



THE PHONINESS IN THE NOVEL *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* BY J.D. SALINGER

Salsabila Fajrina Rizal

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Andalas

salsabila.fr.student.sasingunand@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to explain why Holden believes everyone is a liar, why conflicts emerge between novel characters, and how rivalry affects the characters in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. All these things caused the main character in the novel to alienate himself from society, and this conflict forced him to suffer from depression and be hospitalized. This journal study uses a descriptive qualitative method approach. The main character suffers from an imbalanced mental life. Therefore, this study will answer the question of Holden's means of phoniness, based on his view as 1.) Holden's protection of innocence, 2.) Holden's hatred for the phoniness of the adult world, and 3.) Holden's isolation as a result of his self-protection from the phoniness world.

Keywords: *adolescent difficulties, innocence, alienation, phoniness*

INTRODUCTION

'Phony' means someone who is not authentic or fake. Holden describes Phony as pretending to look mature by deceiving himself, whereas Holden does not like liars. Holden wants to be accurate. Holden does not want to be fake and tell them he is just a hypocrite. Phony word is used in the novel around thirty-five times. We can say this word is one of the top words used in this novel. *The Catcher in the Rye* is a book that takes the readers on Holden's journey in New York. He runs away from his school because he does not want to be a grown-up. After all, all adults is a phony. Holden's adolescent issues include his defense of innocence, his hatred for the adult world's phoniness, his estrangement from society, and his attempt to find his identity by running away from everything.

Some journal articles have analyzed the themes of Adolescent Problems in fiction. Lingdi Chen's *An Analysis of the Adolescent troubles in The Catcher in the Rye* explores the adolescent troubles that Holden Caulfield faces on his path from infancy to maturity. These are the adolescent issues that Holden Caulfield confronts as he grows from childhood to adulthood.

Holden's adolescent concerns include his defense of innocence, his disdain for the adult world's phoniness, and his alienation from society (Chen, 2009:143-146).

The article entitled "A CONFLICT IN J.D Salinger's *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*" by Gongsar Silaban explains all of the conflicts that exist in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, which helps the writer to analyze all the types of conflict that appear in the book such as internal conflict and external conflict. Furthermore, it give evidence about how the conflict happens (Silaban, 2009:146-157). The article "Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and the Crisis of Coming of Age: An Inevitably Fearful Move toward Growth" by Ali Mohammadi explains the analysis of Holden's fear of coming of age and explains the reason why Holden feels fear of becoming an adult (Mohammadi, 2019:210-216).

Furthermore, Guerin's book *Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* explains the psychological approach. According to Guerin, psychological interpretation can provide many profound clues to unraveling the themes and symbolic riddles of work. Still, it can rarely explain the beautiful symmetry of well-crafted poetry and fictional masterpieces (Guerin, 2005:153).

Interestingly, this novel uses the word 'Phony' that Holden Caulfield likes to repeat. We can say that Phony is the most famous word he uses in the novel thirty-five times. The term is often used because every time he meets people he already knows or are new, especially adults, he constantly criticizes the people in his mind, "How would you know you weren't being a phony? The trouble is you wouldn't" (Salinger, 1951:224). He will not criticize the people he loves and cares about, like his sister and Jane. After all, this novel is based on the Author J. D. Salinger's teenage life. He is cut off from the rest of the world and bravely defends children's innocence, which he struggled with as he grew into maturity. He starkly contrasts the fleeting glimpses of phoniness, perversion, surface-level chatter, and things he faced when he escaped to New York. Holden felt very lonely and tried to talk to the people he met in New York, although he criticized them as phony. He misses his little sister Phoebe and his late brother Aillie, who can understand him like no one else, and he wants to meet her. However, he could not go home because he was escaping from his parents. He was fed up with his life, but in the end, he returned to his house and accepted that he would also be an adult.

