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Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* As a Novel of Initiation Rite

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Panesh Budha completed his thesis entitled “Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* as a Novel of Initiation Rite” under my supervision. He carried out this research from March 2020 to July 2021. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* as a Novel of Initiation Rite" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Panesh Budha has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

*This thesis explores a character's journey from innocence to experience in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* applying Bildungsroman perspective. This paper studies how the protagonist of the novel, Holden Caulfield, faces difficulties in his adolescence life due to his innocence, lack of proper guidance and knowledge. After gaining some experience from his innocent life and mistakes, he becomes an intelligent person. This thesis also analyzes two days in the life of the protagonist of the novel, Holden after he has been ejected from the school. Being muddled and disappointed, he searches for the reality and escapes the "phoniness" of the adult society. He ends up exhausted and emotionally unstable. This thesis studies how Holden develops maturity through his foolish acts in different levels: physical, mental, psychological and social. The way he gets changed throughout his entire life, from his earlier life to later life, represents an individual's journey from innocence to maturity. This thesis applies the critical insights of J. H. Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, George Oliver's *History of Initiation in Twelve Lectures* and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as theoretical parameters to analyze the primary text. This thesis attempts to justify that Holden's all activities represent Bildungsroman features of the novel since the novel deals with the journey of a character's personal development.*

Key Words: Abjection, Bildungsroman, hypocrisy, initiation rite, phoniness, transformation

This thesis explores Holden Caulfield's journey from immaturity to maturity, from childhood to manhood, and from innocence to experience in J. D. Salinger's novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* from Bildungsroman perspective. It attempts

to study how the protagonist of the novel, Holden Caulfield, faces difficulties in his earlier life due to his innocence, lack of proper guidance and knowledge. After gaining some experience from his innocent life and mistakes, he becomes an intelligent person. This thesis examines the central character's life in a couple of days after he gets banned from his school. In spite of having a lot of confusions and delusion about life, Holden searches for truth and rails against the "phoniness" of the adult world. At the last, he is tired and emotionally unstable. So that, these events are related to the adventure journey of a teenager boy and this fact directly refers to Bildungsroman or initiation rite. Similarly, this thesis studies how Holden develops maturity through his foolish acts in different levels- physical, mental, psychological and social. The novel deals with the way the protagonist gets changed throughout his entire life from his earlier life to later life, and represents an individual's journey from innocence to maturity. This thesis attempts to justify that Holden's all activities represent Bildungsroman features of the novel since the novel deals with the journey of a character's personal development.

Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* views the adult world from the perspective of a teenager. It is not only a novel for a novel's sake, but it offers in its content and characterization an illustration of the process of initiation. Thus, the researcher proposes to examine the novel as an example of the initiation rites and to show how the various novelistic elements function to create a complex and symbolic view of this rite of passage as established in the modern world.

This thesis excavates Bildungsroman features in the character of Holden, who transforms from innocence to maturity. He is the narrator of the novel who remembers his past days' experience through flashback technique. By narrating his past events, Holden creates a series of events about how he creates the concept of meaningful life.

This thesis attempts to study how the protagonist develops his personality as a mature adult man from his own experience. His experiences shape his personality.

Apart from other novels of initiation rites, *The Catcher in the Rye* opens with the protagonist's teenage years rather than his childhood. Holden describes his journey from childhood to adulthood. He is a teenager boy, and failure is always with him in his East-coast prep school. He is in advance frustrated of life as an adult. He does not like things and people because he finds all of them as "phony". Similarly, He has no proper relation with girls. His own roommate Stradlater has erotic relationship with girls like Jane Gallagher (whom Holden admires from afar). That is why, he reveals his own sexual frustrations when Stradlater has a date with her. He thinks to move to a monastery or some other distant place. After knowing that the school expels him, he decides to run away to New York City. Holden does run to New York, and he gets a room at the Edmont Hotel. He is being fascinated with older women at the hotel bar, but their fascination with wealth depresses him. He pays for a prostitute but has not sex with her.

The next morning, he encounters two nuns and has a date with a girl named Sally, but he is so depressed that he loses his cool, and the date ends in disaster. He sneaks back into his house while he is in drinking and talks to his little sister, Phoebe. He tells her his mission to be a "catcher in the rye" going out to the West. Then, he goes to his teacher, Mr. Antolini, who warns him that he is heading for a great fall unless he starts following the rules. Mr. Antolini sexually abuses Holden. After that, he goes to his sister's school and tells good bye to her. The novel ends with Holden telling the reader that he is going to try harder next time at school with a note of optimism. He even misses his roommate Stradlater. These actions justify the growth of Holden undergoes in course of Bildungsroman (initiation rite). Holden's childish

tendency to distance himself from “phony” adulthood and to abandon human relationships and their emotional risks only lead to depression. But at the last, when he changes his mind, he is finally opening up to the possibility of a future beyond adolescence.

