

## Analytical Essay of Catcher in the Rye

When finding meaning in the world, humanity needs to be established. A strong sense of self will help save your soul. When asked to what can save a soul, a lucid person could arrive at the idea of hope. However, in The Catcher in the Rye, Holden's meaning in life lies within his persistent continuance in life without any hope. He seems to create missions for himself; one being his desire to be a protector of children and the innocence they represent. Bringing a hero-esque tone, Holden says, "...if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them...I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all'" (Salinger 173). Holden gives himself the position of "catcher in the rye" (Salinger 173) to save children from the struggle of growing up and the suffering brought upon by adulthood; however, his mission is in vain because it can't be done. The inevitability is that a Peter Pan standard of living cannot exist and that childhood innocence is lost eventually among the vice in the world. Holden is unable to prevent this moral loss despite his efforts. He continuously fights this, and later on he tries to defy the inescapable again by trying to rub off the rude graffiti at the school where his little sister, Phoebe, attends. Having those signs reappear are disheartening for Holden, but do not smother his hope to save youth. Holden's life is a parallel to the Greek mythological character, Sisyphus. In Albert Camus's The Myth of Sisyphus, he states that "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (Camus 91). Holden's nonstop search for truth and happiness represent Sisyphus's strive to push his rock to the top of the hill, and Holden's failures represent Sisyphus's defeatist watch of his rock's decent. Through the possibility of having a hopeful end, Holden collects the strength to carry on; therefore, his heart is filled with value. Holden also is hopeful in his search for his place and

purpose in life. He questions this when he thinks, “How do you know what you're going to do till you *do* it? The answer is, you don't. I *think* I am, but how do I know?” (Salinger 213). He constantly passes people and places in such a short time in order to find his “place that’s nice and peaceful” (Salinger 204), the place where he is able to feel content with himself and the world around him. Holden’s situation would seem bleak, but he continues in his pursuit for happiness to try and save himself while finding meaning

Great hardship and personal battles are used to find the truth that is contained inside and can only be found by oneself, unaided by others. Each character’s goal is not necessarily to do it in a positive, least wounding method but to find that humanity within in a self apt way. For example, Holden was not a positive character and he wasn’t supposed to be. His character does not matter when it comes to the journey of finding meaning in life. An entirely constructive means of going at such a life-size search would defeat the purpose: to struggle in order to ultimately better oneself. Working towards locating humanity is a journey all must go through at one stage or another, and each must go at it alone and cope with life via their own discretion.