



The Representation of J.D. Salinger's Views on Changes in American Society in the 1940s in *The Catcher in the Rye*

ภาพแทนในทัศนะของเจ.ดี.แซลลิงเยอร์ต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลงในสังคมอเมริกันช่วงทศวรรษ 1940 ในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง *The Catcher in the Rye*

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Abstract

The objectives of this study aim to analyze both the protagonist in *The Catcher in the Rye* in terms of conceptual or ideological factors and narrative techniques which influence the construction of the representation and the relationship between the representation and J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s. This area of study might concern two theories: namely, a theory of representation and narratology. In addition, this research is intended to answer the following three questions. Firstly, how is the production of meaning through language in *The Catcher in the Rye* constructed? Secondly, what are J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s? Lastly, how is the relationship between the representation and J.D. Salinger's views?

The findings showed that the protagonist's views, J.D. Salinger's views, and changes in American society in the 1940s obviously interrelated. The production of meaning which is the representation of the protagonist's views was constructed of narrative techniques. J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s were the same antisocial perspectives as Holden Caulfield's which are phoniness, alienation and meltdown.

Keywords: Representation, Construction of the representation, Systems of representation, Phoniness, Alienation, Meltdown

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ตัวละครหลักในนวนิยายเรื่อง *The Catcher in the Rye* ด้านองค์ประกอบของความคิดและกลวิธีการเล่าเรื่องที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการสร้างภาพแทน และความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างภาพแทนกับความคิดของเจ.ดี. แซลลิงเยอร์ต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลงในสังคมอเมริกันช่วงทศวรรษ 1940 กรอบแนวคิดที่ใช้ประกอบด้วยสองทฤษฎี ได้แก่ ทฤษฎีภาพแทน และทฤษฎีการเล่าเรื่อง นอกจากนี้การวิจัยยังมีเจตนาตอบคำถามสามประการ ประการแรกการผลิตความหมายผ่านภาษาในวรรณกรรมเรื่อง *The Catcher*



in the Ryeถูกสร้างขึ้นอย่างไร ประการที่สอง ทศนะของ เจ.ดี. แซลลิงเยอร์ต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลงในสังคมอเมริกันช่วง ทศวรรษ 1940 คืออะไร ประการสุดท้าย ความสัมพันธ์ ระหว่างภาพแทนกับทศนะของเจ.ดี. แซลลิงเยอร์เป็น อย่างไร

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าทศนะของตัวละครหลัก ทศนะของ เจ.ดี. แซลลิงเยอร์ และความเปลี่ยนแปลงในสังคมอเมริกัน ช่วงทศวรรษ 1940 มีความเกี่ยวข้องสัมพันธ์กันโดยเด่นชัด การสร้างภาพแทนของตัวละครหลักถูกสร้างผ่านกลวิธีการ เล่าเรื่อง ทศนะของเจ.ดี. แซลลิงเยอร์ต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลง ในสังคมอเมริกันช่วงทศวรรษ 1940 เป็นทศนะเดียวกัน กับทศนะของตัวละครหลัก ได้แก่ ความจอมปลอม ความ แปลกแยก และภาวะหดหู่ใจ

คำสำคัญ: ภาพแทนการสร้างภาพแทนระบบของภาพ แทนความจอมปลอมความแปลกแยกภาวะหดหู่ใจ

บทนำ

The Catcher in the Rye “has such a fascinating impact on Americans on the 20th century and today because it subverted so many conventions and challenged the conservative values of the late 1940’s-1950s mainstream (Iduncanoo, 2011)” ; it depicts an alienated hero in a corrupt society who chooses values involving personal integrity over those involving public conformity. Most studies of The Catcher in the Rye often show that “the protagonist is faced with the dilemma of psychological situation. Many critics dismissed this novel as detritus due to its healthy helping of four-letter words and sexual situations, and even today The

Catcher in the Rye has been banned in school districts in Washington, Ohio, Florida and Michigan (Litcharts, 2011)”. Such a bizarre and fantastical world view is of outstanding importance chosen for analysis.

For readers, it is possible to accept the fact that The Catcher in the Rye has been seen as the teenagers’ bible. It is because J. D. Salinger as an author devoted the entire story to adolescent subject matter concerning teenage hero’s behaviour towards the norms of American society of the 1940s. Holden Caulfield as a principal character has brought Americans new alienation which represented a casebook of post-war phenomenon. Evidently, it can verify that the author has provided the reader with both denunciation and a controversial perspective on society. However, there is a better way of gaining a genuine insight into literary work and its social context should rely on various analytical methods such as semiotics, deconstruction, hermeneutics, or representation. The Catcher in the Rye can be demystified and considered not only by a mere mimetic reflection of reality in a positivistic fashion but also by a concept of ‘representation’ which emphasizes the construction of the text by selection, exclusion, and enhancement of social elements.

There is no study examining a concept of ‘representation’ which emphasizes the construction of the text to deconstruct The



Catcher in the Rye. This can be interpreted to mean that the door into scholarly arena is still open to conduct a study on such a topic. The important aspect of this study is neither the post-war American culture nor the portrayal of the adolescent hero's behaviour towards changes in American society in the 1940s, rather it explains the constructed representation of the protagonist. In terms of milieu, this study focuses on J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and the theory of representation. In terms of time, it will be specific to American society in the 1940s. The analysis differs from other study in that mine will discuss solely *The Catcher in the Rye* in terms of the production of meaning through language which is interrelate with J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s.