Initiation rite is a special kind of genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of its protagonist, from his or her childhood to adulthood. The initiation rite refers to the transition from childhood to adulthood of an adolescent or pre-adolescent of protagonist. It is a fundamental phenomenon, to human growth and development as well as socialization in many parts of the world. It directly links to individuals to community. It is a story of the growing up of a sensitive person, who looks for answers to his questions through different experiences. Generally, such a novel starts with a loss or a tragedy that disturbs the main character emotionally. He or she leaves on a journey to fill that vacuum. During the journey, the protagonist’s character as Holden gains maturity, gradually and with difficulty. Usually, the novel presents a conflict between the protagonist and the values of society as in the novel, there a conflict between Holden and the phony’s society. Finally, he or she accepts those values, and they are accepted by society. So, finally Holden makes a mind to go home as well as he accepts the rule and regulation of the society which he has called as a “phony” and he wants to become “catcher in the rye”.

“Bildungsroman” is the word that has combination of the German words: “bildung” and “roman” meaning “formation” and “novel” respectively. It originated in Germany in the early 19th century. The word “Bildungsroman” also similar to the term of “coming-of-age novel” because sometime its calls Bildungsroman. A “Bildungsroman” typically begins with the protagonist, who feels alienation and

aloneness, but at the end, he has an optimistic feeling and he/she finds a sense of self-realization. Likewise, many authors use this formula in the novel.

George Oliver, in his book, *History of Initiation in Twelve Lectures: Comprising a Detailed Accounts of the Rites and Ceremonies, Doctrines and Discipline, of All the Secret and Mysterious Institutions of the Ancient World* argues:

Initiation involved all the confused and complicated mechanism of heathen mythology; and many of the political and domestic customs of antiquity may be traced to the same inexhaustible and prolific source. It was considered to be a mystical death, or oblivion of all the stains and imperfections of a corrupted and an evil life, as well as a descent into hell, where every pollution was purged by lustrations of fire, and, water; and the perfect Epop was then said to be regenerated or new born, restored to a renovated existence of life, light and purity, and placed under the Divine protection. (11)

So, initiation is related to purification of the impure, corrupt and polluted lifestyle into pure and holy one. Protagonist's bitter experiences and foolish activities purifies into protagonist's willful sociable activities. If ancient's protagonist purifies his/her evil life by lustrations of fire and water, the modern protagonist purifies as self-confession and his /her improvement activities as a Holden does.

Similarly, In *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, Mircea Eliade, a Romanian fiction writer, historian of religion, philosopher, and professor claims that initiation is spiritual phenomena in human history:

Initiation represents one of the most significant spiritual phenomena in the history of humanity. It is an act that involves not only the religious life of the individual, in the modern meaning of the word "religion"; it involves his entire life. It is through initiation that, in primitive and archaic societies, man

becomes what he is and what he should be—a being open to the life of the spirit, hence one who participates in the culture into which he was born. (3)

By this, Eliade means to say that initiation involves the whole life of an individual. Initiation makes even primitive people into modern ones. Initiation rite not only deals with the religion but also talks about entire life. For him, it is the act of transition from childhood to adulthood (immaturity to maturity). As the novel describes about Holden all entire activates which represent to initiation.

The novel deals with character that is unwilling to socialize, and Holden has a pessimistic attitude towards life. The novel also shows us that the imagination of a teenager boy after the Second World War. In this novel, the writer shows the contradiction between American teenager material life and lack of spiritual life after the World War II, reflected on the protagonist Holden. The novel reflects the lack of spiritual connection between the protagonists and other characters. It is also one of the reason, Holden feels the lack of connection and drawn further into alienation. It points out that Holden is a representation of Salinger's alter ego. Holden and Salinger's life are related in many ways. Like Holden Salinger's family is also quite rich. When he is 15 years old, his parents send him to a military boarding school in Pennsylvania. It is said that description about boarding school in *The Catcher in the Rye* is largely based on the background of Salinger's school.

Many critics have examined *The Catcher in the Rye* from multiple perspectives. Warren G. French, critic of twentieth-century American literature and social history, argues regarding the text the phony world and nice world in his journal. He sates as:

Just as one inspecting real estate must seek some central promontory from which to get the lay of the land so the critic try to get an author's work into

perspective seeks some central document that provides a focal point from which the other may be viewed . Since the work of any considerable writer is, furthermore, likely to embody a complexity of subtly insinuated themes rather than to reiterate a single, badly stated ideas, but more study of achievement. So far comprehensive evolutions of J.D Salinger's work has been built around two short stories. (21)

This paragraph by French directs that the phony and real world different and the critic of the attention and lavished upon Salinger during the decade may be down the literary history as the Holden Caulfield, there have been remarkable few critic survey of his writings. Most accounts have dealt only with *The Catcher in the Rye*.

In the same light, Daniaell M. Roemer, critic and the author of *Angela Carter and the Fairy Tale*, argues that *The Catcher in the Rye* is the personal narrative and he raises the person story and he also states that:

Telling the stories requires telling about. In the case of personal narration, the speaker self is necessarily separate from the self that is spoken of. The narrator creates a sense of some other, typically past identity, farming it as an object of attention. As result, personal story telling can be said to function as a mode of separation. (5)

This view advocates the personal view and personal story telling of Holden past and present. The text tells about the adult child who suffers from the new world. He presents the under sixteen children who face several difficulties at that time because they did not knowledge about society that is why they live in full depression. In the text, Holden expresses his bitter experience at school. He fails four times in same class and goes under depression. Storytelling involves acts of both separation and contextualization of the plot and description and in the case of personal stories. In the

allusive narration, the self-spoken of is not an inheritance but a reconstitution. The root of the problem is not in Holden's commitment to ruin the daily life world. Rather, it has developed over time. It stems from his scenes of appropriate ground.

