

Муниципальное образовательное учреждение
лицей № 180
Ленинского района г. Н. Новгорода

Научное общество учащихся

**Тема: Symbolism as a device for conveying the nature
of the character's deep troubles and concerns about life
in J.D. Salinger's novel "The Catcher in the Rye"**

Выполнила: Егорова Евгения,
ученица 11а класса.
Научный руководитель:
Соколова Л.Ф.,
учитель английского языка.

Н.Новгород
2011

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Introduction

It was announced on TV news some time ago that on January 27th Jerome David Salinger' one of the most celebrated 20th century American writers died. He was called “an author of one pitch-perfect masterpiece” – 'The Catcher in the Rye'.

From one of the sayings about him I remembered that “Salinger tapped into the very heart of middle class dissatisfaction, of the dark side of domesticity” and that many people now want to get close to him because he “remains a mystery” for them.

After the writer's death, “The Catcher in the Rye” became an almost immediate best seller, and its narrator and main character, Holden Caulfield, a teenager newly expelled from prep school, became America’s best-known literary truant since Huckleberry Finn.

I got interested in the writer and his famous book and read the novel at first in Russian and then in English. While reading I had a feeling that the title of the book, some people, places and things obviously had a profound sense. It all was intriguing. What do ducks in the pond or the museum mean? What place does the image of Holden's brother Allie take in the novel? What do Holden's contacts with many people during the three-day period stand for? These are only some of several questions that arose while I was reading the novel. I decided to study the literary signs more seriously.

Since the time of its publication in 1951 the novel “The Catcher in the Rye” has been of intent attention for critics and researchers. Generally, critics view the novel as Holden Caulfield's melodramatic struggle to survive in the adult world, a transition that he was supposed to make during his years at preparatory school. Some critics will point to the fact that Holden has flunked out of three Pennsylvania prep schools, and use it to symbolize the fact that he is not truly ready for adulthood. David Stevenson commented that the novel was written “as the boy's comment, half-humorous, half agonizing, concerning his attempt to recapture his identity and his hopes for playing a man-about-town for a lost,

partially tragic, certainly frenetic weekend”. Reviewer Charles Kegel commented that the novel could be read as Holden Caulfield's “quest for communicability with his fellow man, and the hero's first person after-the-fact narration indicates . . . he has been successful in his quest”.

One of the most popular means by which “*The Catcher in the Rye*” is critiqued is through the comparison of Holden Caulfield to other literary characters. The novel is often compared to traditional period literature, particularly Mark Twain's novel “*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*”. Both works feature naive, adolescent runaways as narrators, both commenting on the problems of their times, and both novels have been recurrently banned or restricted. John Aldrige remarked that both novels are “study in the spiritual picaresque, the joinery that for the young is all one way, from holy innocence to such knowledge as the world offers, from the reality which illusion demands and thinks it sees to the illusion which reality insists, at the point of madness, we settle for”

But most researchers miss or deny the whole lot what makes up the main value in Salinger's work – the elements of realism. They even don't try to interpret “the dark spots” and mysterious symbols which are in abundance in the novel.

The main aim of my project is to carry out the research on the literary symbols in the novel in order to understand what they mean and what role they play in conveyance of the main character's feelings and thoughts.

To achieve this aim I set myself the following tasks:

- To study the author's biography and find out how his life influenced the novel;
- To define the notion and the idea of symbolism;
- To follow the history of symbolism and the usage in literature.
- To consider different kinds of symbols in Salinger's “*The Catcher in the Rye*”;
- To analyse the symbolic structure of the novel.

Chapter1 J.D. Salinger and his novel “The Catcher in the Rye”

Jerome David Salinger was born in New York City in 1919 to a Jewish father and a Scotch-Irish mother. There were two children: an older sister and himself. He was asked to leave several preparatory schools because of poor grades before finally graduating from Valley Forge Military Academy in 1936. Although he did not complete a degree, he attended several colleges. These included Columbia University, where he enrolled in a writing course taught by Whit Burnett, a well-respected teacher of young writers.

Salinger was drafted into the military in 1942 and was transferred to the Counter-Intelligence Corps in 1943. The following year he trained in England, joined the American Army’s Fourth Division, and landed at Utah Beach on D-Day. He then served in five European campaigns as Security Agent for the Twelfth Infantry Regiment.

