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Louise Caroline Barbosa

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## Superficiality [sic] and maturity within J. D. Salinger's *The catcher in the rye* and Mark Twain's *The adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the concept of maturity between postcolonialism and modern literature through a close reading of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Both Huck and Finn reside in a world where growing older means accepting the often fake societies and communities that regulate societal norms. Both characters face mature themes, such as death/mortality/ isolation, the hypocrisy of "civilized" society, and depression. In evaluating these texts, it is reasonable to believe that Holden and Huck will forever be displaced in society because of their repression of superficiality, which in turn stagnates their maturity (as defined by society) that can never progress as it would represent acceptance of the hypocritical societal values imposed upon them.

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Mary K. Ramsey

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SUPERFICIALITY AND MATURITY WITHIN J.D. SALINGER'S *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* AND MARK TWAIN'S *THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN*

By

Louise Caroline Barbosa

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the concept of maturity between post-colonialism and modern literature through a close reading of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Both Huck and Finn reside in a world where growing older means accepting the often fake societies and communities that regulate societal norms. Both characters face mature themes, such as death/mortality/ isolation, the hypocrisy of "civilized" society, and depression. In evaluating these texts, it is reasonable to believe that Holden and Huck will forever be displaced in society because of their repression of superficiality, which in turn stagnates their maturity (as defined by society) that can never progress as it would represent acceptance of the hypocritical societal values imposed upon them.

### Part One: Societal Values

When discussing societal values, it is important to analyze how these values are formed and in what ways they are enforced. In the world of Huck Finn, the two main figures who attempt to “civilize” him are the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. They took in Huck because they believed they could turn him into someone respectable through the creation of strict rules and limited day-to-day activities. The first chapter is Huck setting the scene for a typical day in his house, and his sentiments, that to some may seem exaggerated, give a glimpse to how constrained Huck truly is: “I couldn’t do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up” (Twain 2). This may be how Huck feels in the new clothes the Widow forces him to wear, but it can also be a metaphor for his entire time in the widow’s house. In just a few paragraphs, the reader learns of all the things Huck is not allowed to do, and there is nothing that suggests he is free to be himself or act in a way that is natural to him. He may not smoke, put his feet up, eat before prayer, or voice his opinions to either of the women because it would be a sign of disobedience. The only activities that the ladies find suitable for him is to practice spelling and to learn the Bible. There is no place for imagination, nor is there a sense of comfort in a home that to Huck is much like the school he avoids. The one thing that he finds in common with the Widow Douglas is taking snuff, and he is only allowed to do this because the widow enjoys it. This shows how the adults of his world find tobacco to be a negative influence, unless it is taken in a form that they find acceptable. Health-wise, this is not an improved method or a consistent ideology, and Huck recognizes the faulty but takes advantage of the little liberty he has.

Religion is also a huge factor that is used to haunt Huck in any way possible. The name of the town itself is St. Petersburg. If one were to make this a direct connection to St. Peter of the Christian teachings, Twain would be placing this town as the Pearly Gates of Heaven, and the

widow, her sister, and all of the other adults of the town are Peter, the figure that determines who can cross the gate into salvation. However, none of the adults within the novel are truly “pure” in the sense that their morals could rival that of a saint. Miss Watson, for instance, enjoys locking Huck in a closet and forcing him to pray as a way to make up for his sin of dirtying his clothes. His disobedience with adults is treated in a more authoritarian way than through Christian teachings, because Huck doesn’t understand the actions he is forced to make. Huck at first tries to obey when he is told to pray every day, but there is no meaning attached to it because he has not been made to understand why he must pray. He states “nothing come of it... I tried it... but somehow I couldn’t make it work” (Twain 13). When he tells Miss Watson that after praying he received a fishing line but no hook, Miss Watson only responded by calling him a fool without explanation. This expresses how she finds actions, such as appearing to pray, more important than the meaning of the act itself, which would be praying for a noble reason or cause. To Huck, the motions of appearing religious have no impact for him and don’t affect his life in the way that he has been made to believe it will. Even Widow Douglas, despite her much nicer demeanor towards Huck, is guilty of not properly forming a connection between him and religion. When she tries to teach him about Moses, Huck is “in a sweat to find out all about him” (Twain 2). However, as soon as she reveals that Moses has been dead for centuries now, Huck loses complete interest as this story has no meaning to him in his modern time. The story of Moses itself is that of a man who sees the injustices towards his people and runs away, something Huck could relate to as he is also the subject of an authority figure who attempts to generate obedience out of fear. However, the time period removes him from the story, as he feels that something that happened so long ago could not possibly be reflected in his life. Huck “don’t take no stock in dead people” because dead people aren’t affecting his life in the present, the way that the widow

and Miss Watson do. In this way, Twain is subtly telling the reader that this town is stuck in rituals and stories of the past without creating a real meaning behind them. Religion for Huck is only a facet by which the individuals in the town can appear to be moral, and therefore gain superiority and power over others.

The only alternative to this figure is embodied in that of Huck's biological father, Pap. He is the only adult figure that separates himself from the town physically, as well as keeps his distance from religion and societal structures. When the reader is introduced to Pap, he is a wild figure that brings fear into the room:

His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through, like he was behind vines... There warn't no color in his face where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white... a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. (Twain 23)

Huck doesn't give anyone in the book as much description as he does his own father, and no one else is comparable to an animal. Pap doesn't seem to be clean, nor does he like the fact that his son's clothes look "starchy," as though this is a way of Huck attempting to be a "big-bug" and superior to his father (23). He dares his son to pick up a book and read, and before a minute can go by it is snatched away and thrown to the other side of the room. He forbids Huck from going to school, and warns that the next thing he may do is become religious, as if this is the worst thing possible. The only meaning in life for Pap is whiskey and rifles, and he doesn't abide by any social structures. Even the idea of a black, educated man being able to vote somewhere in the United States causes him to rethink voting ever again as long as he lives (Twain 32). Pap, in the eyes of the reader, is the direct opposite of a civilized person, and the only example of living

outside of structured society. Since he only lives by his rules, he is degraded as a person and has more likeness to an animal, as his ways of living are feral. Huck sees only two pathways in his life, and those are either to conform and become the man the Widow Douglas wants him to be, a religious hypocrite, or fall into the footsteps of his drunk and abusive father. The only real time Huck seems to be at ease is when he escapes these two realities, if only for a moment, to be by himself in the woods. An illustration offered in the sixth chapter of the book is captioned "Solid Comfort" with Huck laying against a tree and smoking in his dirty, tattered clothes. His father is nowhere to be seen, and he reminisces of his life with the two women and how free his is compared to when he couldn't cuss or run around wherever he pleased (Twain 30). When Huck is alone with nature, he is able to fish and drink, and he looks forward to this quiet time alone without being licked by his father or scolded by the widow. He represents the place in-between suffocating rules and regulations of society, and the guideless and uncivilized ignorance of being completely separated from society. Unfortunately for Huck, this middle ground does not last, and he continues being tossed and turned between the two lifestyles throughout the novel.

