

Kinda like a really bad episode of Seinfeld.

Text	Analysis
<p>“While I was walking up the stairs, though, all of a sudden I thought I was going to puke again. Only, I didn't. I sat down for a second, and then I felt better. But while I was sitting down, I saw something that drove me crazy. Somebody'd written 'Fuck you' on the wall. It drove me damn near crazy. I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them – all cockeyed, naturally – what it meant, and how they'd all <i>think</i> about it and maybe even <i>worry</i> about it for a couple of days. I kept wanting to kill whoever'd written it.” (pg. 201)</p> <p>"That's the whole trouble. You can't ever find a place that's nice and peaceful, because there isn't any. You may think there is, but once you get there, when you're not looking, somebody'll sneak up and write 'Fuck you' right under your nose. Try it sometime. I think, even, if I ever die, and they stick me in a cemetery, and I have a tombstone and all, it'll say 'Holden Caulfield' on it, and then what year I was born and what year I died, and then right under that it'll say 'Fuck you.' I'm positive, in fact." (pg. 204)</p>	<p><u>Re: Holden's anxiety</u></p> <p>“Yes, Holden, reading 'Fuck you' drove you crazy. That's what did it. Sure.”</p> <p>It is interesting to note Holden's “protectionist” or “conservationist” stance there when he wants to make sure that old Phoebe doesn't figure too much out about the phrase on the wall. Most people will probably be worrying about something anyway, so why would this be any different? If he was to go around fixing what everybody is worrying about then that would be another matter. This is very specific and thus very odd.</p> <p>The second passage is largely sarcastic but unfortunately has a ring of truth to it. Holden claims that there's no peaceful place because somebody will come along and mess it up. Such as in the case of the museum and something will be moved or out of place and history be altered somehow. Or somebody will go do something that will make the experience less enjoyable. It's natural- sometimes unavoidable since people don't fit our idealization of perfection.</p>
<p>"Anyway, I kept walking and walking up Fifth Avenue, without any tie on or anything. Then all of a sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again. Boy, did it scare me. You can't imagine. I started sweating like a bastard--my whole shirt and underwear and everything. Then I started doing something else. Every time I'd get to the end of a block I'd make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I'd say to him, "Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear. Please, Allie." And then when I'd reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I'd thank him. Then it would start all over again as soon as I</p>	<p><u>Re: Arguments for Holden's insanity</u></p> <p>Some might find the quote easy to show that Holden was insane. However, I disagree. This is just showing some self-narration when Holden talks to his older brother. Of course, Allie can't respond because he's dead. Is Holden talking to him and believing that somebody is listening? If that is the case then he could easily be insane.</p> <p>But there is no distinction between whether or not he expects Allie to listen to him. Indeed, he's just talking like most people who talk to a god. The only difference is that Allie isn't omnipotent and is just helping him get to the other side of the street.</p> <p>Signs of anxiety and schizophrenia are stereotypically associated with the mentally</p>

<p>got to the next corner. But I kept going and all." (pg. 197)</p>	<p>insane, though.</p>
<p>“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 <i>catch</i> 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.” (pg. 173)</p> <p>“This fall I think you’re riding for – it’s a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn’t permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement’s designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn’t supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn’t supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave it up before they ever really even got started. You follow me?” (pg. 187)</p>	<p>Re: The catcher</p> <p>These passages describe the title of the book. Holden mentions the edge of some “Crazy Cliff” which intrigues me because it could be interpreted literally to mean a cliff of craziness: fall down and you are insane. But who would Holden be to keep others sane if he himself might be insane?</p> <p>Given the second passage from page 187 the “Catcher in the Rye” can be reinterpreted to mean somebody that gives others what they need in order to operate in their own environment. But what does Holden have that others want? His socio-political commentary? His conversations which mostly fly straight into the ground?</p> <p>One could make an argument that the catcher in the rye in the story is actually old Phoebe because she is able to keep Holden from running away. Without her he would have gone off with his crazy plans and would not have realized his own poor planning and unclear thoughts.</p>
<p>“The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move. Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different would be <i>you</i>. Not that you’d be so much older or anything. It wouldn’t be that, exactly. You’d just be different, that’s all. You’d have an overcoat on this time. Or the kid that was your partner in line the last time had got scarlet fever and you’d have a new partner. Or you’d have a substitute taking the class, instead of Miss Aigletinger. Or you’d just passed by one of those puddles in the street with gasoline rainbows in them. I mean you’d be <i>different</i> in some way – I can’t explain what I mean. I kept walking and walking, and I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays the way I used to. I thought how she’d see the same stuff I used to see, and how <i>she’d</i> be different every time she saw it. It didn’t exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn’t</p>	<p>Re: Things staying the same and nice</p> <p>In the sea of phonies that he finds himself in, Caulfield hopes that the museum provides common ground for common experiences to have amongst different people. Maybe, he thinks, just maybe, if they see what he has seen then they will be somewhat like him and there will be common ground on which to stand with others.</p> <p>The same happens with books: no matter how we change we can still go back and read the same books. Each time we do we will probably come up with a slightly different interpretation but always the words will be exactly the same as the author originally wrote them exempting abridged editions.</p> <p>Holden is not exactly depressed but also not happy about the ability to preserve items and thoughts.</p>