Upon discharge from the army, Salinger returned to live with his parents in New York City. There followed a series of short stories until the publication of «The Catcher in the Rye» in 1951. His early life experience influenced the work greatly. In his novel, Salinger describes the school Holden loathes for its bleak atmosphere, Pencey Prep, similarly as how he perceived the academy. Examining the author's past closely, it is evident that the novel's negative feel generated from experiences in Salinger's life, including heartbreak, war, and stress. The book was an instant best seller. His picture appeared on the cover of «Time» magazine, and he became a hero of college students across the country.

With its cynical, slangy vernacular voice (Holden’s two favorite expressions are “phony” and “goddam”), its sympathetic understanding of adolescence and its fierce if alienated sense of morality and distrust of the adult world, the novel struck a nerve in cold war America and quickly attained cult status, especially among the

young. Reading “Catcher” used to be an essential rite of passage, almost as important as getting your learner’s permit.

But Salinger did not find fame agreeable. With the success of «The Catcher in the Rye», he moved out of New York City to Tarrytown, New York, then to Westport, Connecticut, and finally, in 1953, to Cornish, New Hampshire. From this point on, he avoided the public eye whenever possible.

Salinger’s output, following the success of «The Catcher in the Rye», has been modest. There have been no additional novels published, only short stories: «Nine Stories»(1953), “Franny and Zooney” (1961),«Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters» and «Seymour. An Introduction» (1963).

Although the known facts of his life are sparse and undramatic, J. D. Salinger’s influence on American youth since the 1950s has been profound. The novel’s allure persists to this day, even if some of Holden’s preoccupations now seem a bit dated, and it continues to sell more than 250,000 copies a year in paperback. Mark David Chapman, who killed John Lennon in 1980, even said the explanation for his act could be found in the pages of “The Catcher in the Rye.” In 1974 critics wrote, “The response of college students to the work of J. D. Salinger indicates that he, more than anyone else, has not turned his back on the times but, instead, has managed to put his finger on whatever struggle of significance is going on today between self and culture.” More than 40 years after the publication of «The Catcher in the Rye», students are still sharing it with each other. This is remarkable, considering that there is scant mention of Salinger in current high school anthologies of American literature.

Young people find that he speaks to them with genuine understanding, as they grapple with the contradictions and mixed messages in society today. Moreover, his insights into the human condition, as experienced by adolescents, are just as valid for adults as they, too, cope with life in all of its complexities and compromises. Robert Coles, the prominent Harvard psychiatrist and literary

essayist, describes Salinger as “an original and gifted writer, a marvelous entertainer, a man free of the slogans and clichés the rest of us fall prey to.”

To sum up, while Salinger’s writing is more substantial than the casual reader may observe, his appeal to both young people and adults remains strong. It is these characteristics—substance and popularity—which suggest that Salinger, indeed, may be an enduring figure in American literature.

Chapter 2 Symbolism as style

2.1 What is symbolism?

According to the definition of the Dictionary of Collective Nouns and Group Terms, “symbolism is a system of arbitrary signs (written or printed) that have acquired a conventional significance”. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, “symbolism is the practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationship”. Hugo Ball, a German writer, poet and artist of the 20th century pointed out that “The symbolic view of things is a consequence of long absorption in images”.

2.2 History of symbolism

Symbolism was a late nineteenth-century art movement of French and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts. In literature, the movement had its roots in “The Flowers of Evil” (1857) by Charles Baudelaire. The term “symbolism” is formed from the word “symbol” which derives from Latin *symbolum*, a symbol of faith, and *symbolus*, a sign of recognition, in turn from classical Greek *symbolon*, an object cut in half constituting a sign of recognition when the carriers were able to reassemble the two halves. In ancient Greece, the *symbolon*, was a shard of pottery which was inscribed and then broken into two pieces which were given to the ambassadors from two allied city states as a record of the alliance.

Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic movements which attempted to capture reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal. These movements invited a reaction in favour of spirituality, the imagination and dreams.

Symbolism has seeped into the arts in such a way that it has become an integral part of most literary works and even general communication. A mere sight of a skull and crossbones figure and you know that there is something that you are being warned against. Roses and images of hearts have become synonymous with

love. Different colors have come to symbolize different emotions, for example purple for loyalty, green for envy and red for jealousy. But before symbolism penetrated everyday language the way it has, it became a mainstay in the literary world.

In conclusion, according to etymology, symbol literally means something that has been put together. From the word symbol came the concept of symbolism where one object is used to refer to something else. So, when an artist, a writer or a poet uses one object to refer to a completely different idea, then he or she is employing symbolism in art or literature.