The Catcher in the Rye is a novel published in 1951, and the author, Salinger, narrates the teenage problem through the protagonist, Holden Caulfield, the high school boy. While reading the book, we will notice that the main character, Holden Caulfield, the 16-year-old protagonist in the novel, calls almost every person he meets a Phony and never calls himself a phony. The tale introduces the concept of phoniness in the novel by using Holden's point of view to imply that the people around him are phony and that Holden himself is a phony person, as well as by

offering a contrast to emphasize the presence of phoniness. Holden thought practically everyone around him was a fraud in some way. Throughout the book, Holden notices phoniness around him by observing the defects in the world and wishes that the phoniness in the world did not exist. Salinger wants the reader to see phoniness as defects in the environment, as evidenced by Holden's use of Phony to criticize his surroundings. Holden Caulfield uses the word phony several times in *The Catcher in the Rye* to describe his surrounds' complaints. Through this novel, "we can see his fear within a majority of different approaches by using symbols, context, etc. These concepts help readers observe the development of Holden Caulfield." (Mohammadi, 2017:210)

The writer wants to research this topic because it is exciting to discuss the problems that occur in teenagers. After all, children are susceptible to many things and have great curiosity about the world at this age. If we know how teenagers think, we can understand how they feel so that we can help them through this period wisely and adequately so that there are no mistakes like what happens in novels, like in psychological adolescence. Holden is not as good as the average teenager because he thinks everyone is a phony and is disgusted with adults. From here, we can take examples such as having trust issues, lack of parental love, and lack of parents' sensitivity to children. *The Catcher in the Rye* is an original story based on author J. D. Salinger, which relates to real life.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used by the writer is qualitative and descriptive technique. According to Pritha Bhandari, an interdisciplinary researcher, "Qualitative research is a method in which data is collected and analyzed to gain an understanding of the opinions, as well as concepts" (Bhandari 2022). In analyzing the primary data, the writer uses the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger. The writer read the story carefully and understood the content of the work. As for the second data, the writer took it from articles, journals, and internet books.

In addition, a psychoanalytical approach is used in this study. Literature and Psychology are two things related to human life, so literature and psychology are two things that cannot be separated. Psychology refers to human conduct as a direct result of the human object, and each individual's behavior is distinct from that of other persons due to the psychological condition of the human being. The conduct carried out by a person relate to specific reasons why the individual does an action. If someone fears something, the person has trauma or unpleasant events or psychological conflict in the past. Psychological row refers to a situation where a person is motivated to do something exclusive and compatible. This occurs when an overt,

verbal, symbolic, or emotional response is required to satisfy another need. "To examine these psychological problems, a psychoanalytic approach is used" (Silaban, 2019:146). Literature is often associated with psychology because the author uses psychological aspects to create his work, and readers will also feel what they feel and imagine in the story. Therefore, the writer is interested in discussing why Holden thinks an adult is full of phoniness and how the impact of the psychological conflict by Holden himself using psychoanalytic in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Throughout the story *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden seems to prioritize the protection of innocence, which he does not like to be an adult who is full of cruelty and phoniness. Holden says adults are phony because, from his view, adults never tell what is on their minds or are not honest with themselves because they always conform to society and do not know what adults think. Adults have disgusting thoughts because they know sex and have it, too. Holden hates "phonies" because they represent everything he fears or fights against, such as adulthood, conformity, and commercialism. We can take many phony characters in this novel. For example, Holden meets Maurice, someone who works in the elevator where Holden is staying. She is also a pimp and offers a prostitute, Sunny (a young prostitute girl), to come to his room for 5\$. Holden turns out to be just talking to Sunny, but he assumes that Holden is not interested in her. Finally, after talking to Sunny, Holden gave \$ 5, but Sunny demanded \$ 10, and Holden did not want to pay more because the deal was only \$ 5. Sunny then went and took Maurice to the room, hit Holden, and took the money. From this, we know Maurice and Sunny are phony because they lied and did not follow the approved agreement.