กรณีศึกษางานวิจัยที่ผ่านมา

Ever since its first publication in 1951, J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* has attained both popular and literary notoriety as a firestorm of controversy and debate. In their book, *Literature and Its Times: Profiles of 300 Notable Literary Works and the Historical Events that Influenced Them*, Joyce Moss and George Wilson write: "The *Catcher in the Rye* received almost instant popular and academic recognition. Published on July 16, 1951, the novel made the New York Times bestseller list within two weeks and remained there for almost thirty (Moss and Wilson, 1997) ."

Alicia Howe's thesis (Alicia Howe, 2008), *Undressing J. D. Salinger : Fashion and Psychology in The Catcher in the Rye and "Teddy "*, examines the discourse concerning clothing and psychology which are used by J. D. Salinger to hide more information about the principal character's mental state of being in his clothing than in his speech and actions. What Alicia Howe found while reading other works of Salinger is clothing. She confirmed:

"clothing, more than anything else – setting, facial features, body types – is what the author writes about. Hats, jackets, T-shirts, pants and dresses, they are all described in detail and are in every works Salinger has ever published. In essence, Salinger uses the hunting hat to create a physical symbol of Holden's back and forth mindset between becoming an adult and staying a child, between adhering to popular culture and breaking away from the "phonies," between childlike immaturity and an adult responsibility. In Alicia Howe's study on Holden's red hunting hat, she also found that it is a symbolic representation of his sense of alienation from society. She



wrote: “thus, for Holden, his hunting hat represents his rebellion against the ideal man in the 1950’s and his desire to assimilate to such a social role. He is in fact wearing a hat, a stereotypical fashion of the day, yet rebels against typical fashions by making it a hunting hat instead of a fedora(Alicia Howe, 2008).”

Apart from Alicia Howe’s study of fashion-psychology relationship inferred from *The Catcher in the Rye*, Sonja Dormann analyzes “Existential philosophy” or “existential thought” which is represented in innocence, experience, and existential concerns. Her dissertation (Dormann, 2010), *The Catcher of Zero Existentialism in Contemporary U.S.-American Literature*, adduces evidence that:

“The *Catcher* was not even written by an adolescent or young adult writer. She believes and asserts that *The Catcher* is not a story of a Bildungsroman hero with his difficulties and serious problems, but rather one of a personal identity crisis which is exposed by the protagonist’s narrative frankness which is the expression of high ideals of innocence, honesty, and

integrity.Dormann concluded from her studies that *The Catcher* represents existential notions. It is pertinent to the “ultimate concerns” which are the themes of death, alienation, integrity versus “phoniness”, innocence, and experience. Holden Caulfield is interpreted, to a certain extent, as an existential protagonist. The findings revealed that “Despite his adolescent insecurity and his somewhat erratic thoughts and conversations, Holden Caulfield can be regarded, to a certain extent, as an existential hero. Salinger has created an existential novel – and one which has become, quite understandably, a widely read and much loved classic (Dormann, 2010).”

วิธีการ

The Catcher in the Rye is demystified through both the theory of representation which involves the meaning process in culture and narratology whose object is to study narrative, narrative structure and the way they affect our perception. Those two theories along with the flesh-and-blood author’s experiences reveal a



clear manifestation of the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s in this novel. The study on *The Catcher in the Rye* has been arranged in terms of text analysis according to the extent of direct exposure of the protagonist to the subject matter stated in the story to uncover the representation. In summary, the methodology used in this study aims to put the protagonist's views, narrative techniques, and the representation into perspective by answering three research questions proposed in the abstract above: Firstly, how is the production of meaning through language in *The Catcher in the Rye* constructed? Secondly, what are J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s? Lastly, how is the relationship between the representation and J.D. Salinger's views?

ผลการศึกษา

From all of the context interpretation upon representation, it illustrates that Holden Caulfield, who is the protagonist of *The Catcher in the Rye*, exposes his pessimistic view of life which is adversely affected by changes in society. He is obsessed by the representation of the protagonist's alienation, nonconformity, and corruption or 'phony' intertwined with loneliness and pain. Narratology also shows that Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life is structured through the disillusionment plot and the central themes, which focus often on

phoniness, alienation and meltdown, as well as characterization and setting. All these narrative techniques verify, therefore, that the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s as reflected in *The Catcher in the Rye* emanated from the construction of the representation influenced by narrative techniques. And the construction of the representation corresponds precisely to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's explanation of the real author asserted in her *Narrative Fiction*, which wrote: "the implication being that a real author can embody in a work his ideas or beliefs; he can also embody different ideas, beliefs and emotions in different works (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002)". Therefore, it can verify that Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life in *The Catcher in the Rye* is evidently the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s which are enumerated as follows : phoniness, alienation and meltdown.

ข้อคิดเห็น

The findings will be under discussion about a detailed analysis of narrative techniques beginning with the structure of plot for the theme in order to portray how Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life is structured. It will prove that how Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life and J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s interrelated.