Similarly, Holden Caulfield within the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* is being also subject to meeting the expectations of a society that does not understand him. The reader meets Holden just as he is about to leave Pencey Preparatory school in Pennsylvania. This is an environment that Holden identifies from the beginning as fake and superfluous:

You probably heard of it, you've probably seen the ads, anyway. They advertise in about a thousand magazines, always showing some hot-shot guy on a horse jumping over a fence. Like as if all you ever did at Pencey was play polo all the time. (Salinger 2)

The narrator assumes that it's well understood exactly the type of place he's describing. He doesn't need to go into specifics as the reader is already asked to imagine the most stereotypical and affluent school that promotes an ostentatious society. He then juxtaposes this image with the claim that no one he has met at the school is a proper representation of the caption that accompanies the image. The only "splendid" and "clear-thinking" young men are "maybe two guys...and they probably came to Pencey that way" (Salinger 2). Holden from the beginning establishes that he is in a school system that perpetuates a lie, claiming to be a place that civilizes young men to be suitable in society. He also establishes that he has been kicked out, and isn't a part of all of the phonies and crooks that make up his obscenely wealthy school.

The first character that Holden introduces is his aging history teacher, Mr. Spencer, who has just flunked him and wanted to speak to him before leaving for Christmas break. Holden is eager to say goodbye as this professor is one figure that he somewhat respects and resents. He respects Mr. Spencer as a teacher because the man is only trying to help him academically, and Holden is aware of how hard it is to work with a student like himself. The same can be said for how Huck respects Widow Douglas and doesn't wish to disrespect her, even if she can be mean at times because "she meant no harm by it" (Twain 2). Mr. Spencer's methods can emulate that of Miss Watson because he too fails at attempting to civilize Holden. The teacher puts Holden in an uncomfortable situation by asking him to appear personally in his house, surrounded by old relics such as Native American blankets and other things that have no relevance to his own lifestyle. He then asks Holden to pick up his essay that has been graded and sitting on his desk, only to have the paper read back to him. Holden knows that the essay was some of his most terrible work, and even left a note at the end for the professor giving him to okay to flunk him for the semester. Nevertheless, his little note did not stop the professor from reading the paper in a

tone of superiority. What the teacher believed would motivate Holden only made him feel embarrassed and more miserable about himself. The teacher believed that pointing mistakes out to Holden would make him change his ways. Belittling Holden's work, proved to not affect him at all and it didn't change his behavior or outlook on life, just as Huck Finn didn't commit to praying more after Miss Watson scolded him for doing it wrong. If anything, for both characters scolding did nothing but discourage Holden from school and Huck from religion, as these are topics that are used to make the characters feel inferior and impose the idea that they must essentially change who they are in order to fit into the mold of civilization. If Huck could just follow the rules, it would be easier for St. Petersburg to praise and love him, and if Holden just applied himself in school, he might fit in better with his peers.

Conversely, Holden doesn't connect with his peers at all. The relationships he forms are superficial, as he states that he never discussed his personal life with his own roommates (Salinger 47). Stradlater, the attractive football player he shares a room with, and Ackley, the socially awkward and ill-mannered suite-mate, are the people he spends the most time around. Yet, he does not form any true relationship with either. In Ackley's case, Holden hates him and at the same time tolerates his behavior. Ackley walks into Holden's room and often overstays his welcome, making Holden feel uncomfortable by doing gross things such as popping pimples or clipping his toenails. However, Holden still takes the time to invite Ackley to the movies with him and another student named Brossard, people he doesn't "even enjoy sitting next to" at the movies because he feels left out when they find scenes funny that he does not (Salinger 37). Another social convention he finds annoying and yet voluntarily takes part in is hanging out with Stradlater. He often goes to the bathroom with Stradlater to watch him shave, making conversation with someone he frequently calls a moron during his long inner-monologues.

Stradlater constantly takes advantage of him, but still has enough charm to convince Holden to borrow his things and write his paper, as the narrator has nothing better to do (Salinger 38). Neither Stradlater nor Ackley serve any purpose in his life other than to be placeholders for Holden when he needs to get his mind off of things. For example: The only reason Holden goes to the movies is because he doesn't want to think about Stradlater on a date with Jane Gallagher, a childhood friend (Salinger 36). This childhood friend is an unexpected twist, as Holden doesn't hold anyone in high regard except Jane Gallagher, whom he immediately asks Stradlater all types of questions about. This weekend has been a horrible experience for Holden, and the only time he is cheery is thinking back on his childhood with Jane, and all of the times he used to play checkers with her, or was a caddy for her mom during games of golf. Holden is filled with so much excitement, that he can't muster up the courage to say hi to her while she waits on Stradlater to finish getting ready. Instead of speaking to someone Holden cares about, he chooses to rave on and on about Jane to an unenthusiastic Stradlater about the "kind of stuff that doesn't interest most people" (Salinger 32). Instead, Stradlater is interested in having sex with his dates, and would rather not hear about the childhood Jane experienced.

Overall, neither of Holden's roommates are true friends, and the superficial connections Holden has made at Pencey draws back to the metaphor his teacher once gave him: "Life is a game that one plays according to the rules" ( Salinger 8). In these rules, Holden spends time with people he doesn't care about at a school his parents forced him to attend, and lives under the disappointment of everyone he meets. These social constructs are similar to the ones Huck experiences because neither boy can internalize such rules. If these rules are life, and life is a game, then there is no point to the life the boys are living as they are on the losing side.

