



## J.D Salinger's Worldview as Reflected in The Catcher in the Rye: A Genetic Structuralism Analysis

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### Abstract

Baby boomer generation in America is considered to have a brighter future compared to the previous generations. This generation was born after World War II and started a new life amidst the contestations of their time. Consequently, they are perceived as a selfish generation prioritizing individual interests, leading to a blurred sense of humanism among them. Through J.D. Salinger's work, *The Catcher in the Rye*, these issues are expressed by implementing Salinger's worldview on humanism. Therefore, this research aims to unveil Salinger's worldview as reflected in *The Catcher in the Rye*. To elaborate, the researcher utilizes the genetic structuralism theoretical framework by Lucien Goldmann. The results of this study yield several points. Firstly, the structure and structuration in the novel can be observed through the relationships between Holden Caulfield and other characters, as well as the relationship between Holden Caulfield and the nearby objects. Secondly, there exists homology between events in the real world of the baby boomer generation and those depicted in the novel. Thirdly, Salinger presents a worldview of humanism in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

**Keyword:** *The Catcher in the Rye*, Genetic Structuralism, Baby Boomers, J.D. Salinger, Humanism

### Abstrak

Generasi baby boomer di Amerika, yang lahir setelah Perang Dunia II, sering dianggap memiliki masa depan yang lebih cerah dibandingkan dengan generasi sebelumnya. Generasi ini muncul di tengah berbagai kontestasi sosial-politik yang signifikan, yang memunculkan persepsi bahwa mereka adalah generasi yang egois dan lebih mengutamakan kepentingan individu dibandingkan nilai-nilai kolektif. Pandangan ini diyakini telah menyebabkan kaburnya rasa humanisme di kalangan mereka. Melalui novel *The Catcher in the Rye* karya J.D. Salinger, isu-isu tersebut dieksplorasi dengan cara merefleksikan pandangan dunia Salinger tentang humanisme di dalam karyanya.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap pandangan dunia Salinger terkait humanisme sebagaimana tercermin dalam *The Catcher in the Rye*. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka teori strukturalisme genetik dari Lucien Goldmann. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan tiga poin utama. Pertama, struktur dan strukturasi dalam novel dapat diamati melalui hubungan antara tokoh Holden Caulfield dengan karakter lain, serta interaksinya dengan objek-objek di sekitarnya. Kedua, terdapat homologi antara realitas sosial-historis generasi baby boomer dan peristiwa-peristiwa yang digambarkan dalam novel. Ketiga, Salinger menyampaikan pandangan dunia tentang humanisme melalui *The Catcher in the Rye*, sekaligus mengkritik perjuangan nilai dan dilema generasional pada masanya.

**Kata Kunci:** *The Catcher in the Rye*, Strukturalisme Genetik, Generasi Baby Boomer, J.D. Salinger, Humanisme.

## INTRODUCTION

Baby boomer generation is a group of people born between 1946 and 1964 in the United States. They are the product of a demographic "boom" that occurred after World War II, where birth rates increased significantly. Baby boomers were born during a period when the United States was experiencing economic recovery and post-World War II development. They grew up during a period of a strong economic expansion and relative political stability. This provided them with opportunities to build careers and lives better than the previous generations (U-s-history.com, 2018). Although baby boomer generation has experienced a strong economic period for most of their lives, this generation has also witnessed the increasing economic disparity in the United States. The gap between the rich and the poor has brought a negative impact on the living conditions of many Americans. The increased economic impact is only felt by a few, while others continue to struggle and survive. This creates inequality in the access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, all of which are humanitarian issues (Bonvalet, Clement, and Ogg, 2015).

Based on the issues mentioned above, J.D. Salinger attempted to express his thoughts and views on the events around him through the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). This novel was firstly published in 1951, during the baby boomer era. *The Catcher in the Rye* tells a story of a teenager named Holden Caulfield after he is expelled from his boarding school. Instead of going straight home after being expelled from the school, Caulfield embarks on a journey because he is not ready to face his parents' anger. He decides to go to New York until the holiday season arrives. Through the novel, Salinger addresses issues of humanity by presenting stories and characters that disregard human values. Therefore, Salinger negotiates his views on humanity, which should involve caring for others and their surroundings. According to Faruk, literary works are stories about the search for authentic values degraded in the world (Faruk, 1988). Meanwhile, according to Fenanie

(2000), literary works are not only the result of the author's thoughts and imagination but also a reflection of the author's culture and experiences. Thus, the creation of literary works cannot be separated from the background and what the author perceives.