Disillusionment Plot and Themes

An analysis of how the plot of *The Catcher in the Rye* is structured will be presented in order to justify the themes of the narrative text of Holden Caulfield's story. The themes of *The Catcher in the Rye* are as follows :

Phoniness Alienation and Meltdown Justify the Theme of *The Catcher in the Rye*

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. For *The Catcher in the Rye*, there are many themes in this novel, as there are in any novel, however, its central themes focus often on phoniness, alienation and meltdown. These central themes refer to Holden Caulfield's perspective on life, society, and the real world and are his catch-all for declaring the superficiality, hypocrisy, pretension, inauthenticity, and shallowness that he experiences in the world around him.

According to Norman Friedman's plot typology in *Dictionary of Narratology*, the plot used in *The Catcher in the Rye* is the disillusionment plot "in which the protagonist is deprived of his/her ideals, possibly loses the receiver's sympathy and ends up in dejection or annihilation. This kind of plot brings about a change in the protagonist's thoughts and feelings in order to interrelate with the central themes(Prince, 1989)".

Phoniness

"Phoniness," which is probably the most prominent idea from *The Catcher in the Rye*, is one of Holden Caulfield's favorite concepts. Holden Caulfield reproaches almost everyone for "phoniness," except Phoebe, Allie, and himself. He constantly encounters people and situations that strike him as "phony," a word he applies to anything hypocritical, shallow, superficial, inauthentic, or otherwise fake. In the story, Holden Caulfield perceives such "phoniness" everywhere in the adult world, and believes adults are so phony that they cannot even notice their own phoniness.

In Holden Caulfield's view, a "phony" is someone who embraces and is obsessing about the world's mundane, absurd demands and tries to make something out of nothing – that is, just about everyone who studies in school or who puts on airs in order to do a job or achieve a goal. The fact that no one is realizing how trivial and fleeting life is, compared with the things people tell one another about reality – how difficult it is to truly love and share oneself with people knowing that all, like Allie, will eventually die, causes him to be plunging into frustration, even rage.

On a personal level Holden Caulfield understands the truths of mortal life : the superficial matters little because it will not last, yet it is made to seem so much more important



to the story. Meanwhile, all around him, he is made outsider by his not wishing to receive the occurrence of superficial people win honors through their cunning in too cavalier a fashion or to seem to have connived. He thus holds his deepest contempt for those who succeed as phonies :Stradlater, Ackley, the Headmaster, and all the boys in school who treat peoples as being subject to the status discrimination views.

Holden Caulfield is right to have an insightful analysis. Many of the characters in The Catcher in the Rye, from Ackley and Stradlater, to Sally, to Mr. Spencer are often phony, and say, act, and do things that keep up appearances rather than reflect what they truly think and feel. Yet even though Holden Caulfield is right that people are phony, The Catcher in the Rye makes it clear that Holden Caulfield's hatred of phoniness is self-destructive. Though, in the story, Holden Caulfield is constantly pointing out the phoniness in others, he is himself often phony. At various times in his story, Holden Caulfield tells worthless lies, claims to like or agree with statements or ideas he detests, goes out with girls he does not like; actually, all was subconsciously conducted to try to feel less lonely or to avoid direct confrontations.

In summary, Holden Caulfield's deceptions and phoniness have generally no sense, although he notes that he is a compulsive liar. For example, on the train to New York, he perpetrates a mean-spirited and needless prank

on Mrs. Morrow. It is because he would like people, who listen to his story, to believe that he is a paragon of virtue in a world of phoniness. Therefore, Holden Caulfield is his own counterevidence, although he would like to believe that the world is a simple place, and that virtue and innocence rest on one side of the fence while artifice, superficiality and phoniness rest on the other.

Alienation and Meltdown

What makes The Catcher in the Rye unique is not the fact that Holden Caulfield is an alienated teenager, but it is extremely accurate and nuanced portrayal of the protagonist's personal counter-cultural which interrelates with his isolation. From the very first scene of The Catcher in the Rye, when Holden Caulfield decides not to attend the football game that the rest of his school is attending, it is clear that he does not fit in.

Besides, Holden Caulfield cannot bear to accept the death of his beloved brother, Allie. In Holden Caulfield's eyes, Allie is not phony, while everyone else outside his spiritual perspective is "phony". This means that he cannot bear to accept the harsher reality; it brings its own harms. Then people whom he encounters often continue to disappoint him; the prostitute demands more money for nothing, the man who takes him in seems like a paedophile, and the cab driver berates him as stupid when he asks



simple questions about the birds in the winter in the park. Consequently, Holden Caulfield's memories of Allie can help him preserve his isolation when he cannot find real love in the outside world.

When the entire world around him and the reality of the world do not accept his demand, Holden Caulfield feels dejected and tries to save his entire soul from being in flux as it comes to grips with reality; he perceives that the reality of the world is its very irrationality. Further, he constantly dreams up schemes to escape alienation, such as fleeing to a New England cabin or working on a ranch out West. In addition, the only role – catching children before they fall off a cliff – which Holden Caulfield envisions for himself in life is symbolic of his wish to save himself and other children from having to one day grow up to live with rootless alienated people.