2.3 Symbolism in literature

Symbolism in literature is a writing method of choice for many authors. Symbolism is when the author uses an object or reference to add deeper meaning to a story. Symbolism in literature can be subtle or obvious, used sparingly or heavy-handedly. An author may repeatedly use the same object to convey deeper meaning or may use variations of the same object to create an overarching mood or feeling. Symbolism is often used to support a literary theme in a subtle manner. It is an object, animate or inanimate, that stands for or points to a reality beyond itself. The cross, for example, is often used to represent suffering. Symbols, however, also indicate their own reality. For example, a cross stands for suffering but it also stands for Christian suffering. A sunrise represents new beginnings but it also represents the beginning of a new day. Other typical examples include: the scales - to symbolize justice; a dove - peace; a rose - purity and so on.

There are many famous examples of symbolism in literature.

“The Scarlet Letter”: The forcible wearing of the letter 'A' by Hester Prynne to indicate that she was an adulteress and that the name of the father of her illegitimate child started with the letter 'A'.

“The Lord of the Flies”: This book was replete with symbolisms. The island was symbolic of our world and the way the characters dealt with the various

situations was a symbol for the way many people live their lives. Every character symbolizes something, for example, Ralph is a symbol of good intentions, Piggy symbolizes intelligence and civilization.

“MacBeth”: William Shakespeare was a master of symbology. In this play, he uses blood to symbolize guilt and a raven to symbolize bad luck.

“Animal Farm”: An allegorical novel, the entire story symbolizes communism and the evils that comes out of following the ideology. Each animal character in the book is a symbol for a key character in the Russian revolution.

This is a very small list of the many famous novels that have examples of symbolism in them. Harry Potter is a great way to introduce symbolism in literature for kids. The entire series uses several mythical creatures and many common place symbols to explain events. The use of the serpent as the symbol for the house of Slytherin is a clear indication of the evil that it stands for. Symbolism is also a key part of poetry with many poets using symbols to express emotions like love, grief, death, anger, jealousy, etc.

To sum up, symbolism is used in literature to give to the literary work meaning that goes beyond what is evident to the reader. Symbolism in literature helps in giving the piece of writing feeling and mood without the writer having to actually spell out the same. By giving certain things human like characteristics and also defining them with certain qualities, the writer can manage to give the novel another level that may refer to things that are completely alien from what is mentioned in the piece of writing.

Chapter 3 The symbolic structure of the novel “The Catcher in the Rye”

3.1 The *name* symbolism .

Throughout the novel, the reader is presented with various symbols. The symbols are clearly made evident by Holden’s constant repetition of their importance. The symbols are so important and their symbolism is directly related to the major themes of the novel.

One of the most telling symbols in the novel is the name symbolism. All names have symbols and meanings, and in this novel we can say that the names have been meticulously chosen to fit the characters. **Holden Caulfield** is not just a name. Because of his perspective of life where everyone is a “phony”, the name **Holden** seems to show that he is “holden” back, not allowing himself to be absorbed into the ugly, vicious adult world. His last name, **Caulfield**, has a lot to do with the theme of childhood and innocence expressed throughout the novel. A “caul” is part of a membrane around the head when a child is born. This symbolizes comfort and protection for children. “Field” represents the rye field where Holden wants to become “the catcher in the rye” who saves children from falling and entering the hypocritical and “phony” world of adulthood. This symbol is first used in chapter 16 when Holden sings “Comin' through the rye” as he is walking down the street, and is then used in chapter 22 when Phoebe asks him what he wants to do with his life. Holden imagines a field of rye perched high on a cliff, full of children playing. He says he would like to protect the children from falling off the edge of the cliff by “catching” them if they are falling. “...I am 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 are running and they don't look where they are going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all.”(page)

The name **Allie** is consonant to the word *Allah* which is the Muslim name for God. Allie, Holden’s young brother who died several years earlier, was a key symbol throughout the story. When Holden remembers incidents from his past

involving Allie, his attitude changes, such as when he writes the composition about Allie's baseball glove or when Holden broke his hand after punching all of the windows after Allie died. He feels that Allie was one of the few people who were not phony in a world full of phonies. More importantly, Allie represents the innocence and childhood that Holden strives to find throughout his multi-day journey. In Holden's opinion, Allie represents the purity that he looks for in the world. Holden admits that he admires Allie more than he admires Jesus, and even prays to Allie at one point, rather than Jesus. Allie is Holden's role model, whom he judges the rest of the world according to. When Allie dies, it creates turbulence in Holden's life.