Based on the above explanation, *The Catcher in the Rye* is an expression of the author's experiences and thoughts in response to the social conditions surrounding him. Therefore, to elaborate on the author's views and expressions deeply, the perspective of genetic structuralism by Lucien Goldmann is the most relevant approach to be applied. Genetic structuralism offers understanding literary within the context of the social and historical structures that produced them. Goldmann argues that to fully understand a work, one must consider that it is a product of specific social and historical conditions. According to Goldmann, literary works reflect the collective thought structure of a particular social group. This structure is not the result of an individual alone but the result of the entire social and historical life of that group (Goldmann, 1975).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative This research employed a qualitative descriptive design to analyze *The Catcher in the Rye* through the lens of Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding how the author's worldview is reflected in the novel. The study seeks to unveil relationships between the structure of the literary work and its social and historical contexts, focusing on Salinger's articulation of humanism. The analysis is grounded in genetic structuralism, which posits that literary works are products of collective social and historical processes. Goldmann's framework emphasizes thematic structures and their alignment with social realities. This theoretical lens provides the basis for examining how Salinger integrates his perspectives into the novel's characters, themes, and settings.

The primary source for this research is J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Secondary data were collected from academic articles, books, and online resources that discuss genetic structuralism, Salinger's life, and the social conditions of the baby boomer era. These sources provide the contextual foundation necessary for a comprehensive analysis. Data collection was conducted through library research, involving the review of the novel and relevant theoretical literature. Online databases and academic journals were also used to gather scholarly interpretations and historical information pertinent to the study.

Data analysis involved four stages. Comprehensive Reading: The novel was read multiple times to identify its key themes, characters, and narrative structures. Structural Analysis: Relationships among characters and between characters and objects were examined to uncover underlying patterns. Homological Analysis: Parallels between the novel's narrative and the sociocultural realities of the baby boomer era were identified. Worldview Extraction: Salinger's depiction of humanism was synthesized from the thematic and structural elements of the novel. Contextual Analysis: Contextualization was a critical aspect of the analysis. This step entailed aligning the literary themes with historical events, societal norms, and the economic conditions of the baby boomer generation. Such alignment helped to reveal the broader implications of Salinger's work.

Validation of Findings: To ensure reliability, findings were cross-verified with existing scholarly interpretations of *The Catcher in the Rye*. This triangulation method involved comparing insights from literary critics with those derived from the structural analysis. Ethical Considerations: The research adhered to academic integrity and citation norms. All references to primary and secondary sources were properly acknowledged to maintain transparency and credibility.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Structure and Structuration in *The Catcher in the Rye*

According to Lucien Goldmann, there is a difference between the structure of a literary work and structure in general. The concept of the thematic structure of a literary work is presented in two ways. Firstly, a literary work is an imaginative expression of a worldview. Secondly, the author creates a universe, characters, objects, and relationships in imagination. The centers of attention in this theory are interaction between characters and other characters, and between characters and the objects around them. Goldmann also explained that the character as the hero in the novel, and the relationship between a hero and the world, is a relationship that cannot be irreconcilable (Goldmann, 1975).

Holden Caulfield as a Problematic Hero in *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield is a sixteen-year-old teenager who serves as the protagonist and narrator. He is tall and skinny, and he often wears a red hunting hat, which he bought for one dollar in New York, and it became his favorite hat. He always wears it wherever he goes.

Holden Caulfield was angry about the world and most of the people around him. He has an older brother named D.B., who becomes a writer and stays in Hollywood. He also had a sister named Phoebe and a younger brother named Allie Caulfield, but Allie passed away when Caulfield was thirteen years old. He loves them, especially his little brother and sister. Holden's father is a lawyer for a company, but in the novel, Caulfield does not mention his mother. Holden's parents are respected, but Holden doesn't like it when people respect their parents simply because they know who their parents are.

Then he said, "I had the privilege of meeting your mother and dad when they had their little chat with Dr. Thurmer some weeks ago. They were grand people."

“Yes, they are. They’re very nice.”  
“Grand. There’s a word I really hate. It’s a phony. I could puke every time I hear it.” (Salinger, 1951: 12).  
“She hasn’t felt too healthy since my brother Allie died. She’s very nervous. That’s another reason why I hated like hell for her to know I got the ax again” (Salinger, 1951: 120).

In this case, Holden Caulfield who is the main character in the novel and also a problematic hero seeks degraded authentic values. Goldmann explains that the novel is a story about a problematic hero seeking degraded authentic values (Goldmann, 1975). In conceptual and abstract form, authentic values are contained within an author's consciousness (Faruk, 1988).

