

## A Lone Soldier in a Fraudulent Society

- I. Reasons for lack of communication
  - A. He doesn't understand and doesn't wish to understand the world around him
  - B. Too moral, too innocent
    - 1. Even goes to say goodbye to Mr. Spencer after he had dropped out
    - 2. The Note to Mr. Spencer
    - 3. Other people don't understand his feelings
    - 4. Asks for a hooker, but feels uncomfortable around her
  - C. Can't fit in to a deceptive, fraudulent, society
    - 1. Mr. Antolini, Lawyers are hypocrites,
    - 2. Stradlater is just a jock, doesn't care for Allie, which matters to him
    - 3. Ernie, once a good piano player, but now got caught up in stardom with the mirror
    - 4. Tries to erase the graffiti at Pheobie's elementary school, only to find that he cannot.
    - 5. Spencer is a phony because he "plays by the rules"
    - 6. Sunny cares more about her dress than her body
    - 7. Holden paid her for doing nothing and she wants more
    - 8. Lies, but for others – Mrs. Morrow
- II. The Nuns and Pheobie
  - A. Only two people that he had a good talk with
  - B. Feels that he can relate to them, Nuns are not influenced by society
    - 1. They do not cheat for money like Antolini does, small, worn suitcases
    - 2. The "haves" and the "have-nots"
    - 3. He had more than they did, so he gave them a donation
    - 4. They were reluctant to take it, further proving that they're humble
    - 5. Won't let him pay for the meal
  - C. Pheobie is young and innocent, yet mature for her age
    - 1. He wants to be the catcher in the Rye
    - 2. Doesn't want to spoil her innocence
    - 3. Corrected him in "if body CATCH a body"
    - 4. Kept forcing him to face his problems
- III. How his lack of communication hurt him
  - A. Lonely, no one to turn for support
    - 1. Talks with the taxi driver failed, never gathered himself to talk to Jane in fear of her changing.
    - 2. No one that actually cares, except maybe Pheobie
  - B. May have caused him to drop school
  - C. People's advice do not apply to him
    - 1. Antolini telling him to apply himself to do better in school, but he's a phony
    - 2. Problem wasn't the school, it was that everyone was phony and materialistic
  - D. He can't establish any real relationships
    - 1. Since he can't talk to people, he can't really get to know anyone
    - 2. He wants to get to know them, but once he does, despises them for being phonies
  - E. Depressed that he can't do anything right
    - 1. Wants to lose virginity with the hooker, but can't
    - 2. Wants to call Jane, but chickens out every time
    - 3. Can't succeed in school, even though intellectually, he's smart
      - A. Not sure of what he really wants or needs

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In life, one must communicate with others in order to share ideas and solve problems. Holden Caulfield, a confused teenager trying to find his role in life, needed the advice of others. In J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, Holden could not communicate with the rest of the world. He could not tolerate the phoniness of the people who acted only for their own benefit. His inability to communicate ultimately hurt him, for he had nowhere to turn for help.

Unlike most, Holden possessed high moral standards and an altruistic personality. He felt that others did not understand his feelings, for they were too obsessed with their own success. Holden's consideration for others was shown when he wrote the note to Mr. Spencer to assure him he should not feel guilty to fail him. In addition, Holden had the courtesy to say goodbye to Mr. Spencer even after he had been expelled. His high morals could be seen when he "started getting sorry that [he had] only given [the nuns] ten bucks" (p.113). He tried to spread his morals and ideals to others, but realized that he could not change the entire world. Finally, Holden's lies to Mrs. Morrow further proved his care for others, for he did not lie for his own benefit, but to make her happy.

Due to his morality, Holden could not communicate with the world. He could not fit into the deceptive, fraudulent society around him. He felt that Lawyers were hypocrites because they did not care for their defendant's welfare, but craved only their own success. "All [they] do is make a lot of dough and play golf and play bridge and buy cars...[and] everybody slapping you on the back and congratulating you in court when the goddamn trial [is] over..." (p.172). Mr. Antolini, his old English teacher and a close family friend, was phony because he married his wife for financial reasons. Stradlater was uncompassionate about Allie, a person who Holden deems a role model because of his innocence. Mr. Spencer was phony because he believed that "life is a game [where] one plays according to the rules." (p.8) He despised people like Sunny, the prostitute who cared about her dress more than her body. In fact, Holden even saw Ernie, the

piano player at the club, as a phony because he no longer played piano for the delight of entertaining others, but for personal show, when he installed a mirror so the audience could see his fingers.

Despite all the phonies that he met, Holden did have a pleasant conversation with the two nuns and his little sister, Phoebe. He felt that he could relate to the nuns because they were not influenced by society. They carried worn out suitcases, ate toast and coffee, and unlike Mr. Antolini, did not expend all their energy in pursuit of wealth. In fact, when Holden offered them a \$10 donation, they were hesitant to accept it because they were worried that he could not afford it. Later, they would not let Holden pay their bill, for “you’ve been more than generous.” (p.112) He was able to talk to Phoebe because she was too young to be influenced by the phoniness of the adults, but was rather mature for her age. She forced him to face the truth that he had been expelled, and even corrected his quote from a poem by Robert Burns. When asked what he wanted to do in life, Holden told her that he wanted to be the catcher in the rye, for he would “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.” (p.173) In reality, he suggested that he wanted to preserve the innocence of children forever, but later realized that they would eventually become phony adults. However, his conversations with Phoebe and the nuns proved that he possessed the communication skills to talk to others, but was simply not able to relate to the materialistic people around him.

Although he was able to talk to Phoebe and the nuns, Holden’s lack of communication greatly hurt him, and may even have caused him to fail in school. He was a young adult seeking guidance, but he had no one to turn for support. He did not even have the courage to talk to Jane because he feared that she had lost her innocence. He wanted to meet people, but after he got to know them, he despised them for their phoniness. More importantly, the advice that he received, such as Mr. Antolini’s advice to apply himself in school, did not solve his problem. His problem

was a consequence of the competitive nature of capitalism, and no one truly understood it. Since he could not talk to others, he became depressed when he could not succeed, not only in school, but in other areas as well. He repeatedly tried to call Jane, but never found the courage to talk to her, and hired a hooker, but eventually paid her \$5 to leave him alone. His discomfort could be seen when he told her "So long. I didn't thank her or anything. I'm glad I didn't." (p.98)

Holden's benevolent personality hurt him in many ways. His morals and innocence isolated him from the world, and created a barrier that he could not overcome. However, some may consider his personality as a gift, for the world needs more Holden Caulfields to remind the public that there is more to life than the amassing of wealth.