Part Two: Family Structures Within *Huck Finn* and *Catcher in the Rye*

The next defining factor for both Huck and Finn's displacement is the presence of family. Within *The Adventures of Huck Finn*, family is an institution that gives no sense of comfort to the narrator. His father only serves as an abusive and cruel figure that scares Huck enough to run away. The reader later learns that the dead man that Jim and Huck passed by on their way down the Mississippi happened to be Pap (Twain 61). Although Huck will never see Pap again, the memory of Pap serves as a way to delegitimize the notion of family structure. Keeping Pap in the back of his mind, Huck is aware of how he is disappointing his father in running away, and fears the retaliation he would receive if he were to return back home. There is this overwhelming idea that Huck must fit into this mold that society and parental figures have created. However, in Peter Stoneley's article "Children, Futurity, and Value: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", it is suggested that Twain filled his novel with flawed parental figures as a way to "show how far the nation has fallen short of what it should be, by showing how it is failing its children. Life, the novel implies, should primarily be about how to deliver the future to the child" (Stoneley 175). Should this be the case, then the whole notion of raising a child fit for the future is arbitrary, for the child is the one that shapes its future. This society is attempting to achieve the impossible, which is determining a generation they will not be present for. Stoneley takes this idea so far as to relate it to the famous "NOTICE" at the beginning of Twain's novel. It states as such:

NOTICE

Persons attempting to find a Motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a Moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a Plot in it will be shot.

By Order of the Author

Per G. G., Chief of Ordnance.

Stoneley addresses the childish tone of Twain as he threatens violence that anyone reading knows cannot be carried out. This is a play on societal conventions because Twain is attempting to act as an authority figure, someone behind “law and established power” (Stoneley 173). In impersonating General Grant (G. G.), Twain has created in himself a father figure that perpetuates the idea that the future should be forced on children. Instead of a caring and devoted father that nurtures, there is the general that established a relationship between parent and child as authority and subordinate. In this way, the idea of violence in the family structure is perpetuated, and Twain’s inclusion of the notice is his way of pointing out the wrong way discipline has permeated itself into family structures (Stoneley 174). The problem with Huck is that he denies any authority figure in his life. He has found this idea of independence that will never again allow him to be made someone’s possession.

The connection between parenthood and possession is not only relevant in the abusive relationship between Huck and Pap, but is also present in the warm and loving home of the Grangerfords, a welcoming family that takes in Huck when his raft wrecks down the river. In this home, Huck has a first glimpse of “aristocracy,” and what it truly meant in his world to be from a respectable family at the top of the social ladder. What he found was insanity.

Plucked straight from the river, Huck found himself plopped down in the middle of a war that had been going on for decades. Grangerford children younger than him were prepared at any moment to kill or die for the sake of a feud with the Shepherdson family who lived nearby, despite the cause of the war having been lost along with reasoning and common sense. When

Huck reveals that three children have already died because of this feud, Huck asks one question after another to get to the bottom of the situation. He finds that not only Buck and the children, but even the adults are proud to participate in a war that has no happy ending for either side and accomplishes nothing. Colonel Grangerford himself asks one of his younger sons why he didn't jump out of the bushes to shoot a Shepherdson, and Buck responded that he plays dirty because the other family also takes advantage of their surroundings (145). The fact that the father is more concerned about fighting fairly and out in the open than the idea of his son being shot brings to question the role this father has within the family. If he is not there to create a future for his children and ensure their lives are safe, then his children are only war props that serve the selfish interests of an older generation. They are pieces of property that are expendable to what he deems significant.

This family structure also hides behind the hypocrisy of religion to appear righteous in the eyes of their community. Every Sunday they attend church in the same small chapel as the Shepherdsons, listening to the preacher speak as rifles sit between their legs. The second Sunday Huck describes to be "one of the roughest Sundays I had come across yet" (Twain 147). This sermon, like the first he attended with the family, preached of brotherly love and free grace. However, the preacher's words are repeated without meaning because Huck is fully aware of how the family appreciates the kind words but does not practice its teachings. According to the Grangerfords, brotherly love limits itself to their blood-related family members, and there is no such thing as grace between two people who have troubling family histories, even if those histories hold no relevance to the present or future. Huck doesn't express these sentiments vocally, but he cannot help becoming traumatized by the death that surrounds this family as

though it were as natural as the wind, and he cannot shake off the ornery feeling that follows him.

It's no coincidence that Huck is one letter away from Buck, as the young boy is an example of what Huck's life could be would he have grown up obedient in what society deems a perfect family. When the Grangerfords catch on that one of their daughters was eloping with the enemy, a huge battle erupted that nearly killed Huck. Instead of happiness coming from two young adults finding love, both families took up arms and without caution fought until their deaths. Huck witnessed the brutal murder of Buck and his older brother by two much older adults. Up in the safety of a tree, he saw young children hunted down by larger and much stronger adults, and became scarred by how even authority figures and supposed role models were able to turn off their humanity and prey upon the vulnerable, all for the sake of family (Twain 153). In Huck's experience, this is what family represented: an indoctrination of oneself to a system, where all actions and opinions are already programmed for you and where free will loses all meaning. Huck could not jump back on the raft fast enough...

Similarly, Holden Caulfield holds his own family in contempt as it is part of a structure that resembles a lack of originality or distinct identity. For instance, D. B. is Holden's brother used to be no one special, "just a regular writer" (Salinger 1). He wrote stories that could be perceived as having trivial storylines, but that is what Holden enjoyed the most. However, D. B. is not the same person anymore. Since he has moved out to Hollywood, he has become a "prostitute," someone who has made a name for himself in movies, and his success is undeniable as he drives a \$4,000 Jaguar (Salinger 1). In Holden's eyes, D. B. has become like any other Hollywood writer, and has sacrificed what Holden believed to be true craft for the seductive world of show business. His brother's physical location is also a representation of the emotional

separation for Holden. Holden's childhood of New York City and the flashy lifestyle of those in Hollywood are not just geographically distinct, but there is a lack of an emotional bond between the two brothers as well. Holden views his brother as just like anyone else in the world, someone motivated by money and tangible things, which take place of real relationships like the closeness he and D. B. may have previously had.