#### Problematic Hero's Relation with the Other Characters

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, there are two kinds of relationships. Firstly, Holden Caulfield is portrayed as a problematic hero interacting with the other characters. Secondly, the problematic hero's relationship with the objects around him is depicted. There are several characters in the novel, including Spencer, Ossenburger, Robert Ackley, Ward Stradlater, Maurice, Sunny, Jane Gallagher, Sally Hayes, Allie Caulfield, Phoebe Caulfield (Holden Caulfield's sister), and D.B. Caulfield (Holden Caulfield's brother). There are also several objects related with Caulfield.

Problematic Hero's Relation with Spencer  
Caulfield was close enough with Spencer. In Spencer's house they talked about Caulfield's plan after he went out from Pencey. They also discussed about the result of Caulfield's exam and asked Caulfield about what the Headmaster of Pencey Prep said to Caulfield. Spencer gave Caulfield advices, something that Caulfield hated. Caulfield felt that nobody can rule him. Spencer also asked Caulfield about what Thurmer said to Caulfield and was worried about Caulfield parent's reaction when they knew that Caulfield was kicked out from

Pencey (Salinger, 1951).

“Has Dr. Thurmer written to your parents yet?” old Spencer asked me.

“He said he was going to write them Monday.”

“Have you yourself communicated with them?”

“No sir, I haven't communicated with them, because I'll probably see them Wednesday night when I get home.”

“And how do you think they'll take the news?”

“Well...they'll pretty irritated about it,” I said. “They really will. This is about the fourth school I've gone to.” (Salinger, 1951: 11).

Caulfield sometimes liked Spencer, but sometimes he did not like Spencer's habit, such as when Spencer shows his old blanket to Caulfield. They have collected some old stuff.

#### Problematic Hero's Relation with Ossenburger

Ossenburger was one of Pencey's alumni who found success in the funeral business. His name was used for one of the buildings at Pencey's school because he had donated a lot of money to the institution. He frequently visited Pencey and made speeches in front of students and teachers. In his speeches, Ossenburger often advised students and teachers to continue praying to Jesus wherever they were. He also frequently spoke as if he were the greatest and most successful person, which annoyed Holden Caulfield.

“Anyway, he gave Pencey a pile of dough, and they named our wing after him. The first football game of the year, he came up to school in this big goddam Cadillac, and we all had to stand up in the grandstand and give him locomotive-that's a cheer.” (Salinger, 1951: 20).

Caulfield was always annoyed when someone spoke as if they were superior to others. When Ossenburger spoke, a student farted loudly, which made Caulfield happy, even though it was impolite. Despite finding entertainment in the disruption, Caulfield was annoyed by Ossenburger's speech (Salinger, 1951).

### Holden Caulfield's Relation with Robert Ackley

Robert Ackley was Holden Caulfield's roommate's neighbor. He was a senior at Pencey. Ackley was a tall and skinny guy with irregular teeth. Caulfield mentioned that Ackley did not brush his teeth and had a lot of acne on his face. According to Caulfield, Ackley was annoying and he did not like him.

"Besides that, he had a lot of pimples. Not just on his forehead or his chin, like most guys, but all over his whole face. And not only that, he had a terrible personality. He was also sort of a nasty guy. I wasn't too crazy about him, to tell you the truth." (Salinger, 1951: 23).

"He started walking around the room, very slow and all, the way he always did, picking up your personal stuff off your desk and chiffonier. He always picked up your personal stuff and looked at it. Boy, could he get on your nerves time." (Salinger, 1951: 23-24).

Ackley often walked around Caulfield's room and picked up some items in it, which Caulfield hated. Ackley and Caulfield talked about the fencing competition. Caulfield became annoyed when he had to repeat his answers to Ackley's questions twice, but he still answered. However, Ackley did not seem to realize that Caulfield was upset with him (Senioradvisor.com, 2015). Caulfield also disliked Ackley when he borrowed something from him, even though Caulfield's belongings had already been packed in a bag. Ackley still insisted on Caulfield retrieving the item.

### Holden Caulfield's Relation with Ward Stradlater

Holden Caulfield was seldom friendly with his schoolmates, including his roommate. His roommate was Ward Stradlater. They were close enough; sometimes they joked around and were familiar with each other. However, Caulfield still did not like Stradlater. He always talked about Stradlater in a negative light, such as Stradlater's habit of rarely cleaning up his razor. Stradlater also believed that he was the most

handsome and coolest guy. Holden also thought that Stradlater was conceited and assumed that others were impressed by him as well. "That's something else that gives me a royal pain. I mean if you're good in writing compositions and somebody starts talking about commas. Stradlater was always doing that. He wanted to you think that the only reason he was lousy at writing compositions was because he stuck all the commas and in the wrong place." (Salinger, 1951: 33).