Similarly, the critic F. Anthony Dejoen raises *The Catcher in the Rye and sex education in the text*. He argues:

There seems to be general agreement that it is the primary responsibility of the immediate family to provide children with sex education of the school are to education. In the text, Holden's encounter with Sunny proves absurdity nightmarish and comically abortive not at all abortive complement and family.

(35)

It means the school and other institution proves the sex celestial experience his misguided fantasies have anticipated. He is humiliatingly reduced to importance because his latent scenes of decency prevail over desire to consummate.

Gerald Rosen, on the other hand, illustrates a retrospective look at the catcher in the in the rye. In his article, he advocates that:

In the book of the context of Salinger's other, especially the writing about the Glass family, most of which were published after *The Catcher in the Rye*. This story reveal themes not immediately apparent in a reading of *The Catcher in the Rye* and stem from a side of Salinger that has been of less importance of Eastern thought and religion to Salinger.(2)

Gerald claims that the *The Catcher in the Rye* focuses the retrospect event of Holden. In this text, Holden expresses his past bitter events about his life. He changes four schools for study but he does not success to pass in the exam. Similarly, he talks about the sexual matter at the hotel with call girl Sunny and he enables to sexual intercourse with her.

Since its publication in 1945, it is considered an influential text for young readers across the country due to its sincere and candid depiction of contemporary American teenage life. However, it has also gained infamy for being one of the most banned books in recent times because of its depiction of controversial themes and issues such as “sexual abuse, drug use, and homosexuality, among others” (1). The novel uses strong language which is notoriously brilliant. The use of the foul language was offensive and was restricted to be taught in high schools. American critic Donald P. Costello argues, “We can see the language of *The Catcher in the Rye* is informal and colloquial art show of American teenagers. It has typical, common features and individuality; it is vulgar, slang and lack of accuracy, with imitation marks, without losing the creativity”. (53)

The novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* discusses different themes within its respective context. Yet it falls under the category of Bildungsroman. The Bildungsroman as a genre is a German term from the early nineteenth century, and has been a widely used term in literary criticism to portray the common conventions of any novel of youthful development. In his essay, “Alienation, Materialism, and Religion in J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*”, Robert C. Evans claims that Holden is an alienated character.

Holden Caulfield, the novel’s adolescent central character, seems alienated from most of his teachers and schoolmates, much of his family, and much of society at large. Although he interacts with numerous people during the three days the novel depicts, he remains fundamentally withdrawn and isolated; he is estranged and distant from others and even, to some degree, from himself. He has no real or deep friendships; most of his interactions are superficial, and many of his relationships are insincere. (41).

Holden is a young adult, who at an initial stage, is not confident about himself and has not found clue about his own life. As the story starts to unfold and the plot progresses, the journey leads him to a fully formed or mature identity. The Bildungsroman genre depicts youths growing up, the struggle that comes with being an adolescent, and the road to becoming adults. Adolescent protagonists and characters have often been seen to have an important place in literature. They are the characters that are at the forefront of social change in many societies. Holden can both be seen as hypersensitive and are therefore so intensely influenced and often emotionally wounded by his surroundings. He can also be seen as character that chooses to be aware of the society around him; he would rather see the truth and suffer for it than hide behind an imposed mask which represents the accepted norms.

In a modern coming-of-age novel, many protagonists do not attain full adult status during the course of the novel, for instance, Holden in *The Catcher in the Rye*. We can comply with the critics because Holden in his case was unable to fit into his role as a young man, as he is flunking out of school, he is unable to find a desirable direction in his environment. In the end hopefully Holden finally realizes that he would venture and take the plunge to adulthood. He learns with time that everyone needs to move on. Both coming-of-age novels and Bildungsroman depict how the protagonist can come to understand himself and his place in society, in which maturation is a central component.

The way of the critics' views based on this novel argue differently to present different point of view. Some of other critics examine their roles and overall scenes are just human center notion. Some Investigates the role of the theses characters are hopeful for human civilization whereas, some other have sense human growth in term of sexuality and mentality. In spite of the all facts that the researcher tries to examine

this further issues and attitude towards other people in *The Catcher in the Rye*. The researcher is going to explore the Bildungsroman perspective in this novel.

The story begins with Holden's psychological breakdown and gradual recovery from it. He says, "this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy" (5). These words indicate that Holden's psychological breakdown, which is slowly recovered from it. On the one hand, Holden Caulfield tells that he comes from the mental hospital. At the same times, he shares very bitter experience of his early school days. As a child in his school, he says he is poor in his study and failed four times even in the same class. As result, he expels from school. This performance of Holden shows that he does not have any experience of proper handling of his career, because of the lacking knowledge and lacking proper guidance. Although he is poor in his in schools, he expels for the same reason. He gains some good experiences his foolish acts, and later he builds up confidence for reforming the educational culture from which he has victimized. He gets a lot of experiences skills of living from society.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the story tells as Holden is looking back at the previous events from the perspective of the psychiatric institution. He has admitted to and the final chapter tells the readers how far Holden may have developed: "a lot of people, especially this one psychoanalyst guy they have here, keep asking me if I am going to apply myself when I go back to school next September. It is such a stupid question in my opinion. I mean how you know what you're going to do till you do it" (214). Holden blames the people suggesting him to join school as stupid ones. He is not sure his plans about whether he will accept his fate and move on. This also shows his distrust towards people around him.