<p>make me feel gay as hell, either. Certain things they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone. I know that's impossible, but it's too bad anyway. Anyway, I kept thinking about all that while I walked.” (pg. 122)</p>	<p>Perhaps the museum is already fueling his nostalgia for when he was younger?</p>
<p><u>A list of phonies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * phony slob * The word 'grand' * phony smiles * phony bastards talking to Jesus while driving * “a phony kind of friendly” * phony handshakes * phony lean-jawed guys named David * phony girls named Linda or Marcia * phony letter * phony dates * phony names * phony bows * phony, innocent looks * phony shirt collar * phony parties * very phony, Ivy League voices * phony stuff in the movies * phony books * phony-charming (not charmingly phony) * phony advice 	<p><u>Re: Phonies</u></p> <p>After examining the list of phonies in the book I have concluded that Holden simply likes the word <i>phony</i> for no particular reason.</p> <p>What is it with his (phony) obsession with labeling phonies? Is it so that he may avoid them? This is certainly not the case since he tends to “shoot the bull” in a phony manner by not being serious. Does he tend to contradict himself and does this make him insane?</p> <p>The use of the word “phony” so often suggests that he thinks that people are not seriously interested or engaged in their own lives and thus produce crap for him to have to deal with. And he drinks their poison willingly. Maybe this is his characteristic flaw.</p>
<p>“Anyway, while I was putting on another clean shirt, I sort of figured this was my big chance, in a way. I figured if she was a prostitute and all, I could get in some practice on her, in case I ever get married or anything. I worry about that stuff sometimes. In a way, that's why I sort of wanted to get some practice in, in case I ever get married. Caulfield and his Magic Violin, boy. It's corny, I realize, but it isn't <i>too</i> corny ... I didn't care too much, though. I sort of just wanted to get it over with.” (pg. 92)</p> <p>“Those war movies always do that to me. I don't think I could stand it if I had to go to war. I really couldn't. It wouldn't be too bad if they'd just take you out and shoot you or something, but you have to stay in the <i>Army</i> so goddam long. That's the whole trouble.” (pg. 140)</p>	<p><u>Re: Getting it over with</u></p> <p>The current revision of the Wikipedia article (153592637) claims that this book is popular because of its controversial nature. Presumably that controversy arises in the quoted passages.</p> <p>Holden presents what I assume to be an unpopular notion of “Getting stuff done.” Instead of enjoying his time with his prostitute or going through the experience of the army he wants to get it all over with as soon as possible.</p> <p>Even with death, an issue that many might consider “heated” and controversial- he does not want to be put into a cemetery, but how could this be controversial? Many people are burned after their deaths, some have their ashes thrown into</p>

<p>“Then I thought about the whole bunch of them sticking me in a goddam cemetery and all, with my name on this tombstone and all. Surrounded by dead guys. Boy, when you're dead, they really fix you up. I hope to hell when I <i>do</i> die somebody has sense enough to just dump me in the river or something. Anything except sticking me in a goddam cemetery. People coming and putting a bunch of flowers on your stomach on Sunday, and all that crap. Who wants flowers when you're dead? Nobody.” (pg. 155)</p>	<p>oceans. And they have been doing this for many years.</p> <p>I suspect that this might have been the first time that the “Get it done” attitude had been presented in fiction-literature, but even this is odd since it was in the '50s that the book was written and published. Maybe everybody else is insane for calling this controversial- I find it light.</p>
<p>“I stayed in the bathroom for about an hour, taking a bath and all. Then I got back in bed. It took me quite a while to get to sleep – I wasn't even tired – but finally I did. What I really felt like, though, was committing suicide. I felt like jumping out the window. I probably would've done it, too, if I'd been sure somebody'd cover me up as soon as I landed. I didn't want a bunch of stupid rubbernecks looking at me when I was all gory.” (pg. 104)</p>	<p><u>Re: Odd reasoning</u></p> <p>It is odd that the reason that Caulfield uses to not jump is because of the “icky” aftermath. He'd be dead and not care. Later in the story he wonders who would want flowers if they are dead and here he is contradicting himself and saying everything wouldn't look too good once he died. What would he care if he's dead? It's the same as the flowers issue.</p>
<p>“The funny thing is, I thought she was enjoying it, too, till all of a sudden she came out with this very dumb remark. “I and my girl friends saw Peter Lorre last night,” she said. “The movie actor. In person. He was buyin' a newspaper. He's <i>cute</i>.” / “You're lucky,” I told her. “You're really lucky. You know that?” She was really a moron.” (pg. 71)</p> <p>“Yes--I don't know. I guess he should. I mean I guess he should've picked his uncle as a subject, instead of the farm, if that interested him most. But what I mean is, lots of time you don't know what interests you most till you start talking about something that doesn't interest you most. I mean you can't help it sometimes. What I think is, you're supposed to leave somebody alone if he's at least being interesting and he's getting all excited about something. I like it when somebody gets excited about something. It's nice.” (pg. 185)</p>	<p><u>Re: Being “polite” and lies</u></p> <p>Holden lied straight through his teeth when he was with dancing with the blond. This was to be expected though: he said that he lies. Are these sorts of lies necessary to keep society running smoothly? If the answer is “yes” I suspect that it would only fuel Holden's depression.</p> <p>The second passage illustrates a common element from teenager angst: when people start talking about something they like, everybody else wants to stop them because it's not “fair” that somebody has a niche interest and can get excited while everybody else cannot. That's the problem that Holden sort of faces- most of the time he just has to lie and act “polite” in order to get people to talk with him and cooperate even when he's just “shooting it” most of the time because of boredom. The same reasons why he goes to the movies from time to time.</p>
<p>“I'm seventeen now. It's really ironical, because I'm six foot two and a half and I have gray hair. I really do. The one side of my head – the right side</p>	<p><u>Re: Evidence that this is a coming of age story</u> (besides the fact that Holden is 17)</p>