Stradlater did not answer Caulfield's questions about his date with Jane; he just said it was a secret. Caulfield became mad about that and then they had a fight in their room. They fought because Caulfield didn't like how Stradlater treated women badly, especially his friend Jane Gallagher. As a result of the fight, Caulfield's nose was injured. He then went to Ackley's room and slept in Ackley's roommate's bed. Caulfield felt lonely at Pencey at that moment. Therefore, he decided to leave Pencey early before his parents picked him up.

### Holden Caulfield's Relation with Maurice

Holden Caulfield was thought that Maurice also a lame man. He did a pimp just he wants to get an extra money. He also did not hesitate to be rude for money. When he came back to Caulfield's room, he charged five bucks remaining to Caulfield. Caulfield felt he had been lied to and blackmailed by Maurice because the deal was five bucks for a throw, and fifteen until noon.

Holden Caulfield was upset and angry with Maurice. He called Maurice an idiot, which made Maurice hit him. Maurice also punched Caulfield in the stomach, causing him to fall to the floor because Caulfield insulted him, saying he would become trash in two years. Maurice and Sunny left after taking the remaining five bucks.

"I was so damn mad and nervous and all. "You're a dirty moron," I said.

"You're a stupid chiseling moron, and in about two years you'll be one of those scraggy guys that come up to you on the street and ask for a dime for coffee. You'll have snot all over your dirty filthy overcoat, and you'll be-"

He smacked. I didn't even try to get out of

the way duck or anything. All I felt was this terrific punch in my stomach.” (Salinger, 1951: 115).

Holden Caulfield believed that Maurice was also a dishonest person. Maurice worked as a pimp to earn extra money and did not hesitate to be rude in exchange for it. When he returned to Caulfield’s room, he demanded an additional five dollars from him. Caulfield felt deceived and blackmailed by Maurice because the initial agreement was five dollars for the service and fifteen dollars until noon.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Sunny

Holden Caulfield stayed at a hotel in New York. He paid a girl to accompany him, but he did not do anything with her. The girl’s name was Sunny; she was a young girl from Hollywood. Caulfield thought that Sunny was about the same age as him. He felt nervous when she came to his room.

“She was very nervous, for a prostitute. She really was. I think it was because she was young and hell. She was around my age.” (Salinger, 1951: 105).

Holden Caulfield just wanted to have a conversation with her and did not want to have sex; he suddenly changed his mind. Sunny only slept and watched movies during the daytime. Caulfield became even less interested when he found out that Sunny enjoyed watching those silly movies. He thought that most movies were stupid, and he didn’t like them. Holden Caulfield paid her five bucks, but she demanded ten bucks. Caulfield refused because the deal was five bucks per session. Sunny angrily left Caulfield’s room. Later, she returned with Maurice to collect the remaining five bucks (Goldmann, 1975).

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Jane Gallagher

Jane Gallagher was Holden Caulfield’s neighbor, but she moved away after the summer. Holden and Jane first met at a club when Jane was lying near a swimming pool. Caulfield knew Jane because her dog often pooped in his garden, and his mother called Jane’s

mother to complain about it.

Caulfield and Jane often played tennis every morning and golf every afternoon. They also frequently went on dates. Jane is a ballet dancer who often practices during the day and worries that her legs might become weak and large. Caulfield also often played checkers with her, and he was very happy to talk about Jane; they were quite close. Caulfield was falling in love with Jane, but his mother did not like her.

“She was funny girl, old Jane. I wouldn’t exactly describe her as strictly beautiful. “She knocked me out, though.”

“My mother did not like her too much. I mean my mother always though Jane and her mother were sort of snubbing her or something when they didn’t say hello.” (Salinger, 1951: 86-87).

Holden Caulfield is quite fond of Jane, but they only had a short relationship because Jane had to move away after the summer. Caulfield was also worried when Jane started dating someone like Stradlater, whom he considered a bastard. Caulfield said that he was feeling somewhat nervous (Slawenski, 2010a).

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Sally Hayes

He called Sally, his girlfriend, to invite her to a theater show. He did not actually like Sally, but he fell in love with her because he thought she was a smart girl. Holden Caulfield admired Sally’s beauty and did not even mind when she arrived late for their date. The things that Caulfield disliked about Sally at that time were overshadowed by her beauty.

Holden Caulfield was also jealous when Sally met her friend. Sally’s friend was a boy who looked like he was from an elite school. Then Caulfield said, “Why don’t you go on over and give him a big soul kiss, if you know him? He’ll enjoy it.” (Salinger, 1951). Sally was annoyed when Caulfield said that. Caulfield became even more jealous when a man approached Sally, and they started chatting. It was clear that Caulfield was jealous; he thought the man was a hypocritical bastard. Caulfield really hated the small talk. Sally and the man engaged in small talk for a long time, which

only made Caulfield more annoyed.