The word **Phoebe** means "light" in Greek. Phoebe was an epithet of the Greek moon goddess Artemis. Holden's younger sister, Phoebe, is a smart kid, and she and Holden mutually adore and respect each other. Holden thinks about Phoebe constantly during his time in New York City, and finally risks getting caught by his parents to sneak into their apartment and visit her. When Holden says he's leaving to go west, Phoebe packs her bags and demands to come along. For some reason, this seems to convince Holden that neither of them needs to be running away. Phoebe symbolizes childhood, sincerity, mutual understanding and affection.

3.2 *The people symbolism*

Sometimes characters are not meant to be people only; they can serve as implied concepts. In mythology, for example, Cupid is not just a divine character but also the concept of love. In the novel we can see many symbols represented by people. The most important symbols are the symbols of his admired brother Allie who died of leukemia at the age of thirteen and his younger sister Phoebe. Some people in the novel symbolize the world of adulthood which is insincere, "phony" and frightening for Holden. Among them are his parents, D.B., Mr. Spencer and others.

D.B.: Holden's older brother who has sold out to Hollywood as a prostitute; he's also a phony; Holden admires him in a way but not nearly as much as he

admires Allie.

Parents: Holden's mother and father represent what he considers phony; he never has a conversation with them throughout the book and tries to avoid them as much as possible.

Mr. Spencer: Holden's history teacher who he admires and then feels sorry for after he visits him at his home; Holden realizes that Mr. Spencer is just a pathetic old man who he can no longer relate to; this begins to show Holden's lack of positive adult role models.

Mr. Antolini, Holden's English teacher, is the only one who feels sympathy for his plight. Mr. Antolini speaks to Holden as if he was a chancellor or physiologist, and not as a person, a teacher or an authority figure like Mr. Spencer. Mr. Antolini recognizes what Holden may be going through and tries to help him by saying that Holden's experiences may be worth writing about in the future as a sign of recognition. Mr. Antolini symbolizes trust and friendship. Mr. Antolini represents Holden's last hope: an adult he respects as non-phony, who, unlike other adults, tried to be a Catcher for James Castle. That's what Holden's looking for, someone to "catch" him. There are many symbols in the novel that are represented by young people who are of the same age as Holden. They may be considered as symbols of anger, hostility, indulgence, hope, affection, admiring and others.

James Castle is an interesting character and must be important because he is one of the few characters that Holden likes. What is his significance? James Castle called another student named Stabile "conceited," and when Stabile and other students went to his dorm room to confront him, rather than take the words back, Castle jumped out of the window and died. Examining the reasons for Castle's suicide is important work. That Castle did not want to give Stabile and the other students the satisfaction or wanted to protect his own integrity at all costs are the usual interpretations for his actions and for good reason. Holden needed to have a model of a person of integrity and Castle fit the bill.

Jane Gallagher represents a person who was a perfect, innocent crush for Holden. She, like Allie, did odd things because of innocent motives. In checkers, she would keep her kings in the back row, not because of strategy or vanity, but because she thought it was cute. She thought they looked good lined up back there and that was more important to her than winning a checker game. This is a person who has a special place in Holden's life. Jane is the only one person outside the family who has seen Allie's glove. Jane stands for tender and innocent love. Once Holden was the one who was able to give her emotional support, but now she is going out with Stradlater. When Holden himself needs support he doesn't go down to see her. We can suggest that he is afraid to connect with her while he is in New York. Well, what if she has changed? What if he discovers that she has been corrupted and is now on her way to becoming a phony?

Like other upper and middle-class boys in America, Holden is sent to the prep school to receive better education. Therefore, we can imagine how strong the influence is from his peers. Indeed, in the first seven chapters, Holden sways between his roommate, **Ward Stradlater**, and his neighbour in the dorm, **Robert Ackley**. In Holden's eyes, these two friends are bad adolescent models at prep school and he cannot accept them to be his friends. Ward Stradlater shows the unacceptable model of male aggressiveness and symbolizes the loss of innocence. Ackley's terrible hygiene and awkward personality become as a threat to Holden. Ackley's pimples present as discomfort of biological changes during adolescence. Holden fears change. Now the vivid example of change is presented to him. So Ackley represents fear of facing the truth.

In Holden's memory, **Sally Hayes** is the phony incarnate. Holden is attracted by her beauty. He thinks, "I felt like marrying her the minute I saw her. I'm crazy. I didn't even like her much, and yet all of sudden I felt like I was in love with her and wanted to marry her" (162). Sally cannot give support and help but her image symbolizes beauty – a thing that Holden suffers lack from.