– is full of millions of gray hairs. I've had them ever since I was a kid. And yet I still act sometimes like I was only about twelve. Everybody says that, especially my father. It's partly true, too, but it isn't *all* true.” (pg. 9)

“Look,” I said. “Here's my idea. How would you like to get the hell out of here? Here's my idea. I know this guy down in Greenwich Village that we can borrow his car for a couple of weeks. He used to go to the same school I did and he still owes me ten bucks. What we could do is, tomorrow morning we could drive up to Massachusetts and Vermont, and all around there, see. It's beautiful as hell up there. It really is. No kidding ... we'll stay in these cabin camps and stuff like that.. I could get a job ... we could live somewhere with a brook .. C'mon! Wuddaya say?” (pg. 132)

“Come on, let's get outa here,” I said. “You give me a royal pain in the ass, if you want to know the truth.” Boy, did [old Sally] hit the ceiling when I said that. I know I shouldn't've said it, and I probably wouldn't've ordinarily, but she was depressing the hell out of me. Usually I never say crude things like that to girls. Boy, did she hit the ceiling. I apologized like a madman, but she wouldn't accept my apology. She was even crying. (pg. 134)

"It was raining like hell and we were out on [old Jane's] porch, and all of a sudden this booze hound her mother was married to came out on the porch and asked Jane if there were any cigarettes in the house. I didn't know him too well or anything, but he looked like the kind of guy that wouldn't talk to you much unless he wanted something off you. He had a lousy personality. Anyway, old Jane wouldn't answer him when he asked her if she knew where there was any cigarettes. So the guy asked her again, but she still wouldn't answer him. She didn't even look up from the game. Finally the guy went inside the house. When he did, I asked Jane what the hell was going on. She wouldn't even answer me, then. She made out like she was concentrating on her next move in the

Holden's gray hairs serve to illustrate the transition from young to old- as he grows older eventually all of his hairs will (probably) turn to gray.

In all coming-of-age stories it seems that the main character schemes a plot to get out of the mess. In *All the Pretty Horses*, John Grady schemes to go to Mexico. In this case, Holden Caulfield schemes to just go anywhere, as he mentions different places at different times.

Eventually it is old Phoebe that catches him from running off the cliff by the rye and keeps him from going on his crazy quest to get out of New York.

Re: Crying

If Holden is insane, the insanity does not stem from any sort of insensitivity. From these two instances it can be observed that Holden was sensitive enough to want to at least make people stop crying- it depresses “the hell out him.”

He takes it upon himself to be responsible for other people and their crying. Throughout the story there is nobody entirely intent on making sure that he's not crying. Although he does not cry, he is certainly depressed throughout the story. Who would be there to catch the catcher in the rye? Besides old Phoebe.

game and all. Then all of a sudden, this tear plopped down on the checkerboard. On one of the red squares--boy, I can still see it. I don't know why, but it bothered hell out of me. Then she really started to cry." (pg. 78)

“How can you figure out if you are sane? ... Once you begin to question your own sanity, you get trapped in an ever-tighter vortex of self-fulfilling prophecies, though the process is by no means inevitable. Everyone knows that the insane interpret the world via their own peculiarly consistent logic; how can you tell if your own logic is 'peculiar' or not, given that you have only your own logic to judge itself? I don't see any answer. I am reminded of Gödel's second theorem, which implies that the only versions of formal number theory which assert their own consistency are inconsistent.”

- Hofstadter