The way Holden gets maturity from immaturity refers to the movement from innocence to experience. In his childhood period, he even does not know how to study for passing his papers. This is the common feature of almost all common students in their childhood. Parents' guidance and teachers counseling and teaching guides them for better performance. In the case of the Holden, he does not get the proper guidance from his parents and the teachers who do not try to understand him properly. As a result, he failed repeatedly in his final exams. When he is expelled from the school, he gets confidence of his internal ability for success, he begins to lead his mission of, "The Catcher in the Rye". Through the mission he means to say that he tries to reform those schoolchildren who are accused of failure of their life and expelled from different school for the same reason.

Abjection is another reason for the psychological development in the life of an individual. In *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J. A. Cuddon defines abjection as a "psychoanalytic concept" (2). It explains the "formation and maintenance of subjectivity" (2). Abjection is "utterly repulsive, because it threatens our sense of ourselves as separate and autonomous beings" (2). For Cuddon, "the abject exists as a constant companion through life, always challenging – and requiring maintenance of – the tenuous borders of selfhood" (2). Holden has the feeling of abjection, which pushes him into alienation. The abjection from the society he lives in and from his peer group's makes harsh impacts in this young adult's life.

As young adults are often involved in peer pressure and turn towards drug abuse and violence. Holden has hard time getting along with his friends and families, Holden too has developed a habit of smoking and occasionally drinking. Holden is indulged in bad habits yet, he still makes remarks on his fellow peers and the school he studies in. He gives his opinion about the students from Pencey Prep: "Pencey was

full of crooks. Quite a few guys came from these very wealthy families, but it was full of crooks anyway. The more expensive a school is, the more crooks it has” (4).

Holden is completely negative towards Pencey and the people there. He does not seem to have many friends. He does not make an effort to get along with others.

“Phoniness” (29) probably the most famous phrase from *The Catcher in the Rye*, is one of his favorite concepts. It is a phrase, Holden often uses for describing the superficiality, hypocrisy, pretension, and shallowness. He feels surrounded by dishonesty and false pretenses. The criticism towards “phony” things in society is expressed in the novel. Though Holden sees everything and everyone as phony, in reality Holden exhibits the same “phoniness” he declares. He tries to churn the phoniness out of people instead of trying to consider the positive side of a person.

Holden is a representative of the world of childhood whose characteristics are the opposite values to phony world. One of the things that Holden often calls “phony” is the world of movies and everything about it. An example of his anger towards his brother D. B. because he moves to Hollywood, and has an affair with prostitute who tells him she spends most of her time in film theaters. He meets three women at the bar who are only interested in movies and famous actors.

At the beginning of the novel, Ackley asks Holden’s privacy and intrusive questions. Later, when Holden’s roommate Stradlater is getting ready for a date, Holden follows him into the bathroom, asks Stradlater personal questions, and then tackles him while he is shaving, and his conversation with Mrs. Morrow contains nothing but falsehoods. The only statement that contains any truth is that he is a student at Pencey; otherwise, all of his statements are deliberately misleading. This proves that Holden points out the flaws and phoniness in other people but does not see the phoniness that is within him. Most of the young adults are the victim of their own

situation. They bring the adversity upon themselves due to the lack of clarity they fail to notice the things around them. They seem to exaggerate situations that are trivial and consider it to be of greater concern. What disturbs Holden about the world in which he finds himself are adults and adult values. He sees that the world belongs to adults, and it seems to him that they have filled it with phoniness, pretense, and social compromise. He would prefer a world that is honest, sincere, and simple.

In the life of a young adult, there will always come a time of confusion and misguidance. They are either going through hormonal imbalances or changes, or some grieving the death of their loved ones and some maybe overburdened with the pain because of a failed relationship. All of these factors contribute to the distress in their life. Most of the young adult literature is related to dysfunctional families. Life takes a new mode for Holden on July 18, 1946, the day his brother dies of leukemia. Holden is thirteen when his brother dies. Joseph Campbell claims that the birth of something can only overcome death. "Only birth can conquer death—the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new. Within the soul, within the body social, there must be—if we are to experience long survival—a continuous "recurrence of birth" (*palingenesis*) to nullify the unremitting recurrences of death" (15). Death is a major factor that affects the life of a young adult. One of the reasons for young adult's problem is dealing with the emotions that are triggered by the death of someone. The night after Allie's death Holden sleeps in the garage and with anger, he expresses:

Broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it. I even tried to break all the windows on the station wagon we had that summer, but my hand was already broken and everything by the time, and I could not do it. It was a very stupid thing to do, I'll admit, but I hardly didn't even know I was doing it, and you didn't know Allie. (39)