The fact that Holden chooses to start his narrative with the severed relationship he has with his brother leaves precedence for the rest of the relationships he has within the book. For instance, Holden's parents are nearly absent in his life, and they only serve as reminders of his personal failures. They are instead parental figures that loom in the distance, manifesting only in his conscious. He knows that they will be disappointed in him when he returns home, and that he will be most likely cycled into another fancy prep school as the last four times have proven. This confrontation is inevitable, and so he decides to prolong his meeting with his parents until they've had a chance to digest the news of his expulsion from Pencey. His guilt follows him throughout the city as he is aware of how quickly his money is being spent, and how his parents would react to his frivolous spending. His father is a very successful corporate lawyer who would disapprove of Holden's activities, and this makes Holden all the more aware of the wealthy lifestyle afforded by his father, as this causes him to compare himself to everyone he meets. His wealth is especially apparent when he comes across two nuns in a sandwich bar his first few days in the city. While they are enjoying breakfast and toast on a Sunday morning, he is having bacon and eggs, and he cannot stand to think that he is having a more luxurious meal than someone else. This thought is expressed even after the narrator reveals that this is not the type of meal he usually orders, as he is extremely skinny and a light eater. To make matters worse, these women are traveling with cheap suitcases. This brings Holden back to the memory of his old

roommate before he moved in with Stradlater. His former roommate also owned very cheap luggage, and Holden knew he was self-conscious of them because he would hide them under his bed, allowing people to assume that Holden's suitcase (made of real cowhide from Mark Cross) was really his own. The student frequently called him bourgeois, and after two months they each requested different roommates. For this reason Holden believes he cannot be friends with anyone who owns cheap suitcases because it gives them an "inferiority complex" and their relationship will turn hostile (Salinger 108). He resents the image people may perceive of him because he is a walking representation of his father's wealth; something he believes is not a true depiction of his personality. He would rather separate himself from his father, as this wealth is his father's and not a proper depiction of the failure Holden believes himself to be. This would explain why Holden is so eager to do things such as give away his suitcases, or pay the check for the nuns in the diner. Money allows him to wander New York and do whatever activities he wants, but he's sorry for having it because it "ends up making you blue as hell" (Salinger 113).

At the same time Holden is resentful of his family's influence, he feels guilty for not living up to their standards. His mother is a very nervous person after his younger brother, Allie, died a few years ago, and he "hated like hell" to give her another reason to be nervous (Salinger 107). Even worse would be for him to die from pneumonia, because his mother wouldn't know "what to do with all (his) suits and athletic equipment and all" (Salinger 155). Holden sees himself more as an inconvenience than a son, and his emotional distance from his family is just another superficial relationship that he futilely avoids.

### Part Three: The Psychological Journey of Huck Finn

Comparable to how rivers shape the features of the Earth, the Mississippi River strongly shapes the psychological and emotional growth of Huckleberry Finn, a young boy on what he believes to be the cusp of freedom on his makeshift raft. Mark Twain, within the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, offers a story of an adolescent's development as he travels through the Southern States of America's Pre-Civil War period. Despite Huck Finn's hometown of St. Petersburg representing the corrupt morale of society as a whole, Huck's travel downriver forces him to take a less passive role in the face of unethical situations. He finds himself becoming more sympathetic of others in a new environment where he is more reliant on companionship in order to survive. His naivety becomes more of a selected method in situations where caution is more important than revealing his true knowledge, and his exposure to various characters strengthens his ability to expose egotistical intentions within a person's behavior. However, despite his growth in wit and compassion, Huck is given to fluctuations in his character when he regresses into the passive and disciple role he was subject to in St. Petersburg, which in turn stifles any development he had made throughout the hardships on his journey.

The reader is first introduced to Huck in a state of what he describes as somewhat blissful: separated from the confines of society: "I got into my old rags, and my sugar hogshead again, and was free and satisfied" (1). Huck has no care in the world for rules, expectations, or even responsibilities, much less anything concerning morale. Reading the Bible or going to church is a chore for him, and having Bible-thumping and self-righteous figures surrounding him such as the unlikeable Miss Watson doesn't encourage any personal search for spirituality. He is prideful in his simple ways of living, wearing the same clothes every day and hunting his own dinner, and would continue to live such a life if his loneliness didn't draw him back to St.

Petersburg and all it represents. Tom Sawyer, the embodiment of this small town in a young boy, draws Huck out of this state of self-reliance by offering companionship. Tom's character, afforded by Twain's earlier novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is that of a mischievous youth who is motivated by adventure, willing to deceive anyone for personal gain, and a less blatant version of the selfish adults who reside in their small town. Tom is the sole reason for Huck choosing to re-enter society and pretending to play along with the rules. Huck becomes a follower and is as devoted as a disciple by taking into account every word that flies from Sawyer's mouth. He feels it is necessary to be a part of Tom Sawyer's Gang, and is willing to offer the life of Miss Watson, one of his caregivers, should he ever break the rules of the Gang (Twain 10). When Tom Sawyer decides to tie up Jim, a black servant under Widow Douglas, as a prank in the middle of the night, Huck barely disputes and becomes a passive person who is supporting Tom's behavior by his lack of vocal protest (8). Huck does not engage in his own behavior nor does he tackle any debates concerning his morality until he is ripped from society by his father and back into nature.

Subsequently, original thought begins to process as Huck is once again thrown into survival mode as he balances surviving in the wilderness and the temper of his own father. He is given time to reflect on his life with the Widow Douglas, and he finds that he prefers to live on his own and to be able to make decisions he sees fit. During this time he had no adult or friend that offered major influence, for his father was mostly away or too drunk to function and Huck was physically distanced from society. The desire to maintain this distance allows Huck to set his journey for the South, where he is able to form a relationship with an unlikely alias: Jim, now a runaway slave. Without taking much concern over the implications of helping a slave, Huck easily lets him join the ride on the raft. The long journey allows Huck and Jim to form a bond

that would not be as strong if they had both stayed in St. Petersburg, where Huck first found Jim to be nothing but a big man who fell as an easy target for Tom's pranks.