“I didn’t much want to see it, but I knew old Sally, the queen of the phonies, would start drooling all over the place when I told her I had tickets for that, because the Lunts were in it and all. She liked shows that are supposed to be very sophisticated and dry and all, with the Lunts and all. I don’t. I don’t like any shows very much, if you want to know the truth. They’re not as bad as the movies, but they’re certainly nothing to rave about” (Salinger, 1951: 130).

Caulfield realized that Sally was stupid. He did not like Sally’s taste in actors or her favorite theater shows. He felt that Sally’s favorite actors were bad when they performed in a show. Caulfield also didn’t like it when Sally didn’t say much, as she was busy looking around just to spread charm.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Allie Caulfield

Holden Caulfield loves children; he considers them still innocent and very honest, unlike adults who are all “phony.” He also loves his family, especially his younger brother and sister, Allie Caulfield and Phoebe Caulfield. Allie passed away early due to leukemia on July 18, 1946, when Caulfield was thirteen years old in Maine. Allie was two years younger than Caulfield. Caulfield was devastated by Allie’s death. When Allie died, he broke all the windows in his garage.

“His teachers were always writing letters to my mother, telling her what a pleasure it was having a boy like Allie in their class. And they weren’t just shooting the crap. They really meant it. But it wasn’t just that he was the most intelligent member in the family.”

“God, he was a nice kid, though. He used to laugh so hard at something the thought of at the dinner table that he just about fell of his chair.” (Salinger, 1951: 43-44).

Allie Caulfield is the smartest kid in the Holden Caulfield family. Holden said that Allie’s teachers often sent letters to his mother, telling her that they were glad to have Allie in their class, and Holden agreed with that. He remembers

everything about Allie Caulfield, such as when Allie would laugh in the dining room whenever she remembered something. Allie never got angry at anyone, which made Holden love her even more, despite her having red hair, which is often associated with people who get angry easily.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Phoebe Caulfield

Holden Caulfield believed that children were innocent and not influenced by adolescents with their ‘phoniness.’ He loved Phoebe and described her as a beautiful girl with red hair who was also very smart. Phoebe always received good grades at school. Holden knew all about her favorite movies, and they had watched one together with D.B. Phoebe was also familiar with the storyline of that movie.

Phoebe wants to go with Holden, so he brings the suitcase containing his clothes to school. Holden goes to Phoebe’s school to meet her. However, Holden does not allow Phoebe to come with him and asks her to remain at school. Phoebe wants to be with her brother, Holden. To avoid making Phoebe sad and causing her to cry, Holden promises that he will not leave her. In an effort to make Phoebe happy, Holden invites her to play on the carousel at a park near her school. He also gives Phoebe his red hunting hat. Later, Phoebe gives Holden money when she learns that he intends to leave.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with D.B.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, there is little narration about Holden Caulfield’s interaction with his brother, D.B. Caulfield rarely speaks about D.B.’s negative traits, as he dislikes adults in general, except for his family. Holden expresses his disdain for D.B., such as when he mentions that his brother bought a luxury Jaguar, referring to it as just a new toy made in England.

“He used to be just a regular writer, when he was home.”

“He wrote this terrific book of short stories, *The Secret Goldfish*, in case you never heard of him. The best one in it was “*The Secret Goldfish*.” (Salinger, 1951: 3-4).

“D.B. isn’t as bad as the rest of them, but he

keeps asking me a lot of questions, too.”  
“He drove over last Saturday with this English babe that’s in this new picture he’s writing. She was pretty affected, but very good-looking.” (Salinger, 1951: 234).

D.B. is living in another city, having become a successful writer. Caulfield admires the work of D.B. and the books read by his brother. However, it is not only the items related to D.B. that Holden Caulfield dislikes, but also the people D.B. associates with. At the end of the story, when D.B. returns home with an English woman, Caulfield perceives her as a hypocrite and a phony.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with the Objects around Him

In genetic structuralism, the focus is not only on the relationship between the problematic hero and the other characters, but also on the relationship between the hero and the objects around him. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, two cities serve as the backdrop for the setting: Pennsylvania and New York. An important place in Pennsylvania is Pencey Prep, Holden Caulfield’s school. New York also plays a significant role, as most of the hero’s activities in *The Catcher in the Rye* take place in various locations within the city.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Ossenburger Memorial Wing

In Pencey Prep, Holden lives in the wing of a building named Ossenburger Memorial. He is annoyed by the name of the building because it was named after someone who graduated from Pencey, became successful in the funeral business, and donated a lot to the school. His roommate is Ward Stradlater, and he has a neighbor named Robert Ackley.

