with the profanity of graffiti, for his distaste toward that kind of squalid sceneries is notable. He wishes to shelter children from any adult's experiences, which to him may corrupt the innocence of children. So "keeping children from his plight is Holden's sole motive as a catcher in the rye", Nuccio says.