This statement shows the anger that is inside Holden, he cannot accept his brother's death. Holden becomes helplessness; he is bearing troubles him. And the only way, he can show it is by breaking objects around him. The act may have been stupid which reflects Holden's uncontrollable anger. At that moment, he wishes himself, as he will be dead because he loves too much his dead brother Allie and cannot cope it. He behaves as a mad because of his brother is leaving him alone and burdens with feelings of guilt. Similarly, when the having the attack on the station wagon, even his father who was powerless either to save Allie or to understand Holden. During the funeral, he was in hospital. He is unable to attend the funeral, to witness the completion of the life process, but by injuring himself. He receives the attention and sympathy, which are denied him during Allie's illness. His actions here as elsewhere are inconsistent and ambivalent, but always comprehensible in terms of his reaction to the loss of Allie. The fact that Holden has trouble holding back his anger is a common trait seen among young adults. The outraging anger shows that Holden is angry at the world for not sparing Allie; he feels utterly helpless and cannot cope with the death of his brother.

The story ends with the protagonist's having a psychological breakdown because of what happened in the past (death and loss in the childhood, and the ramifications of that) and how this surfaces when he is expected to grow up and become functional adult. Neither can move on before the past is dealt with. Holden needs to come to terms with the death of his brother and the fact that childhood is a phase that eventually will pass, whether you want it or not. It can be argued that the anxiety of growing up has not changed for generations, just the circumstances, considering what this young-adult story portrays.

According to Silverberg, his perception of Holden is that “Looking at *The Catcher in the Rye*, the readers can identify the feelings of Holden, who is unable to express” (19). But that can be read between the lines: “Identifiers treat Holden not so much as a literary construct but as a person with ‘a life of his own’ and, more importantly, as a ‘person worthy of emulation” (19). Charlie and Holden are characters that portray adolescent culture from the time they were written, but continue to stand as hallmarks in youth culture since their experiences and thoughts are general and universal, and last but not the least; relatable. It can also be argued that death of his brother is the reason he is having trouble living his life. Holden does not want to live in a world that Allie is not in, or in a world where things like that happen. The novel is built around the theme of loss and death and learning how to move on from that.

Robert Milner talks about the influence of mentors for Holden as he shares his views by stating, Mentors Central to Holden’s journey is his strong wish to be given some instruction and guidance from a person who would just listen and help. He tries to turn to his older brother D. B., his former teacher Mr. Antolini, his little sister Phoebe, and his former student advisor Carl Luce; but they are all unavailable, “or, when contacted, has other agendas” (33). ‘All right, all right,’ I said. ‘Relax.’ You could tell he didn’t feel like discussing anything serious with me. That’s the trouble with these intellectual guys. They never want to discuss anything serious unless they feel like it” (130). Holden does not have anyone he can model himself after, “adrift at a sea of peers every bit as adrift as he is” (34). Holden alienates his prep school friends and teachers, since he never stays in one school for very long, often leaving him with no one to talk to, or to get support from.

Holden has suffered loss and it[has] left him wounded. Instead of accepting the death of his loved one, he is searching for other means to resolve the issues. One of the striking traits of a young adult is the 'need for justification'. Rather than accepting the inevitable they are searching for answers and reasons behind it. Holden too cannot understand the phenomenon of death and why it occurs.

Holden Caulfield, the protagonist from *The Catcher in the Rye* is a young adult on his quest to self-discovery. As a young adult, the transition to maturity baffles him leaving him withdrawn from the society. Holden is a talkative person but in an intrusive and cynical way. He is not someone humble and with charismatic character. Holden feels alienated, making him withdraw into his own world of loneliness. For him, in order to understand the physical world around him, he first needs to comprehend himself from inside.

Holden enjoys reading books but he reads only what intrigues him. He cannot be called a weak reader even though he does not read his texts, he reads for pleasure with vigor or excitement. He does not read what he is told to read but he reads what he enjoys reading. Holden does not talk about his feelings openly, he shrouds his true feelings and constantly lies to his readers often misleading them. Holden tells his readers that he took the book by mistake from the library and blames the library for handing him the wrong book:

The book I was reading was this book I took out of the library by mistake. They gave me the wrong book, and I didn't notice it till I got it back to my room. They gave me *Out of Africa*, by Isak Dinsén I thought it was going to stink, but it didn't. It was a very good book. I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot. My favorite author is my brother D.B., and my next favorite is *Ring Lardner*.

My brother gave me a book by *Ring Lardner* for my birthday, just before I went to Pencey. (10)

Although Holden baffles the readers as he constantly makes things up and he seems not completely honest, he really studies the books he likes. His approach towards things are seem contradictory, as he admits he loves reading at the same time and confesses that he is “quite illiterate”. Before he gets maturity, he is not confident in the things he admits so he manages to leave a safer side to retreat if cornered. He does not connect with his readers in a truthful way; he tries to make things up. Holden has trust issues that forbid him from being completely honest with his readers.