Furthermore, Huck becomes more conscious of the emotional impact he has on others when he attempts to fool Jim into thinking that he dreamed of the fog that caused their separation in the middle of their journey. The response Huck received when Jim poured his true thoughts in such a vulnerable state caused Huck for the first time to reflect on the consequences that follow the way he communicates with others.

“It made me feel so mean that I could almost kissed *his* foot to get him to take it back. It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger- but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither.” (Twain 105)

This passage is the first major breakthrough for Huck in the development of his character. Being an outcast for a majority of his life, Huck had always grown used to the disapproval of others and never felt it necessary to apologize for his actions. However, his new environment has allowed him a more sympathetic perspective of others and allows him to review how he should conduct himself in his personal relationships. Huck has already proven himself capable of thinking differently from the mindset of St. Petersburg because his apology represents the notion that even the emotions of black slaves should be held in equal consideration to that of a white man.

As the novel progresses, Huck's behavior increasingly contradicts the verbal attitudes expressed before his life changing journey. When being coerced into learning the story of Moses within the Bible, Huck is at first captivated by the story of freedom from bondage. However, once Huck realizes that Moses lived in a time irrelevant to the present, he quickly loses interest

and states that “I don’t take no stock in dead people” (2). However, the way Huck conducts himself when visiting the Grangerford household conveys a deeper and more sensitive side of Huck. By this point in the novel, the protagonist has witnessed several accounts of deadly situations: He has passed a floating house with a dead man lying inside, a wreckage of a steamboat where a hostage situation almost causes him and Jim to lose their mode of transportation, and he has also come across a drunken brawl of men who prey on other’s weaknesses through intimidation. After having come closer to death than at any point previously in his life, Huck has formed a newfound interest concerning mortality. In the case of Emmeline Grangerford, he has even formed a sense of respect for death:

“...many’s the time I made myself go up to the little room that used to be hers and get out her poor old scrap book and read in it when her pictures had been aggravating me and I had soured on her a little.” (Twain 140)

Huck’s perplexed state is due to the unique personality of this young girl whom, had this been the same Huck from the beginning of the novel, the reader would assume would hold no significance toward him. Unlike other characters throughout the novel, Emmeline is the one person whose life was filled with complete regard for other human beings, placing herself as secondary. Even when she fell sick and had a right to focus on her own health, Emmeline continued making poems and artwork for other people. She is a deep contrast from other characters of the novel, who so far have only behaved in ways to profit themselves. The closest redeeming character to Emmeline is Jim, who still does not compare on the same level to Emmeline because Jim did act out of his own personal interests by running away from St. Petersburg. This is Huck’s first exposure to a human being who proved to be an unselfish

individual, and his fascination with her work contradicts his earlier claim that he isn't interested in concerning himself with dead people.

Not only does Huck develop strong compassion for other beings, but he also grows more cautious when it comes to reading into the intentions of other people. After being introduced and then bombarded by the company of the dauphin and the duke, he states:

“It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings nor dukes, at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing... I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way.” (Twain 154)

This type of behavior is similar to the passive characteristics Huck had to Tom Sawyer's actions in the beginning of the novel. Huck is very aware that he is not in a position where he can swindle two adults without causing suspicion concerning his relationship with Jim, and so he continues to act as though he is naïve enough to believe the two men's fraudulent identities. He lets them sleep in his makeshift bed, and follows their plans when it comes to how they scam different townspeople. Although their behavior “was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race” Huck doesn't actively demonstrate his disapproval until he comes across another character like Emmeline Grangerford (Twain 210). Miss Mary Jane's ability to believe that the dauphin and duke are her real uncles and the way she easily gives them the six thousand dollars in her will not only makes her a naïve character, but also gives her a sense of selflessness. Money is not in her interests, but instead she is heavily occupied by the death of someone she loved. It pains Huck to see how she is being robbed, and he willingly tells Mary Jane the truth knowing that it puts him in great danger of being hunted by the frauds (Twain 243). Although St.

Petersburg follows him onto the raft in the form of two helpless men, Huck is able to not only recognize them as the epithet of St. Petersburg, but also takes a powerful stance by rising against a power that has proven itself to be inescapable.

If only the novel had ended on this note, the reader would have had stronger confidence that Huck was able to act independent of others. Once Huck realizes that Jim, his only true friend throughout the journey, had been sold by the dauphin, he struggles between calling Miss Watson to take Jim back to Missouri, or the more tedious task of finding and freeing Jim himself. He wrestles with the ideas of the corrupt and religious societies imbedded in him by St. Petersburg. To not call on Miss Watson would be like stealing her property, her slave. However, Huck recognizes Jim as more than a slave, and finally rips up the note to Miss Watson in a heated declaration of "All right, then, I'll go to hell" (Twain 271). Huck has finally confronted his moral conscious and decides that his gut is stronger than any influence religion may have forced upon him.

However, Huck's sudden confidence has yet to be tested in the form of his supposed best friend, Tom Sawyer. Once again, St. Petersburg is there to draw Huck back into their society when Huck again puts more trust in Tom than himself to handle the situation. Despite the little trial there is in physically freeing Jim, Huck instead follows the delusional and romantic concept Tom has that Jim must be freed in the most elaborate way. No longer is Jim a human being, but a storybook character. Although the boys often visit Jim, they first make ludicrous requests that have a hint of fantasy to them, such as asking Jim to grow flowers with his tears and to keep mice as company while the boys choose to dig Jim out instead of simply unlocking the door to the shed he is kept in at nighttime (Twain 301). Jim is lowered to a status that is worse than being a slave, and Tom willingly degrades him in order to elevate his status as the liberator.

Huck's intention was never to free Jim to make himself a heroic figure but to act out of true respect for their friendship. Tom has not psychologically grown along the Mississippi River with Huck and is unable and unwilling to become sympathetic to the cause of others, and unfortunately Huck allows himself to become susceptible to this mentality.