“Where I lived at Pencey, I lived in the Ossenburger Memorial Wing of the new dorms. It was only for juniors and seniors. I was a junior. My roommate was a senior. It was named after this guy Ossenburger went to Pencey. He made a pot of dough in the undertaking business after he got out of Pencey.”

“Anyway, he gave Pencey a pile of

dough, and they named our wing after him.” (Salinger, 1951: 19- 20).

Holden Caulfield stated that Pencey was full of thieves and bastards: 'Pencey was full of crooks. Quite a few guys came from these very wealthy families, but it was full of crooks anyway' (Slawenski, 2010b). He felt lucky because he was finally able to get out of Pencey.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with His Red Hunting Hat

Holden Caulfield has a red hunting hat that he wears everywhere he goes. He bought the hat when he was in New York for a buck. He often wears the hat when he feels stressed. He wears it backward, with the tongue of the hat at the back. He likes the hat because it covers both of Holden's ears. Sometimes, he wears it to help him avoid being recognized as a teenager when he is in a club.

“Then I took my hunting hat out of my coat pocket and gave it to her. She likes those kinds of crazy hats.” (Salinger, 1951: 199). Holden gave that hat to his sister when he met Phoebe. He gave it to her because it was his favorite hat, much like how Holden always kept Allie's baseball mitt. Phoebe also loved that hat.

#### Holden Caulfield’s Relation with Allie’s Left-Handed Baseball Mitt

Allie Caulfield, Holden Caulfield's sister who passed away at a young age, had a favorite item. Holden Caulfield always keeps it with him as a memento of Allie. The baseball mitt, covered in poems written by Allie in green ink, was meant to outwit opponents, so that they would read the poem while facing Allie.

“My brother Allie had this left-handed fielder’s mitt. He was left-handed. The thing was descriptive about it, though, was that he had poems written all over the fingers and the pocket and everywhere. In green ink.” (Salinger, 1951: 43).

When Ward Stradlater asked Holden to complete his descriptive writing task, Holden wrote about Allie's left-handed baseball mitt, because he always remembers Allie and his belongings.



### The Social Structure and Homology of *The Catcher in the Rye*

According to Goldmann, the product of structural activity is the homology between the structure of a literary work and the structure of society (Salinger, 1951). To understand the homology in *The Catcher in the Rye*, which depicts the 'baby boomer' generation, we need to examine the social and cultural conditions of New York, the genesis of the novel, the ideology of its author (J.D. Salinger), and the ideology prevalent in the lives of the "baby boomers".

### Social and Cultural Condition of the Setting of Place of *The Catcher in the Rye*

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, numerous narratives illustrate individuals who prioritize their own needs above all else. These individuals appear to disregard their surroundings, leading to the degradation of humanitarian values. This erosion of humanitarian values is depicted when Caulfield encounters the nuns on the train. The nuns are traveling to seek donations for the church, highlighting how an individualistic society no longer cares about those in need, thus prompting the church to send the nuns to seek assistance.

Furthermore, the society portrayed in the novel is characterized as hedonistic. This is exemplified when Caulfield mentions his brother, who owns a luxury car. Similarly, Ossenburger, the largest donor at Pencey, is described as owning a luxurious Cadillac. These details underscore that the society in the story places a high value on material wealth and luxury.

"Anyway, he gave Pencey a pile of dough, and they named our wing after him. The first football game of the year, he came up to school in this big goddam Cadillac, and we all had to stand up in the grandstand and give him locomotive-that's a cheer." (Salinger, 1951: 20).

Based on the exposition above, the social condition depicted in the novel reflects a hedonistic and individualistic society. As a result, individualistic values overshadow humanitarian principles,

leading to the erosion of social equality and community concern.

### Genesis of *The Catcher in the Rye*

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger presents a narrative that reflects the capitalist nature of New York society at the time. People were often preoccupied with money, and their relationships were frequently tied to objects or wealth. They were willing to do anything to obtain money.

In the novel, Salinger portrays a woman who becomes a prostitute to earn money. Maurice collaborates with Sunny, the prostitute, to gain money, and he even goes so far as to assault Holden Caulfield for financial gain. At Holden Caulfield's school, there is a room named Ossenburger Hall, which was named after a benefactor who made a donation to Pencey Prep.