Holden too is an insightful character, he shares his opinion about a book he read, and it was a birthday gift from his brother D.B. The book was by an author named Ring Lardner, he talks about how the book had “very funny, crazy plays” (18). He continues by confessing that he loves to read books that are funny once in a while. Here we can see the flip side of the coin, an insightful Holden talking about how he had read a lot of classical books, like the *Return of the Native* and also a lot of war books and lot of mysteries. Holden advises the reader to read *Human Bondage* by Somerset Maugham, that he had read the summer before. He says that he would like to call the authors of the books he had read if they were his “terrific” (19) friends but he wouldn’t call Somerset Maugham, instead he would call Thomas Hardy. Holden here reveals a lot about his interests and gives the readers an insight into his life. For both Holden and as well as Charlie, books are something that keeps them occupied. They lose themselves in the book they read which helps them connect with the outside world. Though they do not actively connect to the word outside yet they fancy the characters and the stories they read.

Holden has a capacity for writing, though Holden constantly fails every exam. He fails because he is not interested in the subjects that are taught in the school. Holden is considered proficient in writing; Stradlater wants Holden's help with writing an essay for him which he agrees. He expresses his attitude towards writing:

Anyway, finally I had to come right out and tell him that I had to write a composition for Stradlater, and that he had to clear the hell out, so I could concentrate. He finally did, but he took his time about it, as usual. After he left, I put on my pajamas and bathrobe and my old hunting hat, and started writing the composition.

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. I am not too crazy about describing rooms and houses anyway. So what I did, I wrote about my brother Allie's baseball mitt. (21)

This again proves that Holden does not quite follow the opinions of others. He does what interests him, instead of writing the way Stradlater expects him to write. Holden writes about his demised brother's baseball mitt because he writes about events that have deep connection with him. It is appropriate for Holden to write about something that means a lot to him. So, in Holden's case through reading and writing he has an opportunity to engage intellectually as well as on an emotional level.

In order to understand the reality and contemplate on the things he feels stuck on, he needs to find some means to help them sort out their problems. To help him realize what he is facing is impermanent and someday it would all end. He needs to learn to have faith and stay hopeful. Comprehending it is just a phase that he is going through. What would help him gain his maturity? To have a clear understanding about the world so he would no longer carry the weight of the world on his shoulders.

The solution the researcher has come up with is “reflective writing”. Most teenagers find it difficult to confront their feelings; they cannot share their fears, their pains. At this age they get their heart broken, feel isolated and cannot socialize, so the only remedy would be to ponder on the life and one way to do it is through writing.

In “The Initiation Paradigm in Castresana's “El Otro Arbol De Guernica”, Elizabeth S. Rogers talks about initiation as a process of transformation from one state to another in social as well as symbolic system. Rogers argues:

From primitive times to the present, initiation, perceived not only as a social ritual but also as a symbolic system which identifies a transition or transformation from one state to another, has remained a constant in the history of man. As a social ritual it identifies that rite of passage from childhood to adulthood while as a symbolic system it universally expresses transcendental movement to a higher state of being, from the secular (profane) to the sacred, from ignorance to knowledge. (183)

Rogers, through these lines, means to claim that transformation takes place in two levels- social and symbolic. Holden’s transformation from childhood to adulthood is initiation rites of him. Holden goes through a series of events leading them closer to maturity. Events that he confronts on his journey are mostly psychological turmoil and dilemmas. He is caught up on his own thoughts and cannot seem to untangle the spectrum of thoughts he is engulfed in.

Holden as a character from the first few pages of the novel gives an impression that he is a troubled teenager. He speaks, “the first thing you will probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap”(1). Holden hates his childhood because he considers it lousy and does

not mention about his childhood memories to the readers. Holden is brought up in a wealthy family meaning he is not deprived of all the comforts. Yet it is because of his psychological conflict, he always uses the word 'phony'. In his perspective, he sees the adult world as phony and he expresses his opinion on why he considers it phony. He also ridicules Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, in which the writer uses many incidents of his childhood and early life to create a considerable fictional construct.

Elizabeth S. Rogers further borrows the idea from Mircea Eliade's *Birth and Rebirth* that in initiation rites, the protagonist separates one from the maternal world (home) and in order to develop maturity and adulthood. Rogers claims:

Initiation as a social ritual has been called (puberty rites) by ethnographers and religious historians. Mircea Eliade in his study *Birth and Rebirth* identifies the following elements as common to initiation rites: separation from the maternal world (symbolized as the (death) of childhood), removal of the initiates to some secluded area apart from the society, initiatory ordeals and performance of feats, revelation of and instruction in group myths and sacred knowledge, some rite of (marking) or scarification, (rebirth) into the adult world as (another) and finally, after having gained aspects of adulthood, a return to the group. (183-84)

These lines claim that initiation rite is similar to the rites of birth, death and rebirth. Holden, in the novel says "Mothers are all slightly insane (30)", and leaves his house in order to develop his maturity. He does not like the society he lives in since he considers it as phony one. Holden slips quietly back into his apartment and is speaking with Phoebe. They talk, and then reconcile that Phoebe asks Holden what he wants to do with his life. Holden says:

I thought it was ‘If a body catch a body,’ I said. ‘Anyway, I keep picturing all these little 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. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it’s crazy, but that’s the only thing I’d really like to be. I know it’s crazy. (93)

This passage reveals the source of the book’s title, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and justifies Holden as the character who takes initiation in that mission. He responds with this image, which reveals his fantasy of idealistic childhood and his role as the protector of innocence. He has a cynical, oversimplified view of other people that is why he looks that children are simple and innocent while adults are superficial and hypocritical. The fact is that he is having this conversation with Phoebe, who is anything but simple and innocent that reveals the oversimplification of his worldview. Holden himself realizes this to a degree when he acknowledges that his idea is crazy, yet he cannot come up with anything more pragmatic and he has trouble seeing the world in any other way. His catcher in the rye fantasy reflects his innocence, his belief in pure, uncorrupted youth, and his desire to protect that spirit. On the other hand, it represents his extreme disconnection from reality and his naïve view of the world. Therefore, all this facts are an example of initiation rite or Bildungsroman.