Consequently, Huck's maturity is curved by the influence of St. Petersburg and individuals who represent the corrupt morality of the town. Although throughout the journey Huck is found capable of acting of his own moral obligations separate from that of St. Petersburg as well as proving himself able to sympathize with others, these triumphs are understated by his final interactions with Tom Sawyer. It can be argued that had Tom not intercepted Huck, he would not have returned to the weak character that relied on others to take the lead of situations. However, the events of the novel suggests that St. Petersburg is found everywhere in the corrupt an ambiguous morality that resides in human nature. Although Huck sets out west as a final act of independence, the reader can only hope that through the events coordinated by Tom Sawyer, Huck was able to recognize his role in a dissolute society and the impact he's capable of making when he trusts his own code of integrity.

#### Part Four: The Obsessions of Holden Caulfield

If there is one member of the family that causes Holden the most self-reflection, it is his dead brother, Allie. All other siblings aside, Holden is most sentimental when he thinks of the sibling he lost. As a source of the narrator's psychological trauma, he is a private part of Holden that is kept a secret, and in a way this helps Holden protect Allie's memory within the present. Through his journey in the city of New York, Holden increasingly thinks about his childhood and Allie, driving him to search for a genuine emotional bond with someone that could fill the void that death had created.

The reader is first introduced to Allie when Holden decides to write Stradlater's descriptive essay on his little brother's baseball mitten. He changed the name so that no one would know Allie was related to him, or that his brother had passed. Surprisingly, Holden had Allie's baseball mitt in his suitcase, and easily whipped it out and started copying the poems inscribed on it. It's important to note that these poems are written in green ink, and they are written on all of the fingers and pockets of the mitt. The color green is easily associated with nature and growth. According to research by at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, the color green "may serve as a cue to evoke the motivation to strive for improvement and task mastery, which in turn may facilitate growth" (Lichtenfeld, Elliot, Maier and Pekren 1). For Holden, the green ink encourages him to write, and is a therapeutic way for him to talk about his brother. In turn, Allie stands for stability, as even Holden is constantly bragging that his brother was incredibly intelligent and the pleasure of all of his teachers, the exact opposite of the type of student Holden is. It can be inferred that Allie was more well-liked and had an easier ability to socialize than Holden. Paradoxically, Allie's representation of a stable character, even in death, directly contrasts and harms Holden, who falls into deeper depression due to his obsession.

While thoughts of Allie provide a calming effect, he is also the reason Holden is incapable of filling the emotional void that his brother once held. The younger brother is in the background of the narrator's voyage as Holden travels aimlessly in search of something that cannot be replaced.

This lack of emotional connections is visible in the characters Holden chooses for companionship. As he is incredibly lonely he begins to make conversation with anyone, even if he incredibly dislikes them. For example, Holden hires a prostitute to his hotel room, believing he may finally lose his virginity. Only when the girl, Sunny, arrives at his room, Holden feels more depressed than anything else. He attempts to make acquaintance, willing to pay her for her time despite not having sex. Sunny is a lousy conversationalist, and in their awkward silence Holden analyzes her, becoming more upset with each detail. He discovers that this young girl with a tiny voice comes from Hollywood, and when she isn't working nights she spends her days watching movies, a pastime Holden abhors. What's worse is that she is wearing a pretty green dress, and as Holden hangs it up he can only think of how she bought the dress, and how the people at the department store sold it to her without knowing her profession (Salinger 98). As the color psychology research had previously stated, the color green is associated with improved memory. The last mention of green within the novel was Allie's baseball mitt, which was full of poems and reminders of childhood youth. While Sunny is very pretty, her presence in the green dress disturbs Holden, who cannot help but emphasize how young she is for her profession, and states that "had she been a big old prostitute, with a lot of makeup on her face and all, she wouldn't have been half as spooky" (Salinger 98). This means that had Sunny been older and more experienced, Holden wouldn't have been so easily bothered by her presence. The more Holden grasps for personal relationships the more disappointment he finds, which contributes to his need to remember the past and his brother Allie.

As soon as Sunny leaves, Holden begins talking out loud to his brother as though he were in the room. The conversation, as the narrator admits, frequently surrounds the one time Holden didn't invite his brother to play BB Guns with him and a kid named Bobby Fallon (Salinger 98). His guilt over a matter so small emphasizes how deeply isolated Holden has become, and he makes insignificant parts of the past major situations that inflict guilt. This is a vicious cycle that repeats itself: Holden finds himself alone and depressed, he tries to socialize with other people, and these people tend to make him resent society and feel as though he is the only person that views the world through the phony lens perspective. Each new person he comes across is a distraction that leaves him more emotionally distraught:

For instance, Holden finds The Lavender Room filled with tourists drinking and dancing. Even though the ladies are much older than him, he tries to flirt as a way to make conversation and find out what they are doing in the city (Salinger 70). These ladies don't take Holden seriously because of his age, and their interest wanes throughout the night. Holden finds fun in dancing, but in the end their lack of commitment to conversation ruins the entire night for him. Despite their disinterest, Holden's persistence shows a desperate need to socialize.

Another hypocritical standpoint for Holden is his view of sexuality. As a sixteen year old virgin, he looks at sex as though it is a rite of passage, as if losing his virginity is something expected of him. This behavior could be the effect of his friendship with Stradlater, the hyper sexually active ex-roommate, or the Princeton boy who gave Holden the phone number of the promiscuous Faith Cavendish. These guys are considered by Holden to be morons at best, but he perpetuates their ideology by creating sexual environments several times in the book in hopes of losing his virginity. He creates a façade as though he is much more experienced, such as in the

Lavender Room, and expects that he will fit in by forcing himself in a situation he is not mature enough or ready for (Salinger 69).

If Holden is not pursuing sexual experiences, he is driven by his obsession with childhood innocence. These extremely opposite ideas propose that Holden has not found a middle ground in his adolescence. He prizes childhood, especially with his kid sister, Phoebe, to the point of worship. Throughout the novel Holden states that she is one of the smartest people he knows, and treats her like a wise sage.