Salinger also includes a depiction of Holden Caulfield's brother, who became an author primarily for financial reasons. Additionally, Holden's parents were very busy, which led them to place him in a boarding school. They lacked the time to care for Holden and his sister adequately. Many parents sent their children to boarding schools due to their own busy work schedules or business commitments. As a result, some children experienced a lack of attention from their parents, and these parents often struggled to monitor their children's activities outside the home. In the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, there is a story where Holden Caulfield goes on a date with Sally Hayes. They plan to visit a theater featuring a performance by the famous American acting couple, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. The Lunts were prominent American actors from 1923 to 1958. This serves as evidence that J.D. Salinger depicted the social conditions of the era when the Lunts were at the height of their fame.

### Humanism in the Life of J.D Salinger

Most of Salinger's stories revolve around humanistic themes, as exemplified in *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*. The story centers on Seymour, a veteran who suffered from depression after serving in World War

II. However, no one seemed to care about Seymour upon his return from the war, not even his wife. At the end of *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, Seymour tragically takes his own life using a gun.

Another notable work by Salinger is *The Laughing Man*, which tells the story of a man with a disfigured face, referred to as "The Laughing Man." His face was deformed due to torture by a Chinese gang, leading him to wear a mask. By the end of the story, "The Laughing Man" is killed by his leader, who is motivated by jealousy after discovering that his girlfriend is in love with "The Laughing Man."

Furthermore, Salinger's experiences in his personal life, particularly his romantic relationships, reflect the fading sense of humanity in his works. For instance, when Salinger was drafted into the military, his girlfriend, Oona O'Neill, chose to marry Charlie Chaplin, a famous actor. This decision suggests that O'Neill valued fame over loyalty, which Salinger may have perceived as a betrayal and a lack of humanistic values. This sentiment is echoed in his novel, where the protagonist, Holden Caulfield, expresses disdain for people who idolize famous actors (Slawenski, 2010a).

#### Ideology in the Life of Baby Boomer's Generation

The baby boomer generation is renowned for its open-mindedness and desire for a peaceful life. Individuals from this generation often feel free to pursue their personal interests. This era has produced many successful individuals who have shaped the present. However, during the early years of this generation, their focus was on improving their lives and initiating significant social and cultural revolutions. Consequently, they became a competitive generation with strong individualistic values, often perceived as having lower humanitarian concerns (Senioradvisor.com, 2015). The baby boomer generation is also characterized by their busy lifestyles, which left little time for interaction with others. They prioritized personal goals and ambitions.

With the economic progress and prosperity experienced by many in this generation, there has been a noticeable shift towards prioritizing individual interests over collective welfare or humanitarian concerns. This phenomenon is evident in the rise of consumer culture and the diminished attention to critical social issues (Seniorliving.org, 2001).

#### The Worldview in *The Catcher in the Rye* Humanism as the Worldview

According to Goldmann, a worldview represents an author's perspective in responding to the issues faced by certain social groups. This perspective is then expressed through literary works. The author often compares one society with another, as well as with objects surrounding that society, through their worldview (Goldmann, 1975). In his novel, Salinger aims to convey his anxious reflections on humanism to the world. He presents narratives about individualistic, hedonistic, and consumeristic individuals, among other themes. Salinger also creates the character Holden Caulfield as a representation of himself—a figure who is disgusted by hypocrisy and the lack of humanity in others. This can be illustrated in the following quote.

"Take cars," I said. I said that it in this very quiet voice. "Take most people, they're crazy about cars. They worry if they get a little scratch on them, and they're always talking about how many miles they get to a gallon, and if they get a brand-new car already, they start thinking about trading it in for one that's even newer. I don't even like old cars. I mean they don't even interest me. I'd rather have a goddam horse. A horse is at least human, for God's sake. A horse you can at least—" (Salinger, 1951: 145).

Based on the quote above, it is evident that people tend to live in luxury, as indicated by their ownership of luxury cars. Many seem to compete to acquire the latest models. This reflects consumeristic and hedonistic tendencies. On the other hand, social inequality continues to persist in society, leaving many individuals in need of assistance.

The Definition and History of Humanism  
Humanism can be interpreted as the essence of being human or what is often referred to as human nature, derived from the Latin term *humanus*. From a philosophical perspective, humanism represents a worldview in which humans are considered noble, independent, and capable of thinking for themselves and about the world using their own abilities (Referensimakalah.com, 2013).

The history of humanism began with a movement aimed at promoting human dignity. Humans possess abilities and a spirit that make them unique. This awareness of human dignity arises from the humanistic perspective that values the spiritual and moral essence of humanity (Referensimakalah.com, 2019).