As in the words of Rogers, “initiation separation entails a night voyage and extensive travel in the company of an adult mentor, represented by the school teacher” (185), Holden gains knowledge and ideas from his teachers, Mr. Spencer and Mr. Antolini. Though these lines, he seems to be indifferent to the advices of people he

encounters, he really gains ideas from them. It is not the same for Holden; he does not seem to appreciate advices. The conversation between Holden and his history teacher, Mr. Spencer shows his indifference towards suggestions:

‘Do you feel absolutely no concern for your future, boy?’

‘O I feel some concern for my future, all right. Sure. Sure, I do.’ I thought about it for a minute. ‘But not too much, I guess. Not too much, I guess.’

‘You will,’ old Spencer said. ‘You will, boy. You will when it’s too late.’

I didn't like hearing him say that. It made me sound dead or something. It was very depressing. ‘I guess I will,’ I said. (8)

Holden is not the one open to advices and opinions. Here, Mr. Spencer tries to persuade Holden to think about his future but he seems disinterested to the advice. He does not take advices too well and we can tell that Holden is not very cooperative. Mr. Spencer further continues:

‘I’d like to put some sense in that head of yours, boy. I'm trying to help you.

I'm trying to help you, if I can.’

He really was, too. You could see that. But it was just that we were too much on opposite sides of the pole, that's all. ‘I know you are, sir,’ I said. ‘Thanks a lot. No kidding. I appreciate it. I really do.’ (8)

Holden is not interested in advices and opinions of other people, no matter if they are really needed for his own life. In the same way, Mr. Antolini teaches him about mature man and immature man. Mr. Antolini says, “The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one” (101). This is how Holden takes the rites of initiation. This epigram shows that the personality of an adolescent who continually views

himself as a martyr or savior, but never sees himself as modestly attempting to cope with a boring and very imperfect world. In effect what Antolini is saying is:

"You are not alone; we have all been through this." You are not the first one, he tells Holden," who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior. You're by no means alone on that score; you'll be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. Happily, some of them kept records of their troubles. You'll learn from them-if you want to" (170-71).

This is a good example for Holden as he is continuously fighting with his troubles. Through these lines, Antolini comes up with this good advice for Holden in order to help him. Antolini is trying to teach him that you are not alone going through the hardships but also face this kind of problem as you feel now. It could help him gather up courage and face the reality.

He finally gets an idea that clarifies things about his idealism and childhood. When he sees Phoebe on the carrousel, "All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddamn horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything" (114). He knows he cannot save the children from growing up, but makes life any easier to live as well as makes it any easier to grow up. At the end it seems like he has come to terms with it, but he does not like it. He tells his brother D.B when he visits him at the sanatorium that he does not know what to think about all that his brother D. B. has told them, but he does miss everyone his brother has told them. This suggests that he does want to 'apply' himself, as his psychoanalyst tells him to.

He does not want to be left alone, like Allie, and it seems like that feeling is stronger at the end when he has finished telling us his story. His epiphany comes in narrating his story and the process of narrating itself is the “transformative agent, serving him as theory and catharsis” (45). Therefore, it invokes fear inside Holden, the fear of being forgotten. He wants people to remember him in life and he wants to be visible. Holden somehow realizes that he has to live his life even if it seems hard.

Though Holden is annoyed too soon when he is given advice but at the same time he thanks Mr. Spencer for expressing his gratitude. Holden genuinely likes old Mr. Spencer. Holden does not care much about academics in spite of his fascination towards reading and writing. It is when old Mr. Spencer tells Holden to meet him before he leaves for Christmas. He reads Holden’s answers and the note he left for Mr. Spencer:

Dear Mr. Spencer [he reads out loud]. That is all I know about Egyptians. I can’t seem to get very interested in them although your lectures are very interesting. It is all right with me if you think you flunk me though as I am flunking everything else except English anyway. Respectfully yours, Holden Caulfield. (7)

Holden’s lack of interest and ignorance worries Mr. Spencer, he questions Holden whether he fears about his future. There are people in Holden’s life who are concerned about him, and he is putting a lot of effort to make him talk about his problems. On the contrary, Holden seems annoyed and disinterested.