3.3 The *object* symbolism

The red hunting hat is one of the most recognizable symbols. The cap keeps Holden dry in the storm and allows him to feel ostracized from society. It is inseparable from our image of Holden, with good reason: it is a symbol of his uniqueness. Holden's red hunting hat is a symbol of his alienation. It protects him, and makes him feel unique, but also singles him out as strange, which in turn reinforces his alienation. The hat is also a symbol of Holden's attachment to childhood—it's the kind of goofy accessory that a proper adult wouldn't wear. The symbolic significance of the red hunting hat to Holden is that it provides a symbol to his identity. Whenever he puts on his red hunting hat, he starts acting childishly. When he takes off his red hunting hat, he is trying to act more like an adult. Also, Allie's hair was bright red, so the red hunting hat may have been a way for Holden to keep his memories of Allie. The presence of the hat mirrors the central conflict in the book: Holden's need for isolation versus his need for companionship. It is worth noticing that the hat's color, red, is the same as that of Allie's and Phoebe's hair. Perhaps Holden associates it with the innocence and purity he believes these characters represent and wears it as a way to connect to them. The cap allows him to feel ostracized from society and keeps Allie's memory retained.

“ He (Ackley) took another look at my hat... 'Up home we wear the hat like that to shoot deer in, for Chrissake,' he said. That's a deer shooting hat.' 'Like hell it is.' I took it off and looked at it. I sort of closed one eye, like I was taking aim at it. 'This is a people shooting hat.' I said. 'I shoot people in this hat.'” (page 19)

Of all the places in the novel where Holden discusses his hat, this is probably the most enlightening. It is obvious from the start that Holden uses the hat as a mark of individuality and independence. Here, we see how deeply he desires for independence is connected to his feeling of alienation, to the bitterness he has for the rest of the world. Holden will not really shoot people in this hat, but it is a symbol of his hatred of convention. Holden does “shoot people” in his own way when he is in his cynical frame of mind, he used all of his mental energy belittling

the people around him. He wants independence because he feels that the world is an inhospitable, ugly place that deserves only contempt.

A second form of Allie's connection to him is Allie's left-handed glove, **the baseball mitt** with all of the poems Allie wrote, written in green so he could read them while he was in the outfield. The mitt is not a catcher's mitt, which might seem to make more sense considering the name of the novel, it is connected with the symbol of the title known as the Catcher in the Rye. The catcher's mitt can signify that Allie is Holden's catcher, keeping him safe.

The ducks in the Central Park Lagoon are a subtler symbol. Holden's curiosity about where the ducks go during the winter reveals a genuine, more youthful side to his character. For most of the book, he sounds like a grumpy old man who is angry at the world, but his search for the ducks represents the curiosity of youth and a joyful willingness to encounter the mysteries of the world. It is a memorable moment, because Holden clearly lacks such willingness in other aspects of his life.

The ducks and their pond are symbolic in several ways. Their mysterious perseverance in the face of an inhospitable environment resonates with Holden's understanding of his own situation. In addition, the ducks prove that vanishings are only temporary. Traumatized and made acutely aware of the fragility of life by his brother Allie's death, Holden is terrified by the idea of change and disappearance. The ducks vanish every winter, but they return every spring, thus symbolizing change that isn't permanent, but cyclical. Holden's fixation on the ducks is also a symbol of his struggle with change and growing up. He wants things to stay the same, but the ducks prove that one must adapt to the environment, that one has to change in order to survive. At the same time, the duck's offer hope: though they disappear each winter, they always reappear. Finally, the pond itself becomes a minor metaphor for the world as Holden sees it, because it is "partly frozen and partly not frozen." The pond is in transition between two states, just as Holden is in transition between childhood and adulthood.

Phoebe's notebook

“Why has south eastern Alaska so many caning factories?

Because there's so much salmon

Why has it valuable forests?

because it has the right climate.

What has our government done to make

life easier for the Alaskan Eskimos?

look it up for tomorrow!!!

Phoebe Weatherfield Caulfield” (page 145)

Holden has a point – Phoebe's notebook is the least phony expression of thought we've seen so far in the novel. What makes her notes so appealing are their lack of pretension and falsity; Phoebe simply wrote exactly what she was thinking.

(Anyone older might be embarrassed about the fact that they're making up a new middle name for themselves, or too reserved to use triple exclamation points.)