Holden Caulfield's view of perfect world is as incorrect as his view of the adult world which is entirely "phony," and it just helps Holden Caulfield hide from the fact that the complex human issues ranging from intimacy, death, or all of which he will have to face in the real world terrify him. However, this form of delusional self-protection can only last so long. Holden Caulfield will live out his life in the real world, whether he likes it or not. Mr. Antolini and Phoebe make it clear that unless he learns to

accept the complexities of the world around him, he will end up, at best, bitter and alone.

Alienation both protects and harms Holden Caulfield. It protects him by ensuring that he will not ever have to form connections with other people. Just as Holden Caulfield wears his red hunting cap as a sign of independence, separation, and protection from the world, he therefore creates his own alienation for the same purpose. Holden Caulfield may wish that he did not need human contact, but inevitably he does. So while his alienation protects him, it also severely harms him by making him intensely lonely and depressed. He therefore reaches out, to Mr. Spencer, or Carl Luce, or Sally, but then his fear of human interaction reasserts itself and he does his best to insult or make the very people he wants to connect with angry at him.

In short, Holden Caulfield has gotten himself caught in a cycle of self-destruction : his fear of human contact leads to alienation, which leads to loneliness, which causes him to reach out to another person. It increases his fear of human contact and leads to a terrible experience that convinces him that people are no good and irrationality which leads to alienation and meltdown.

According to the disillusionment plot, Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life is structured by Holden Caulfield who chronologically conveys his own story along with a stream of



consciousness technique which takes the reader inside the narrating character's mind, where he reflects on the world of the story through the thoughts and senses of the central character. J.D. Salinger's arrangement of the events that make up *The Catcher in the Rye* helps support the function of the central character, Holden Caulfield, who is designed to represent the themes of the story systematically. It means that Holden Caulfield has his own function as the central character to reflect his concern about the entire world around him. Consequently, Holden Caulfield's concern is arranged to construct the plot perfectly and transforms into a world of make-believe which nourishes the themes of the story which are phoniness, alienation and meltdown.

Characterization

Apart from the structure of plot for the theme and the protagonist's roles which merge into the themes, characterization also plays an important function as a means to relay Holden Caulfield's appearance and personality to Caulfield himself in order to make him interact well with the themes and the plot embedded in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Characterization in *The Catcher in the Rye* distinctively impacts upon how Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life is structured, as well as exposing the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s. ShlomithRimmon-Kenan explains that:

“there are two basic types of textual indicators of character: direct definition and indirect presentation. The first type names the trait by an adjective (e.g. ‘he was good-hearted’), an abstract noun (‘his goodness knew no bounds’), or possibly some other kind of noun (‘she was a real bitch’) or part of speech (‘he loves only himself’). The second type, on the other hand, does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002)”.

Besides ShlomithRimmon-Kenan, Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch explain quite differently that: “basically, there are three methods of characterization:

1. Direct Description of physical appearance and explanation of character traits and attributes. This description may occur either in an introduction or in statements distributed throughout the work. Essentially, the author tells the reader what sort of person the character is.



2.Presentation of the character in action, without interpretive comment by the author. Essentially, the author shows the reader what sort of person the character is through what the character says and does and what is said by other characters. As a "witness" to the character's actions, the reader is free to draw his or her own conclusions.

3.Representation of the character's inner self. Essentially, the author describes the thoughts and emotions triggered in the character by external events. A classic example is Molly Bloom's stream-of-consciousness soliloquy in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

In extended fiction, such as the novel, all three of these approaches may be used. However, the method of characterization is often the result of an author's choice of point of view. Direct description (method 1) usually occurs when the story is told from the first-person point of view or the omniscient point of view. Representation of a character's

inner self (method 3) results when an author chooses a third-person point of view that is limited to the internal responses of a single person, often revealed through interior monologue (Morner and Rausch, 1991)."

Evidently, Holden Caulfield is conveyed in the form of indirect presentation, according to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's explanation, and direct description (method 1 -when the story is told from the first-person point of view), along with representation of the character's inner self (method 3), according to Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch's. Even though the reader cannot actually see or hear the narrator, he/she can hear a textual voice or the narrator's voice that seems to be voice of a teenage boy. (If the reader is familiar with the text he/she will know that the narrator, Holden Caulfield, is actually seventeen.) These methods of characterization appear distinctively in a textual narrator as from the beginning of Chapter One of *The Catcher in the Rye*:

"If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and



all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all – I'm not saying that – but they are also touchy as hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy (Salinger, 2001)."

Then, in order to explain how characterization is as a means to present the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s with Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life and can interrelate with the plot and themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*. The basic concepts of characterization by both Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch will be

applied to the following explanation to expose how Holden Caulfield is constructed.

The Story Is Told from the First-person

Point of View

J.D. Salinger writes *The Catcher in the Rye* in first-person point of view from the perspective of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield, who narrates what he himself sees and experiences or whom he encounters, and provides his own commentary on the events and people he describes; it makes the reader feel like Holden Caulfield is real. Although Holden Caulfield's perspective on matters seems to persuade the listener (who may be a psychoanalyst in the hospital where Holden is hospitalized.) to believe what he thinks of the people, events, places, weather, or the readers might be never sure how much to trust him or cannot be sure about him or the people he describes as moronic phonies because they are confined to Holden Caulfield's point of view, it is possible to trust this method of characterization.