The development of humanism can be divided into three phases: Antiquity, the Pre-Renaissance period, and Modern Humanism. During Antiquity, humanists in the Roman era—over two thousand years ago—strived to cultivate the highest ethical and cultural values, emphasizing human strength in its most aesthetic and virtuous form. This was considered the ultimate aspiration of Roman society (Scoot, 2019). The Pre-Renaissance era marked the beginning of the modern age. In the 14th century, human development was driven by education, positioning humans as the natural benchmark of life. In the modern era, the development of humanism also influenced religious thought. In Europe, however, the evolution of humanism diverged into two distinct forms: religious humanism and anti-religious humanism (Scoot, 2019).

#### J.D Salinger and His Social Groups

Jerome David Salinger was born on January 1, 1919, in New York. He had an older sister, Doris, making him the younger of two children. His father, Sol Salinger, was Jewish and a successful businessman in the cheese trading industry, while his mother, Marie, was Catholic. Salinger initially aspired to become an actor, but his father opposed this ambition and instead enrolled him in

the Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania. During his time at the academy, Salinger served as the literary editor for his class yearbook, *The Crossed Sabres*. He also actively participated in various clubs, including the Glee Club, Aviation Club, French Club, and the Non-Commissioned Officers Club (Slawenski, 2010b). After graduating from Valley Forge in 1936, Salinger returned to his hometown for one year to attend New York University. Following this, he traveled to Europe, particularly Austria and Poland, with financial support and encouragement from his father to learn another language and gain experience in the import business. During his five months abroad, Salinger spent most of his time in Vienna, where he focused more on language learning than on business (Slawenski, 2010a). Salinger eventually dropped out of New York University. His father then encouraged him to join a business trip to Europe. The trip included stops in London and Vienna (Slawenski, 2010b).

After dropping out of New York University, Salinger attended night classes at Columbia University. It was there that he first met Whit Burnett, a teacher who encouraged Salinger to develop the story of Holden Caulfield. Burnett had read “Slight Rebellion off Madison” and admired the character of Holden Caulfield. This story was later set to be published by *The New Yorker*. However, before the story could be published, World War II began. *The New Yorker* deemed the story inappropriate for publication during the war (Slawenski, 2010b). Salinger lived away from the media spotlight, leading a secluded life in Cornish, New Hampshire, in a rural home that was rarely visited by others. Beyond writing, Salinger also showed an interest in various local community activities. He participated in several clubs and associations in the Cornish area, although specific details about his involvement are not widely known. Furthermore, Salinger’s connections extended beyond his immediate community. He maintained relationships with several renowned writers and intellectuals of his time, many of whom respected his preference for privacy and tranquility (Slawenski, 2010b).

## Humanism as J.D Salinger Worldview as Reflected in *The Catcher in the Rye*

Through his work, Salinger presents a narrative about the decline of human values. This reflects Salinger's experiences and observations of societal issues he encountered. Consequently, Salinger aimed to convey his thoughts and concerns through *The Catcher in the Rye*. The narrative and portrayal of a society losing its humanity are evident when Holden Caulfield is beaten by Maurice over money. This illustrates how individuals can exhibit cruelty toward others for financial gain. The relevant quote from the story is presented below.

“Then what he did, he snapped his finger very hard on my pajamas. I won't tell you where he snapped it, but it hurt like hell.”  
“He smacked. I didn't even try to get out of the way duck or anything. All I felt was this terrific punch in my stomach.”  
(Salinger, 1951: 115).

Based on the quote above, it can be inferred that Salinger's work portrays an individual who embraces individualistic values and loses their sense of humanity. Consequently, such a person is willing to do anything to obtain money. This interpretation aligns with Salinger's own experience of being robbed and beaten by someone intent on taking his money. The robber showed no concern when Salinger mentioned that he was an American veteran (Slawenski, 2010b).

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that *The Catcher in the Rye* serves as a profound reflection of J.D. Salinger's worldview, shaped by the social and cultural conditions of the baby boomer generation. By applying Lucien Goldmann's genetic structuralism, the analysis identifies homologies between the novel's structure and the societal context of post-World War II America. The individualistic and hedonistic tendencies of the era, coupled with the erosion of humanitarian values, are vividly

mirrored in Holden Caulfield's interactions and experiences. The protagonist's role as a "problematic hero" highlights Salinger's critique of the inauthenticity and materialism prevalent in the society of his time. Through Holden's disillusionment and search for authenticity, Salinger conveys a humanistic worldview that calls for compassion, sincerity, and a deeper connection with others. The structural relationships within the novel, including character interactions and symbolic objects like Holden's red hunting hat, further reinforce this thematic exploration. Overall, the study underscores that *The Catcher in the Rye* is not merely a personal narrative but a cultural artifact that encapsulates Salinger's anxieties and aspirations for a more humane world. This work exemplifies how literature can serve as a medium to critique societal flaws and inspire introspection about collective values.

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