Another subtle but very important symbol is **the carousel**. Holden's release at the end of his story comes as he watches Phoebe ride the carousel. There is an element of magic to this moment: the carousel is operating even though it is wintertime. Holden mentions that Phoebe protests, arguing that she is too big to ride the carousel, but Holden knows that she wants to do it and he buys her a ticket. Holden, on the other hand, declines to ride, which shows him recognizing if not accepting his status as an adult. In a way, the carousel is similar to the statues in the Museum of Natural History because like them it never changes. It continues to move in circles and always stays in the same place: it stays the same while the children who ride it continue to grow older.

The gold ring represents another subtle symbol in the carousel scene. The children and Phoebe trying to grab the gold ring for a free ride on the carousel is Salinger's representation of the disturbance the status quo. In this case we see Holden accept this disturbance. He restrains himself from going to help her and says “All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was Phoebe, and I

was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them.” (page190) This quote probably shows that Holden is accepting that growing up is necessary and that he has to let Phoebe experience failures for herself. It is at this point where Holden realizes that he can't protect her forever.

Kings in the back row: the concept that Jane would always put her kings in the back row is very fascinating to Holden; throughout the story Holden continually references this childhood fascination; the kings show how Holden can't separate his past from his present; though consumed with many adult ideas, Holden is still captivated with the concept of the kings.

3.4 The *place* symbolism

Pencey Prep and Elkton Hills are examples of institutions that serve as symbols. For Holden, the schools represent the phony, cruel world of those who run them. Even the advertisements for Pencey Prep are misleading. They feature "some hot shot guy on a horse" performing equestrian feats. Holden says he has never even *seen* a horse at Pencey. The school's motto is equally repulsive to Holden: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men."

The Museum of Natural History is another symbol. Holden tells us the symbolic meaning of the museum's display: they appeal to him because they are frozen and unchanging. He also mentions that he is troubled by the fact that he has changed every time he returns to them. The museum represents the world Holden wishes he could live in, the world of his 'catcher in the rye' fantasy, a world where nothing ever changes, where everything is simple, understandable, stagnant and infinite. Holden, for example, can think about and judge the Eskimo in the display case, but the Eskimo will never judge him back.

“The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right it was. Nobody 'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still just finished catching those two fish... Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be you.”(page 109) This constancy satisfies Holden’s desire to stop time and remain in childhood.

New York City: this setting of the story is very fitting because like Holden, the city is constantly changing and transforming, learning new things and finding new experiences; Holden’s mind is like the city— always absorbing new experiences but never being able to come to any rational conclusion about them.

Because of New York’s utilitarianism, Holden dislikes it very much. In his words, “In New York, boy, money really talks– I’m not kidding” (90). New York symbolizes hypocrisy.

Holden somehow thinks that innocence only exists in **the West**. Consequently, Holden wishes he could escape from the hypocritical New York City to the innocent West. To him, if New York is a phony incarnate and the West is an ideal paradise. Dreaming of the West is a typical American consciousness. In the American tradition, the West stands for the spirit of self-reliance and freedom.

3.5 The *phenomenon* symbolism

The catcher in the rye takes its name from a line in a poem by Robert Burns. The symbolic nature of Holden being the ‘catcher’ in the rye is a fundamental one in the book. Holden imagines his perfect existence: in a field of rye atop a cliff’s edge, he watches over children playing within it, protecting them from the fall that lies just beyond the edge. He would love to be the ‘catcher in the rye’.

The interesting part of this symbol is that Holden has failed to understand it properly. In chapter twenty-two, Holden has a conversation with Phoebe about the Robert Burns **song ‘comin’ thro’ the rye’**, which serves as the inspiration for his ‘catching’ fantasy. Holden has always heard the lyric as saying ‘catch’ a body through the rye, whereas Phoebe points out that the actual lyric is ‘meet’ a body through the rye.

The song '*comin' thro' the rye*' is about a romantic encounter in a secluded field away from the scrutiny of public opinion. The song is concerned, at its core, with no-strings-attached sex, and the word 'meet' is used as a euphemism for this. Holden's substitution of the word 'meet' for the word 'catch' brings an entirely different reading to the song, and indeed, creates an alternative version of the piece that is completely at odds with the original. Holden hears what he wants to hear: an innocent version.

The Profane Graffiti: Holden is shocked to see a very rude word written on the walls of Phoebe's school. He rubs it out with his hand so the kids at the school won't be exposed to it and wonders what it means. He later finds it written in another part of the school and then again at the Museum of Natural History. The scrawled curse words anger Holden because he can't stand to see children corrupted, though he's been using coarse language all through the novel. It represents Holden's inability to prevent the loss of innocence in others. The taunting nature of the phrase represents his own inability to protect himself from the trials of adulthood.