Because of the first-person point of view (or a first-person narrator) used in this novel, this method provides insights into Holden Caulfield's views of the world around him. Holden Caulfield cannot possibly address the readers because he does not know they exist. Conversely, the readers cannot talk to Holden Caulfield because they know he does not exist. Consequently, it is



possible to sense Holden Caulfield's discontent which markedly resonates with the readers who try to understand and are tempted to revel in his cantankerousness and try to deduce what is wrong with him.

There are obvious signs manifested everywhere in the novel showing that Holden Caulfield is a troubled and unreliable narrator. He fails out of four schools. He is in a fog of mental apathy and confusion and not willing to make any effort to improve things towards his future. He is hospitalized, and visited by a psychoanalyst, for an unspecified complaint against the world around him. And he is unable to socialize with other people. Holden Caulfield as a first-person narrator implies that two traumas in his past clearly affect his emotional state : the death of his brother Allie and the suicide of one of his schoolmates. But, even with that knowledge, Holden Caulfield's peculiarities cannot simply be explained away as symptoms of a readily identifiable disorder.

Holden Caulfield's most marked "peculiarities" is how extremely judgmental he is of almost everything and everybody he encounters. He criticizes, sympathizes, and philosophizes about people who are boring, people who are insecure, and, above all, people who are "phony." Holden Caulfield takes this penchant for passing judgment to such an extreme case that it often becomes extremely funny and ridiculous, such as when he

speculates that people are so crass that someone will probably write "fuck you" on his tombstone, or when he asks simple questions about the birds in the park. Holden Caulfield 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 demeanour in class than they do in conversation, or people who dress and act like the other members of their social class. While Holden Caulfield 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 as well.

Holden Caulfield's attitude towards sex is another aspect that deserves comment. Holden Caulfield is a virgin, but he is very obsessing about sex, and, in fact, he spends much of his story telling his attempt to lose his virginity. He asserts strongly that sex should happen between people who care deeply about and respect one another, and he is upset by the realization that sex can be casual – for instance, Stradlater's date with Jane does not just make him jealous; it infuriates him to think of a girl he knows well having sex with a boy she doesn't know well. That should not be casual sex. Moreover, he is disturbed by the fact that he is aroused by women whom he does not respect or care for, like the blonde tourist he dances with in the



Lavender Room, or like Sally Hayes, whom he refers to as "stupid" even as he arranges a date with her. Finally, he is disturbed by the fact that he is aroused by kinky sexual behaviour – particularly behaviour that is not respectful of one's sex partner, such as spitting in one's partner's face. Although Holden Caulfield refers to such behaviour as "crumby," he admits that it is pretty fun, although he does not think that it should be.

Holden Caulfield's appearance and personality is portrayed by characterization to expose his pessimistic view of life. It is clearly evident that J.D. Salinger is successful in using the first-person narrator in this novel to make the protagonist's roles interrelate with the plot and themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Other Characters' Point of View Underscores Holden Caulfield's Characterization

Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life pertaining to characterization is revealed additionally through other prominent characters' point of view. The fact that J.D. Salinger's some characters can effectively mirror Holden Caulfield's personal traits affirms why Holden Caulfield criticizes, sympathizes, and philosophizes about people who are boring, or insecure, or, above all, "phony." In this case, there are two key minor characters who underscore Holden Caulfield's characterization.

Phoebe Caulfield

Phoebe Caulfield is Holden Caulfield's ten-year-old sister, whom he loves dearly. But she is considerably more mature and intelligent than Holden Caulfield and than her age implies. She is obviously a voice of reason throughout the novel, both in Holden Caulfield's thoughts and in the advice she gives to him in person. She does not perceive that Holden Caulfield is the only noble character in a world of superficial and phony adults. On the contrary, Phoebe is an unusually perceptive and sophisticated young girl who is sensitive to the extent of Holden Caulfield's misanthropy and hatred of almost everything.

Phoebe is depicted as Holden Caulfield's beloved sister. In the story, Holden Caulfield appreciates every minute detail of her existence and treats her with more respect and kindness than any other character. But conversely, she exhibits great maturity and even chastises her elder brother for his immaturity. Therefore, there seems to be a dichotomy between the sweet world of make-believe, where Holden Caulfield wants to stay, and the cruel world of shallow adult hypocrisy, where he is afraid to go.

Phoebe also complicates Holden Caulfield's fantasy world of his own narrative. With her level-headed attitude, instead of sympathizing with Holden Caulfield's refusal to face the real world, she recognizes how tenuous Holden



Caulfield's grasp on reality is, but she becomes angry with him. Phoebe understands that struggles against the outside world around her brother is a necessary process and also understands that Holden Caulfield's stunted emotional maturity and stubborn outlook seem irresponsible, less charming, and more foolish.