"What's the matter? Whaddaya want?" I said. Boy, my voice was shaking like hell. "Nothing much," old Maurice said. "Just five bucks." He did all of the talking for the two of them. Old Sunny just stood there with her mouth open next to him. "I paid her already. I gave her five bucks. Asks her," I said. Boy, was my voice shaking." (Salinger 1951:102)

"I sat there for about a half hour after he left. I mean, I just sat in my chair and am not doing anything. I kept thinking about Jane and Stradlater having a date with her. It made me so nervous that I nearly went crazy. I already told you what a sexy bastard Stradlater was." (Salinger, 1951:5)

We can see that throughout the novel, the person he doesn't think a phony is Jane Gallagher, the girl he likes, who is described as an ordinary girl he used to play chess with. Holden's relationship with Jane is quite sweet, where they usually hold hands.

"Holden feels depressed that his roommate, who has perverted thoughts and phony people, Stradlater, will be Jane's date, making him very afraid that Stradlater will do inappropriate things and destroy Jane's innocence, which he likes because her innocence makes him feel depressed." (Silaban, 2017:151)

"The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move" (Salinger, 1951:17). Holden is very fond of museums. The symbol of museums for Holden is that they will never change, meaning the same as Holden. The latter is afraid to grow up and is scared of the changes that will happen to him because he wants to be a child forever. Know that Holden hates adults for being full of Phony. That is the reason why Holden loves museums so much. They will never change and will always be the same as Holden wanted.

"Holden is afraid of the sudden changes in the world; he despises conflict, is perplexed by Allie's needless death, and shudders at social interaction. We can see Holden's battle with adulthood in this situation." (Chen, 2009:144)

However, at the park, Holden finally accepts that he will one day change and become an adult. Because of his little sister Phoebe, when Holden watches Phoebe do merry go around in the carousel, he finds that he is happy because he can see his little sister happy and participating in the scene of innocent Phoebe. Holden has found what he is looking for, and he tries to change. Back home, he starts introspecting about himself to be a good adult. That will help the teenager not to get into the cliff at the time of rebellion in coming of age.

"I think I was crying. I have no idea why. Sleep tight, ya morons! I roared at the top of my goddamn lungs while donning my red hunting hat and adjusting the peak to my liking. I'll wager that I awakened every cretin on the entire floor. Then, I immediately left. The stairs were covered in peanut shells that some idiot had flung, and I was so close to breaking my insane neck." (Salinger, 1951:7)

The red hunting hat is a symbol from the novel that explains the uniqueness of Holden. It means Holden wants to be different from the others around him. Holden is ostracized by the world around him. Because of this feeling of alienation, he uses it to protect himself from the phoniness that exists in the world. Red Hunting Hat explains that Holden feels better than them, and interacting with other people overwhelms him and confuses him because Holden sees people full of phoniness, and he hates it so much; that's why Holden uses his alienation as self-

defense. We can see Holden's alienation is the cause of why he feels sick because Holden needs someone who can understand him. Holden also needs love from humans, but his high self-esteem creates a wall that makes him isolate himself from the world. The hat is red and it is the same as Aillie's hair (Late brother) and Phoebe (Little sister). Both are Holden's dearest people. Holden wears this red hat so they can get connected.

This adolescent conflict greatly influences him, isolates him from society, gives negative attitudes toward people, who have fear and disgust toward adults. Holden has a lot of negative attitudes toward everything. Holden's behavior is borderline chaotic and impetuous. His actions have no rational or reasonable motivation (Chen, 2009:146). Holden's depression exists because he has too many problems everywhere, such as having a family that does not care about their children and losing his younger brother, Allie. Holden is blamed, angry at Stradlater that he is dating the person he likes, and suspects that Stradlater has slept with Jane because of the many problems he has had on his own and has no friends to share stories with in his teens. All he can understand is his late brother and his sister.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that J. D. Salinger got depressed because he has had awful experiences in his life. He tried to escape from reality, which is afraid to be an adult and tried to postpone his growing up because he was scared he would be one of the phonies. He is willing to accept and accept the fact that he is going to be an adult because he does not want his loneliness to last. Teenagers, when they have problems that occur, usually try to find ways to overcome them on their own. Nevertheless, not all can handle it by themselves. It can also get worse, like in the case of Holden. Because he tries to solve his problems, he has Gerascophobia, which is the fear of becoming an adult, such as fear that when he grows old, he will be alone, unable to take care of himself, and causes mental disorders that cause sufferers not to act normally. For example, it is easy to lie to anyone, and always think negatively about those around us, etc.

