

## Entropy Increases

The second law of thermodynamics states that entropy increases. In other words, randomness and change are always present and always increasing. Despite our best efforts, this principle can not be overcome, no matter how much we wish it could. Resistance to change is a major theme in all the books, but is particularly prominent in J.D. Salinger's, *The Catcher in the Rye*, Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night*, and John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*. Each of the main characters in the three texts is confronted by change, and each is unwilling to recognize the consequences of it or even its existence.

This resistance to change is exemplified in the memoir *Night*, in which the reader sees how hard the Jews of Sighet try to ignore the realities of the Holocaust. When Moishe the Beadle returns to warn the Jews about what is happening, he is met with silence and hate. His reaction shows his frustration, "I am alone. But I wanted to come back to warn you. Only no one is listening to me..." (Wiesel 7). This is further punctuated by the beating of Mrs. Schachter as she cries for the "Jews to listen to [her]," as she describes "huge flames" consuming the cattle car (Wiesel 23). These warnings about the torment soon to come are quickly silenced by the frightened and confused Jews. The Jews of Sighet are willing to ignore all warnings in a futile attempt to avoid the horrors of the Holocaust.

Resistance to change is not always found in a situation as drastic as the Holocaust. In *A Separate Peace*, Gene's best friend, Finny, uses his conspiracy theory about the war to avoid acknowledging change. By insisting that "fat old men" have "made it all up," Finny attempts to shield himself from the new realities that the war presents to the boys (Knowles 115). Gene, who is so easily swayed by Finny, also begins to believe in the truth of Finny's story. Gene is also confronted by another type of change as he revisits Devon fifteen years after Finny has died. He explains how time can shrink the "old giants" and the world that was once familiar can change, "while you were looking the other way" (Knowles 14). Gene

resists accepting the toll time has taken on the school and the change he sees in himself since Finny's death. It is part of human nature to fear and resist change, whether it is as devastating as the Holocaust or as natural as growing up.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden shows resistance to change within himself rather than in the world around him. This is shown by his avoidance of the museum where, he explains, inward change becomes most apparent, "Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be you" (Salinger 122). Holden is afraid of the loss of innocence and the responsibilities that come with becoming an adult. He is suspended in a void between the two stages of life, unwilling to grow up, and unable to return to childhood. Even though it becomes apparent to Holden that it is too late to save his own innocence, he still tries to protect that of others. This is shown by his helping the children in the park, as well as when he erases the profanity from the walls of his sister's school. Holden explains about the glass-cased museum displays that "You ought to be able to stick [the innocent] in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone," to protect them from the world (Salinger 122). Though Holden wishes that he could save the innocence of childhood, the entropy in his world must increase and change the innocent into jaded adults.

Change is part of the cosmic order and is there for unavoidable and inevitable. As *Catcher in the Rye*, *A Separate Peace*, and *Night* show, we all must deal in one way or another with its effects.