Phoebe makes Holden Caulfield's picture of childhood romping through a field of rye – seemingly oversimplified, an idealized fantasy. It asserts that Phoebe's character challenges Holden Caulfield's view of the world; she is a child, but she does not fit into Holden Caulfield's romanticized vision of childlike innocence. Although she never explicitly states it, Phoebe seems to realize that Holden Caulfield's bitterness towards the rest of the world is really bitterness towards himself. She could sense that Holden is a deeply depressed, insecure young man who needs love and support. When she shows up at the museum and demands to come with him, she seems not so much to need Holden Caulfield as to understand that he needs her. Phoebe proposes that she is willing to go to the ends of the earth with her brother, and her willingness wakes him up to the impossibility of his self-destructive impulses and finally makes him succumb to the real world; Holden Caulfield cannot bear to witness Phoebe's suffering.

In short, Holden Caulfield's characterization is revealed through Phoebe's point of view which

is mature enough to reflect and declare that Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life interrelates with the plot and themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Mr. Antolini

Mr. Antolini is Holden Caulfield's former English teacher at the Elkton Hills School, now an instructor at New York University. He is a clever, sympathetic, friendly, likable, young teacher who is one of the few adults Holden Caulfield respects. Mr. Antolini is the adult who is willing to both come closest to reach Holden Caulfield and to engage with him in order not to let Holden Caulfield commit self-destructive impulses with any of his psychological tricks. Mr. Antolini manages to avoid alienating Holden Caulfield and he is not a hypocrite. Holden does not label him a "phony" because he does not behave conventionally and insincerely.

Mr. Antolini does not speak to Holden Caulfield in the persona of a teacher or an authority figure, as Mr. Spencer, who tries unsuccessfully to motivate Holden Caulfield to "play by the rules" and to take more responsibility for himself and his academic commitments, does. Mr. Antolini is simply concerned to warn Holden Caulfield that Holden Caulfield is headed for a "terrible fall" and tells



him that he envisions Holden Caulfield dying nobly for an unworthy cause.

Mr. Antolini welcomes Holden Caulfield with open arms and hints at no objection to Holden Caulfield's calling him in the middle of the night or Holden Caulfield's being drunk or smoking. Instead, by opening his door to Holden Caulfield on the spur of the moment, Mr. Antolini shows no reservations about exposing his private self, with his messy apartment, his older wife with her hair in curlers, and his own heavy drinking. That is why Holden Caulfield really and greatly admires Mr. Antolini; what Holden Caulfield admires most about Mr. Antolini is his sincerity and compassion. Mr. Antolini realizes that Holden is different from other students, so his advice to Holden Caulfield about why he should apply himself to his studies is so unconventional. He represents education not as a path of conformity but as a means for Holden Caulfield to advance his unique inner voice and to find the ideas that are most appropriate to him.

There is one case which reflects Holden Caulfield's pessimism. When Holden Caulfield awakens to find Mr. Antolini patting him on the head, he interprets it as a homosexual advance. However, it can be interpreted that Mr. Antolini may overstep a boundary in his display of concern and affection. And Holden Caulfield says afterward that this type of perverse advance has happened to him about twenty

times since he was a kid. Besides, there is little evidence to suggest that Mr. Antolini is making a sexual overture as Holden Caulfield thinks and hurriedly leaves the house, and much evidence that Holden Caulfield misinterprets his action. Holden Caulfield indicates in Chapter 19 that he is extremely nervous around possible homosexuals and that he worries about suddenly becoming one. It is because he has been thinking about sex constantly since leaving Pencey.

Holden Caulfield finally regrets his hasty judgment of Mr. Antolini, but this mistake seems very important to him because he is beginning to question his own practice of making snap judgments about people. Holden Caulfield realizes that even if Mr. Antolini is homosexual, he can't simply be dismissed as a "flit" since he has been kind and generous.

In summary, Mr. Antolini's point of view is not significantly different from Phoebe's point of view because it also reveals Holden Caulfield's characterization. Although Mr. Antolini never explicitly states that Holden Caulfield is antisocial, the readers can perceive his advice to Holden Caulfield about why he should apply himself to his studies which indirectly reveals Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life. From every facet of Mr. Antolini's point of view, it validates Holden Caulfield's characterization which interrelates with the plot and themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*.



Setting

The term "setting" refers to "the general locale and the historical time in which a story occurs (Delaney et al. 1, 2003)." Denis Delaney and others explain:

“some settings are relatively unimportant. They serve simply as a decorative backdrop helping the reader to visualize the action and adding authenticity to the story. Other settings are closely linked to the meaning of the work: the author focuses on elements of setting to create atmosphere or mood, or the setting plays a major role in shaping the characters’ identity and destiny. Some of the main functions of setting are :

a. Setting as a mirror

The setting may reflect a prevailing mood or reinforce the emotions felt by a character; barren landscapes may mirror despair and desperation; stormy weather may provide a suitable backdrop for emotional turmoil. However, the setting may also be ironic or comment on the characters’ state of mind or behaviour in an indirect way.

b. Setting as an antagonist

The setting of the story often shapes the characters’ identities and destinies – making people what they are. Someone growing up in an inner city slum is likely to have a different outlook on and approach to life than someone who has grown up in wide open rural spaces, in close contact with nature. Stories sometimes show us characters that are direct products of their environment, reflecting its moods and values. Often, however, stories depict characters who rebel against their restrictive settings and fight to break free of their stifling environment.