Having studied the sequence of events within *The Catcher in the Rye*, one could create a layout of facts correlating the desired outcome versus the actual reality that Holden experiences. In his state of lonesomeness, the very world that Holden hates is the same world that he strives to find acceptance within. He claims to be surrounded by phonies, but he fails to realize that the biggest phony is himself. One major theme throughout the book is Holden's distaste for movies. However, Holden's inner monologue resembles that of a movie script. Whenever Holden is alone with his thoughts, his mind recreates memories in such a way that he can create a new persona, changing the events of the past to feel less vulnerable. These scenes have never occurred, but he imagines scenarios that could happen by toying with the idea of power and authority. For instance, Holden walks back to his hotel in freezing weather, wondering what happened to his gloves while he was at Pencey. He fantasizes about what he would do if he knew the person that took his gloves, and how he would approach the student. He sees himself barging into another guy's room and searching in obscure places, determined to take back what's his. However, the tough act stops right there: "I'd leave his room without even taking a sock at him. I'd probably go down to the can and sneak a cigarette and watch myself get tough in a mirror" (Salinger 89). Holden spends more than a page of writing describing the specific dialogue and

actions between himself and this fictitious thief. This requires calculating motive for imaginary characters, and considering a climax to the scene. In his own way he is a movie director, as these dramatic, movie-like scenes are always occurring in his head. After Maurice the pimp roughs him up for extra cash, Holden walks around his hotel room in pain, and started pretending he had a bullet in his guts (Salinger 103). Despite his personal hatred of movies, Holden's mind reflects the dramatic genre that he so vehemently hates.

### Part 5: Isolation and Mental Health of Holden

As an adolescent rogue in society, Holden Caulfield spent his days before Christmas break roaming the streets of 1950s New York City in a lonely haze. Surrounded by fake conversations, missed childhood nostalgia, and the perpetrated “phonies” who’ve defiled the innocence of youth, something he values as a dying species, he becomes despondent and lost within his journey as he fails to form an emotional connection with anyone willing to talk to him. His relentless pursuit of superficiality in everyone causes him to socially regress and disconnect from his environment and everything he’s ever known. Ironically, Holden must find acceptance from this society and culture he’s grown to despise so much in order to cross this barrier of maturity. Similar to the prep schools he has been dismissed from, society and its conventions are an institution that Holden fights against. While he grasps for the childhood identity in him and in the children around him, Holden suffocates under the pressures of adulthood that seem to loom in every corner, and he is unable to cope with these battling identities. As a self-positioned gatekeeper of innocence, Holden’s hypocritical actions prove that his psychosis is self-inflicted due to his fear of adulthood, and those actions cannot be placed on the perpetrated phony society that his one sided and unreliable narration would persuade the reader to believe. The cause of Holden’s mental instability is the battle between his innocence and maturity, and his inability to move from this transitional stage reveals the true phony of the novel to be Holden himself.

One of the most obvious ways Holden displays his immaturity is his great disappointment in failing to recreate his childhood. His favorite place to visit in New York is the Museum of Natural History because of the glass displays where “Nobody’d move. You could go there a hundred thousand times... The only thing that would be different would be you” (Salinger 121). Even these changes he mentions are superficial, such as a change in clothing, or a different

partner in grade school when on a field trip. Holden admires the museum for its ability to stop time and frame the past in a picturesque way. He writes about how the animals and Eskimos would be perfectly fine kept in the middle of whatever action they were in the midst of doing, and a reader can identify in Holden an obvious desire for this to happen in his life. He cannot travel back in time to before Allie died and his life fell apart, but he also cannot go home and face the consequences of his actions. He goes into extensive detail about all of the things that could happen on a trip to the museum according to how he remembered it in school, and even romanticizes not so comfortable experiences, such as how creepy the display of the “spooky guy in the back of the canoe” made him feel (Salinger 120). What is even more disturbing, however, is that Holden recognizes that he is different every time he visits the museum, but chooses not to discuss further how each visit is different, instead choosing to drown any interpersonal exploration with excessive and useless anecdotes about past visits to the museum. This establishes how Holden is an unreliable narrator as he recreates memories in order to cope with the troubles he currently has in his life, and only focuses on how his environment affects him as opposed to how his outlook may affect his view of the environment.

Another pivotal point of recreating reality within the novel is when Holden travels to the lagoon in Central Park. During a very drunk and isolated late night after phoning his old friend Sally, Holden rounds the lagoon several times in hopes of finding a duck and is deeply upset that ducks would defy nature and stick around during a cold December. Within the article *Reconsidering the Concept of Therapeutic Landscapes in JD Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye"*, Leonard Baer and Wilbert Gesler study how geography pertains to Holden's state of mind. The fact that the lake is described as half frozen and half water is “a visual representation of his identity, caught between two contradictory states of being... His innocence, at least reflected by

the missing ducks, is nowhere to be found” (Baer and Gesler 408). This is a perfect description of Holden’s mental state. He is drunk because he drinks to forget his past, but this also doesn’t allow him to move forward in any helpful way. This chapter also reveals the reason Holden doesn’t have closure or cannot move on from his childhood as he subtly states that he was unable to attend his brother’s funeral. This landscape was once a place of refuge, one of the main positive thoughts within his conscious that he shared with his brother. Yet, in his depression he only becomes more sporadic and unnerved by the fact that the lake is not going to replicate how innocent and carefree Holden may have felt before Allie died. For all the reader knows, Holden could have been the phony one and created a world where this lagoon played a much bigger role in his personal life, and he only inflicted more damage on his mental health by fantasizing a magical place that he hoped would be a sanctuary from this lonesome world he is currently experiencing.

Even seemingly less significant locations within the novel, such as the theatre, is an example of Holden attempting to demonize social constructs. Holden detests anything to do with Hollywood because he believes that people in the business must be phony. Not only is his brother considered a prostitute to him, but Holden mentions to almost every character his distaste for the theatre. This is hypocritical of Holden considering he chooses a movie date for his day with Sally. When Holden is overwhelmed by how phony the actors are, as well as how fake and pompous Sally’s old friend acts, he doesn’t realize that he is berating and shouting at Sally until she is in a fit of tears (Salinger 134). Holden’s inability to stand people and social situations causes him to repel others, which explains his isolation more than Holden voluntarily excluding himself. The deeper he travels into his psyche, the less he can properly gage other people’s emotions and motives, making him a shell of a person who is more phony because he takes a girl

out on a date to the movies because he feels that is what social conventions call for, and not necessarily because he actually likes Sally and wants to spend time with her. To further the irony, the hospital in which Holden is writing his story is situated nearby Hollywood. This could be a metaphor for Holden's need to be in social or prevalent spaces such as Hollywood or the movies in order to recover from his traumatic experiences. He may dislike being around other people, but he needs the populated environment and social interactions because companionship is necessary in his therapy so he doesn't regress into a cold, hard person who isn't capable of expressing his emotional depth in a healthy manner.