The movie: Of the urban entertainments, movies are the most mentioned social activity in the novel. Bernard S. Oldsey says, "The movies constitute a major influence on Salinger's novel and play a peculiarly functional part in it" (92). Indeed, throughout the novel, we can see the influence of movies on the novel and the protagonist. The novel itself shows as an anti-Hollywood product. In contrast, the protagonist reveals an ambiguous attitude to movies. In the beginning of the novel, Holden exhibits his hatred of movies, especially the ideas about his older brother, D.B., who is a movie writer in Hollywood. D.B. has been his idol because D.B. used to write "terrific book of short story" (page). But his idol crumbles because he writes in Hollywood and, in Holden's idea D.B. becomes "a prostitute." The scorn of movies can also echo Holden's confession. "If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me" (page). Holden looks down on his elder brother's job and movies.

Regarding Holden's hatred of movies, we may understand it better from his inner conflicts. First, Holden thinks that a great writer should write for art's sake. But D.B. uses his writing talent for commercial purposes. Second, Holden feels anxious about losing his brother again. As we know, Holden has lost his younger brother, Allie, because of leukemia. Therefore, he is afraid of losing the other brother to Hollywood. Third, he dislikes movies because they are artificial. When he has a date with Sally in the Lunts, he comments on the actors and the actresses. "They didn't act like people and they didn't act like actors" (page).

3.6 The *word* symbolism

"Phony"- The most noticeable of Holden's "peculiarities" is how extremely judgmental he is of almost everything and everybody. He criticizes and philosophizes about people who are boring, people who are insecure, and, above all, people who are "phony." Holden carries this penchant for passing judgment to such an extreme that it often becomes extremely funny, such as when he speculates that people are so crass that someone will probably write "a profane graffiti" on his tombstone. Holden applies the term "phony" not to people who are insincere but to those who are too conventional or too typical—for instance, teachers who "act like" teachers by assuming a different demeanor in class than they do in conversation, or people who dress and act like the other members of their social class. While Holden uses the label "phony" to imply that such people are superficial, his use of the term actually indicates that his own perceptions of other people are superficial. In almost every case, he rejects more complex judgments in favor of simple categorical ones.

"Madman"- Holden uses the word "madman" commonly as an adjective and in a variety of ways ranging from "[snow] was still coming down like a madman" to "I went right on smoking like a madman." It seems plausible that Salinger wished to convey that there is a bit of madness in the way Holden sees the world. The fact that the word comes up most often when Holden is criticizing himself could be a sign of further self-estrangement from society.

“Old...”- The careful reader cannot fail to notice that almost every person's name, which Holden references, is prefixed by the word "Old," as in "Old Stradlater" or "Old Phoebe." This is a particularly ingenious device of Salinger's which reminds us that Holden is not living out the narrative, but retelling it. In the telling, everyone has become a distant, old memory.

“Shoot the bull” Many authors have noted that almost every swear word in the English language is used freely in this novel except for the word "shit," which never occurs. Instead of saying "bullshit" (a word which was not uncommon in the 1950s), Holden instead says "shoot the bull." The only plausible explanation for this is simply to add to the realism of the story- Holden himself has some reservations with regard to obscenity.

Because Holden is the narrator of the novel and because he seems in so many ways to be a typical teenager battling typical teenage issues of identity, it seems like he is using these words for effect. In other words, when he says he's crazy he seems to mean that he's acting oddly, or inconsistently, or stupidly, but not that he's actually going insane.

The following conclusion to be drawn is that the symbolic content of Salinger's work is directly related to the major themes of the novel. Throughout the novel extensive symbolism is used to reveal the solitary and somewhere contradictory character of Holden Caulfield, his rejection to change and growing on the one hand, and his desire to find support, affection and love on the other hand.

Conclusions

Now, having performed all the tasks that were set at the beginning, I can sum up all the material and answer the main question of my work: “What role do the literary symbols play in the novel?”

“The Catcher in the Rye” includes a wide range of complicated meanings and symbols. Literary symbols prevail throughout the novel and are intricate tools for conveying his story to the reader. I would like to stress that J.D. Salinger created a novel, where everything and everyone represents a particular thing or idea. The reason for this is that the author wanted to communicate urgent messages about the way he saw things. The symbolic environment of the novel helps the reader understand the main theme of the novel - the problem of adolescence that Holden Caulfield confronts on the journey from childhood to adulthood. These adolescent problems include Holden’s protection of innocence, his disgust for the phoniness of the adult world, and his alienation from society.