Holden needs someone who can understand him and wants to be loved by others too, but his pride does not want to understand it makes him alienated from the world. Because he feels he does not fit in and cannot understand what other people think, Holden feels alienated from other people. It makes Holden think negatively and see other people as Phony, and then put a thick wall on society because he does not want to feel that someone lied to, and is afraid to be a phony too. In the end, It makes him feel alienated in a way to protect himself from a world full of Phony.

Adolescence is an essential period with turmoil in life. At this time, we will experience inner conflicts with ourselves and society. At this age, we will grow up just like Holden, a teenager looking for a way out of his teenage problems. This is a common thing that happens to young people. Because not all teenagers can solve their problems, we people around them must help them not to fall into a dangerous place.

Phony is a way to survive in society or how society works. If we are too honest and do not like something, people will shun us. After all, people tend to enjoy the same things. Phony is also used to protect the good name of that person. So there is no conflict in society. It does not matter if someone has a phony side but only uses it when needed.

REFERENCES

- Lipson, C. (2009). *How to write a Ba thesis: A practical guide from your first ideas to your finished paper; includes Mla, Apa, and Chicago citation styles.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Kinane, Ian. "Phonies" and Phone Calls: Social Isolation, the Problem of Language, and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 73 no. 4, 2017, p. 117-132.
- Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/arq.2017.0023
- Edwards, Duane. "Holden Caulfield: "Don't Ever Tell Anybody Anything" *ELH*, vol. 44, no.3, 1977, pp. 554-65.
- JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872573?seq=1>
- Windt-Val, Benedicta. *Personal Names and Identity in Literary Contexts. Names and Identities* vol.4, no.2, 2012, pp. 1. Osla,
- Mankhi, Azhar Hameed. *Social Critique in J.D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye*, vol. 34, 1 Jan. 2019, pp. 330–346.
- Mohammadi, Ali. "Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and the Crisis of Coming of Age: An Inevitably Fearful Move toward Growth" *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* vol. 9, no. 8, 8 Aug.2019, pp. 210–216.
- <https://doi.org/10.21275/SR20729142247>.
- NARDI, S. "The Internal Conflicts of Holden Caulfield" *E-Scriptor* 2009, pp. 32-49.
- STEINLE, P. (1962). *In Cold Fear: The Catcher in the Rye censorship controversies and postwar American character.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- WAKEFIELD, D. (2000). *The Search for Love, in Salinger: A critical and personal portrait*, Ed., Henry Anatole Grunwald. New York: Harper & Row.

- Silaban, Gongsar. A CONFLICT IN J.D SALINGER'S THE CATCHER IN THE RYE, vol. 1, ser. 1, Apr. 2009, pp. 146–157.
- Klarer, Mario. (2004). *An Introduction to Literary Studies*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Rahim, Afzalur. (2011). *Managing of Conflict in Organization*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Schultz, D. P. & Schultz, S. E. (2017). *Theories of personality*. Cengage Learning.
- Salinger, J. D. (1951). *The Catcher in the Rye*. Little Brown and Company.
- Graham, Sarah. (2007). *Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Perales-Blum, L., Juárez-Treviño, M., & Escobedo-Belloc, D. (2014). "Severe growing-up phobia, a condition explained in a 14-year-old boy" *Case reports in psychiatry*, 2014, 706439. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/706439>
- Guerin, W. L. et. al. (2005). *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bhandari, P. (2022, October 10). *What Is Qualitative Research? | Methods & Examples*. Scribbr. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>
- Chen, L. (2009). *An Analysis of the Adolescent Problems in The Catcher in the Rye*, 05, 143–146.
- Bhandari, P. (2022, October 10). *What Is Qualitative Research? | Methods & Examples*. Scribbr. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>
- Kenny, W.P. (1933). *How to Analyze Fiction*. Monarch Press.