Another major point demonstrating Holden's personal contradictions is his incessant need to categorize everything and everyone within two polarities. The world he has constructed is only made of pretentious adults and innocent children. Holden himself, however, is a mixture of the two when he appoints himself as the Catcher in this metaphorical rye field, while simultaneously acting much older than his 16 years when it suits him. He points flaws in every authority figure and doesn't consider himself one, but the act of censoring children is an adult-like action. Adults for Holden are authority figures that hold him responsible for his actions. He runs out of Dr. Spencer's home before leaving campus because he didn't want to listen to another disappointed voice advising him on the importance of school (Salinger 15). Holden invents reasons to dislike this professor he admired so much at Pencey, such as describing the professor's word choice as phony, in order to direct the attention away from his failures. Later in New York, he worries that the nuns in the diner may ask him whether he is Catholic, and fears that it would lead to a spoiled conversation if he has to explain his morality (Salinger 113). Considering this, a reader may conclude that Holden thinks and acts childish to avoid authority. However, Holden doesn't hesitate to become an adult when he chooses to deepen his

voice to impress the older ladies in the Lavender Room (Salinger 71). When he continues fantasizing about his desire for companionship, he imagines Jane and relives their times together before immediately accepting a prostitute into his bedroom, feigning the age of 22 in order to lose his virginity (Salinger 91). Jane is the past, where happiness and first love are perfectly maintained memories, and Holden chooses to juxtapose her and this colder world where he is troubled with transitioning into an adult. Holden attempts to allocate his thoughts for innocent memories and reserves his actions for sexual experimentation, which are really just distractions from his depression. However, the two are constantly interacting because his need for comfort and nostalgia drive him deeper into his destructive choices that hurt his health. In a study of emotional intelligence by Katy Bennett, she summarizes how people learn to “suppress or induce their feelings through deep acting and emotional work as they tune into the demands and needs of, say, their workplace” (Bennett 416). Holden’s job in this case is being the catcher in the rye and trying to prevent his sister from growing up. Paradoxically, taking on this role makes him like an adult figure, as censorship is an adult activity, and all adults in Holden’s world are phony. Holden Caulfield is the definition of his own enemy, yet acts as though his actions are necessary and therefore acceptable in a society where children can only be saved by his censorship. Holden’s belief that he can live in this in-between stage of childhood and adulthood is the main reason for his mental instability as he finds solace in neither memories nor adult interactions, and falls apart under the stress of maintaining this vision of youthful innocence.

Consequently, Holden could only handle being Catcher for a total of three days before his health didn’t allow him to continue. Truthfully, there is no place for this role he created for himself in society. In his final attempt to play catcher in the novel with his sister Phoebe, he recognizes that his task is an impossible job if she doesn’t fear growing up as much as he does.

He would love for his sister to ride the carousel round and round forever, remaining a child.

Surprisingly, however, Phoebe proves that she doesn't want Holden's help, and declares her own acceptance of maturity when she chucks Holden's red hat back at him. The significance of this event is proven by how the reader is able to interpret Holden's use of his red hat throughout the novel:

We begin to perceive that Holden's alienation is his way of protecting himself. Just as he wears his hunting hat to advertise his uniqueness, he uses his isolation as proof that he is better than everyone else around him and therefore above interacting with them. The truth is that interactions with other people usually confuse and overwhelm him, and his cynical sense of superiority serves as a type of self-protection. (Chen 145)

Whenever Holden feels miserable, or needs to feel as though he is stable person and in control of his environment, he pulls out his hat and plops it on his head. The fact that Phoebe rejects this emotional crutch and rejects the idea of Holden leaving and alienating himself again proves that her brother has created his own unhappiness by taking on an impossible and unrealistic responsibility. His persona as The Catcher is the phoniest part of his constructed world, and he finally discovers some happiness when he is able to reconnect with family and live in the present instead of wandering alone with false hopes.

Overall, Holden's struggle to transition between the two phases in his life caused greater emotional distress as he had no companionship to help him through his grieving period, allowing him to construct a cruel world with impossible objectives. His hypocritical nature caused him to constantly battle between adulthood and childhood without understanding why he wandered aimlessly and searched for outlets in unreliable confidantes such as Sally, Sonny, and past

professors. Yet one can infer that Holden may be closer to mental health if he releases his need to save every child from the inevitable, and focuses instead on saving himself from his forlorn internal battles.

## Conclusion

In summary, the protagonists of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye* will forever be displaced within their worlds, as they will never truly accept the hypocrisy of their societies and within themselves. Huck and Holden leave the reader at the end of their journeys with contemplations of the unknown. Huck doesn't know what will meet him out west, but he's sure that if he stays he will be "sivilized" to no end. As the analysis would argue, Huck is extremely susceptible to the pressures of his environment, and there is nothing that would suggest a trip out to the Territory would bring greater fortunes than his previous. Huck is just as set in his ways as Holden, who knows he will be going to school again next fall, but is aware that he can't promise he'll change or put any effort into his education. Both narrations give a sense that the hardest part of their journeys are over for them, but in studying their actions and thought processes it would be mistaken to propose that the characters would act out of their stubborn ways. Death, violence, and mortality are themes that will permeate their lifetimes, and trauma as deep as those experienced by Holden and Huck will continue to mar their ability to interact with society in a healthy way, as the only way to overpower the phonies and hypocrites of the world are to accept the unchangeable ways of society. Nevertheless, both Huck and Holden will remain as intrinsic psychological challenges for the educated readers. They represent the part of us that suppresses itself in order to conform. At a certain point in our lives, we are all Huckleberry Finn and Holden Caulfield.

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