Throughout the novel, Holden sees the protection of innocence, especially of children as a primary virtue. The people he admires all represent or protect innocence. Through the images of Allie, Phoebe and Jane the author shows Holden's affection to purity and childhood innocence. Even the red hunting hat, a symbol of his uniqueness and individuality, also serves Holden as means of protection from insincere adult world and as a device of connecting to the world of his beloved brother and sister. The museum and other unchangeable images help us understand the world Holden wishes to live in: it’s a world of his “catcher in the rye” fantasy, a world where nothing changes, where everything is simple, understandable, and infinite.

Holden’s disgust for the phoniness of the adult world is expressed through the word “phoniness”, probably the most famous phrase from novel. It is a phrase Holden often uses for describing the superficiality, hypocrisy, and pretension. He feels surrounded by dishonesty and false pretenses that are represented by the images of Prep school authorities and students, the movie and theatre, Maurice and

Sunny, and to some extent of his elder brother and parents.

It should be noted that throughout the novel, Holden seems to be excluded from the world around him. Salinger depicts Holden as a deeply troubled sixteen-year-old boy who is totally alienated from his environment and from society as a whole. This alienation can be explained as an adolescent struggling with the angst of growing up or as a rebel against what he perceives as hypocrisy (phoniness) in the world of adults. Holden's red hunting cap, which he dons when he is most insecure, is a continuing symbol throughout the book of his feeling that he is different, doesn't fit into his environment, and, what's more, doesn't want to fit in. His mental breakdown is a direct result of his inability to come to terms with adult reality.

Salinger finishes the story optimistically. In the last scene, the reader can see the main character happy. Intending to portray the spiritually curative power of children the author resorts to the help of symbolism: he shows Phoebe on a carousel. The change in Holden in this scene is unmistakable. The innocence he sought to protect, the honesty he hoped to find, and the simplicity he wished discover were all found in his final scene with Phoebe. He no longer wishes to save anyone but himself from falling. He misses everybody, even Maurice. The concern to communicate, to establish a relationship with man, has led to the love of man. At last Holden is able to reconcile the world he has experienced with the world he has imagined.

Bibliography

The chart of symbolism in the novel

Symbol	Literal Meaning	Symbolically
Holden	The name of the main character	The desire to be “holden back”
Caul	A membrane around a child	Comfort and protection
Field	An area of land	The rye field for the “Catcher”
Allie	Allah	Immunity from the dangers of society
Phoebe	”light” in Greek	Childhood and innocence
Jane Gallagher	A childhood friend	Stability and affection
nuns	Religious women who devote their life to God	Purity and mercy
James Castle	A teenager who committed suicide	The protection of goodness
Mr. Antolini	An English teacher	The non-phony adult, a kind of a catcher figure
Mr. Spencer	A History teacher	Disappointment
Carl Luce	Holden's college adviser	The model of the man-about-town, an example to follow
Sally Hays	Holden's girlfriend	The double nature of the social world
D.B.	Holden's elder brother	The loss of trust
Parents	The nearest relatives who give birth	Phoniness
Ward Stradlater	Holden's roommate	A model of male aggressiveness
Robert Ackley	The neighbour in the dorm	A bad model of adolescence changes
Sunny	A woman who earns money having sex with men	The immaturity and inability to cope with the adult life
The red hunting hat	A head dress	Uniqueness, individuality, protection
Allie's baseball mitt	A glove	Holden's catcher
Ducks in the park lagoon	Water birds	Circulation
Phoebe’s notebook	A diary	Naivety
The carousel	A machine with wooden horses for riding	Hope

The gold ring	An object in the shape of a circle	The promise of life, the goal, the prize
The Egyptian tombs	Stone structures where the dead are buried	Permanence and peace
Kings in the back row	Flat round pieces for playing checkers	Immutability
Pencey Prep and Elkton Hills	Schools	Phoniness
The Museum	A building for important cultural objects	Immutability
New York City	A place to live	Hypocrisy
West	The western part of the USA	An ideal world
The catcher	In baseball, the player behind the batter, who catches misses balls	The saviour
The song 'comin' thro' the rye'	Robert Burns' poem	Protection from despair
The Profane Graffiti	A bad word on the wall	Despair and the desire to protect children
The movie	Films made to be shown at the cinema	Social activity; pretense
Phony	False, insincere	Too boring, too conventional or too typical