Sexuality plays an important role in the life of young adults. They do not talk about it freely and are reluctant to share their opinions. Holden confesses that in his mind he is the biggest “sex maniac” (14). Considering the fact he calls himself a sex maniac he contradictorily points out that again it is sex that baffles him and swears to

god that he does not understand it. He is having several doubts regarding “sex”, in such cases Holden should have confronted to an adult regarding his confusing curiosities. Holden’s reluctance to sex is strongly related to his unwillingness to move beyond childhood innocence and to reach adulthood. It seems however, quite normal for a 16 year old boy to be sexually baffled and immature, and to therefore experience complexities concerning how to behave, but Holden is especially hesitant on this matter because he is so fond of childhood and children. Lundquist quotes Robert G. Jacobs on this subject in relation to Salinger’s writing:

For Salinger, childhood is the source of good in human life; it is in that state that human beings are genuine and open in their love for one another. It is when people become conscious in their relationships to one another, become adults, that they become ‘phony’ and logical and come to love the reasons for love more than the loved person. (44)

So, the reason behind Holden’s hatred towards the adult world is that he believes once people reach adulthood, true love is hard to find, or hard to believe in. As people become ‘phony’ and self-conscious, even love and emotional relationship become something superficial and each one has his reasons: for one, art is a flight; for another, a means of conquering but one can flee into a hermitage, into madness, into death. One can conquer by arms.

The central focus of the narrative of the childhood of the protagonist is of *The Catcher in the Rye*. The novel follows the tripartite structure and it represents the standard sequential formula of the mythological adventure of the hero as represented in his rites of passage: separation, initiation, and return. Joseph Campbell in his discussion of the nuclear unit of the monomyth argues, “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder [. . .] comes back from

this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (28).

While Salinger's protagonist cannot be termed a hero figure of godlike attributes reminiscent of the mythological heroes, he does fulfill the archetypal characteristics of the hero figure, notwithstanding one of a contemporary nature. After gaining maturity, Holden comes back (not physical but mental return) to the society from where he goes in the beginning. At the very end of the novel, he says:

I didn't know what the hell to say. If you want to know the truth, I don't know what I think about it. I'm sorry I told so many people about it. About all I know is, I sort of miss everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance. I think I even miss that goddam Maurice. It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody. (115)

These lines clearly show that Holden returns to the same society, which he leaves in the beginning. His feeling of missing the people around him signifies his mental return to the world he, he fulfills the requirement to be a hero.

J. H. Buckley, in *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* claims that one's return back to home and the society one is from is an element of Bildungsroman, “When the protagonist has gained the desired maturity and wisdom, he may go back to his old family home in order to demonstrate his success” (17). To reach maturity is found to be a difficult process in a Bildungsroman and one which is accomplished over a long period of time.

During the course of the protagonist's journey, he struggles to find a balance between his needs and desires whilst also determining his rightful place in the society, a struggle or conflict, which is, finally resolved when he becomes a mature adult. A Bildungsroman should discuss “childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, and alienation, ordeal by love, the search for

vocation and a working philosophy” (18). Buckley points out that although these are the principal elements of a Bildungsroman, all novels that are considered to belong to this genre do not necessarily follow this exact pattern.

A modern hero is different from cosmic or mythical hero. He comes from ordinary world. While talking about the modern hero, Campbell argues:

The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding. 'Live', Nietzsche says, 'as though the day were here.' It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal —carries the cross of the redeemer—not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair. (362)

The expedition of Holden, designed to protect the children both physically and psychologically from the phony nature of the adult world, is the journey of a modern archetypal hero. Holden is also an archetypal hero who leaves his family, house and goes away for a mission to save children and becomes a catcher in the rye. He sacrifices his whole life in the mission of saving children from the cliff of innocence into maturity. As Prometheus steals celestial fire from the grace of god, and as Oedipus saves the Theban people from the riddle of the sphinx, Holden has his holy mission to protect innocent children. Though he is not as equal to mythical heroes, he is an archetypal hero of the modern society.

The research comes to the conclusion that in *The Catcher in the Rye* Salinger presents the adult world from the perspective of a teenager. It is a novel of

the process of initiation. Thus, the researcher has examined the novel as an example of the initiation rites and has shown how the various novelistic elements function to create a complex and symbolic view of this rite of passage as established in the modern world. This thesis has incorporated the ideas from J. H. Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, George Oliver's *History of Initiation in Twelve Lectures* and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as theoretical insight.

The research concludes that Holden's journey in the novel is the journey from innocence to experience in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* applying Bildungsroman perspective. Through the examination of his activities and behavior, this thesis explored his journey from innocence to experience. It has studied the ways Holden Caulfield faces the hardships, challenges and difficulties in his earlier life because of innocence, lack of proper guidance and knowledge. This very character becomes an intelligent person at the end of the novel after having some experience from his innocent life and mistakes. Within two days period, the character changes a lot in the novel after he has been expelled from prep school. So, learning comes from abjection in the life of Holden. He starts hating the grown ups' world as he thinks them to be phony and cheaters. He searches for truth and escapes from the "phoniness" of the adult world. He ends up exhausted and emotionally unstable. The events are related after the fact.

This research has studied how Holden gains maturity through his innocent and foolish acts in physical, mental, psychological and social level of life, and has come to the conclusion that it is due to abjection from the prep school and even by his own parents, he gains maturity. His changing from innocence to maturity, from his earlier life to later life, represents an individual's journey. This thesis has justified that

Holden's all activities represent Bildungsroman features of the novel since the novel deals with the journey of a character's personal development. Holden is a modern hero who becomes the catcher in the rye and protects the innocent children like his sister from falling into the trap of the phony world.

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