c. Setting as a way of revealing character

The manner in which a character perceives the setting may tell the reader more about the character and his or her state of mind than about the setting itself. When, for example, an urban landscape is described by a character as ‘desolate’ and ‘ominous’, the writer may be



telling us more about how the character is feeling rather than accurately describing the setting. The writer is using the outer world setting to give us an insight into the character's inner world.

d. Setting as a means of reinforcing theme

The setting may also reinforce and clarify the theme of a novel or short story. The physical setting in which the action takes place may symbolically represent the central ideas of the work. A solitary house in bleak, hostile surroundings may reinforce the theme of man's struggle against nature. Many modern novels take place in what are termed 'alien settings', where even the familiar seems unfamiliar. The characters are often exiles, tourists or expatriates, and the inhospitable setting reinforces the theme of loss of roots and loss of home which is common to much modern fiction.

Setting in time. The historical period, time of year and time of day are all important features of

the setting. The fact, for example, that most of a story's action takes place at night may create an atmosphere of mystery, violence or conspiracy. Authors often use the traditional associations with the seasons and the cycle of the day to create appropriate time settings for their work, for example spring – morning – youth.

Social setting. While the setting refers to the time and place in which the action occurs, the term social setting is used to indicate the social environment in which a story takes place. The social setting of a novel or story may be explicitly indicated by the author or it may be conveyed through the use of social or class markers, i.e., the way the characters talk, where and how they live, the clothes they wear, how they eat, and so on. Like the physical and temporal setting, the social setting may be relatively unimportant or it may play a determining role in a novel or story. In many novels characters are presented as products of



their social class, and many authors have explored the themes of conformity to or rebellion against the values and mores of specific social settings (Delaney et al. 1, 2003)".

Holden Caulfield's Pessimistic View of Life Is Direct Product of Social Setting

It is clearly evident that social setting in *The Catcher in the Rye* is as an antagonist which influences Holden Caulfield to be consumed with pessimistic view of life. He begins his story in Agerstown, Pennsylvania, at his former school, Pencey Prep and then recounts his adventures in Manhattan, New York City during a long weekend in either 1948 or 1949.

For the locale, Pencey Prep is the high school that Holden Caulfield has just been kicked out of. Although a few of the chapters take place here, in Holden Caulfield's view, this school is the same land of phonies as New York City. Holden Caulfield thinks that by switching location he can avoid the people and attitudes he detests. Conversely, his internally-generated isolation and alienation keep on going with him. It seems likely that there have no peaceful places for Holden Caulfield to shelter from the hypocritical world around him, even Mr. Antolini's swanky apartment, except his unoccupied brother's room where Holden Caulfield spends the short night in, the zoo

where he takes Phoebe to the carousel, and a sanatorium where he is hospitalized.

For the historical time, Holden Caulfield's story takes place only three days, from Saturday afternoon to Monday around 1 p.m. In Chapter Two, Holden Caulfield mentioned that he is seventeen now (as he is telling a listener his story) and was sixteen "last year around Christmas" when he left Pencey and bummed around the city for a while. In Chapter Five, when Holden Caulfield talks about Allie's baseball mitt, he says Allie died on July 18, 1946 when Allie was eleven and Holden Caulfield was thirteen. Consequently, the year of the December, his New York City escapades are either 1948 or 1949, depending on when Holden Caulfield's birthday falls or what the exact date is of his story-telling. It means that Holden Caulfield tells a listener his story in either 1949 or 1950.

From facets of social milieu, the significance of 1948, 1949, or 1950 is that of post-World War II. Holden Caulfield talks about the war and the effect it has had on his brother D.B. with a slightly detached air. He mentions the Atomic bomb, which the U.S. busted out in August of 1945, four to five years earlier than Holden Caulfield's narration. He mentions the movie star, who is hypocrite. He consistently detests the movie which is lousy. Both the movie stars and the movies are referred to "a range of films in the 1940s, which dealt with class conflict and



the effects of economic scarcity” (Halliwell. 2007), which undoubtedly is the social setting in Holden Caulfield’s story. According to Paul Levine and Harry Papasotiriou,;

“in the 1930s, motion pictures, along with radio, became the prime form of entertainment in America : more people went to the movies every week than attended church. As movies rose in popularity, the large film studios flourished. The motion picture industry became increasingly a vertical monopoly, with large studios controlling the production, distribution and exhibition of films. In order to fill the expanding theater chains they owned, the studios transformed the system of film production. The older method of individual film-making was replaced by a new industrial system where movies were manufactured by an army of workers using mass production techniques. Soon the larger studios were producing one picture a week and Hollywood was turning out one picture every day. At the end of World

War II, the film industry was at its zenith. The film historian Robert Sklar says: In 1946, the first full peacetime year, American movies attained the highest level of popular appeal in their half-century of existence. Total weekly attendance climbed to nearly three-fourths of their ‘potential audience’ – that is, the movie industry’s estimate of all the people in the country capable of making their way to a box office, leaving out the very young and very old, the ill, those confined to institutions, and others without access to movie theaters. Moreover, the rich European markets, which had accounted for almost 40 percent of Hollywood’s earnings before the war, now reopened with sensational results. For instance, Italy imported more than 1200 Hollywood movies between 1946 and 1948, almost twice as many films as were actually produced in those years. But there were clouds on the Hollywood horizon. In October 1945, the Justice Department reopened its anti-trust suit against the large studios for their



monopoly of the production, distribution and exhibition of films. In 1949, the Justice Department won its case and the studios were dismantled. By 1948, Britain, France and Italy imposed quotas on the importation of American films in order to encourage their own domestic production. Meanwhile, American attendance began to fall after 1946 as the suburban building boom and the new baby boom changed American recreational habits. Soon Hollywood began to feel the heat of a new competitor breathing down its neck: television (Levine and Pappasotiriou, 2005)."

Additionally, the social setting in Holden Caulfield's story explicitly reveals that Holden Caulfield is getting at some of the general feelings of isolation and disillusionment of his generation as portrayed in Chapter Sixteen which indicates that although Holden can himself be a snob because he seems to belong to the middle class, he detests social pretension as manifested by the Lunts (Alfred Lunt and Joan Fontanne, considered the prominent couple in Broadway theater) and Laurence Olivier. Like so many other things, he dislikes both film and theater

because they are inherently phony and, in the case of Broadway theater, validate others' notions of their own sophistication.

Holden Caulfield's red hunting hat can be interpreted as a social setting as well. He often wears this hat when he feels depressed. It 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 Caulfield's struggle with a changing mass society – it is the kind of goofy accessory that a proper adult would not wear. He also may be rebelling against the growing conformism and consumerism of America as depicted in Chapter Ten which surfaces that the three women in the Lavender Room are significant examples of Holden Caulfield's derision. Holden Caulfield finds Bernice's insistence on propriety laughable, and dismisses her and her companions' tourist activities. For Holden Caulfield, their actions are trite, simplistic, and meaningless, while they have a purpose and a plan.

In summary, it is clearly evident that the general locale and the historical time in which Holden Caulfield's story occurs reflect Holden Caulfield's antisocial behaviour. However, social setting in *The Catcher in the Rye* certifies that it has immense influence over Holden Caulfield who is consumed with pessimistic view of life which interrelates with the plot and themes of the story.



Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life is structured through the disillusionment plot and the central themes, which focus often on phoniness, alienation and meltdown, as well as characterization and setting. All these narrative techniques verify, therefore, that the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s as reflected in *The Catcher in the Rye* emanated from the construction of the representation influenced by narrative techniques.

The Representation of J.D. Salinger's Views in The Catcher in the Rye

According to Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's explanation of the real author asserted in her Narrative Fiction, therefore, it can verify that Holden Caulfield's pessimistic view of life in *The Catcher in the Rye* is evidently the representation of J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s. They are enumerated as follows: phoniness, alienation and meltdown. They are consistent with Richard Lacayo and Brinda Adhikari's explanation of part of experiences of J.D. Salinger's youth. It asserts:

"Many parallels exist between Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of *The Catcher in the Rye*, and J. D. Salinger: both grew up in upper class New York, both flunked out of prep schools, and

so on. It's no surprise, then, that Salinger's experience in World War II should cast a shadow over Holden's opinions and experiences in *The Catcher in the Rye*. World War II robbed millions of young men and women of their youthful innocence. Salinger himself witnessed the slaughter of thousands at Normandy, one of the war's bloodiest battles. In *Catcher* we see the impact of Salinger's World War II experience in Holden's mistrusting, cynical view of adult society. Holden views growing up as a slow surrender to the "phony" responsibilities of adult life, such as getting a job, serving in the military, and maintaining intimate relationships. World War I was supposedly "the war to end all wars"; World War II proved that this claim was as hollow as the "phony" ideas adult characters impose on Holden throughout *The Catcher in the Rye* (Litcharts, 2011)."

And they are also consistent with Warren French's opinion which asserts:



"J. D. Salinger has provided the reader with a controversial look at society which is greatly enhanced by the integration of his own life experiences, dialect and religious philosophies into his stories (French)." In addition, in a 1953 interview with a high-school newspaper, Salinger admitted that the novel was "sort of" autobiographical, explaining that "My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book ... [I]t was a great relief telling people about it (Wikipedia, 2011)."

ข้อสรุป

According to Stuart Hall, the production of meaning through language is representation (Hall, 1997). Therefore, as question (I) asks how the production of meaning through language in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is constructed, it is found that representation in this novel is constructed of narrative techniques which are the disillusionment plot and the central themes, as well as characterization and setting. And all these narrative techniques are relevant to the protagonist's pessimistic view of life which focuses often on phoniness, alienation and meltdown.

To answer question (II) asking what J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s are, it must necessarily focus on major changes in American society in the 1940s which impact on J.D. Salinger's views which are

transmitted to Holden's behaviour. Therefore, J.D. Salinger's experiences in his youth evidently make J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s be the same antisocial perspectives as Holden Caulfield's. Consequently, J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s are phoniness, alienation and meltdown.

The last question asks how the relationship between the representation and J.D. Salinger's views is. All things considered, it is theoretically possible for the relationship to be organized by two systems of representation. According to Stuart Hall, "two systems of representation consist in conceptual maps and signs. We can understand or interpret the world and are able to communicate because of the conceptual maps which are concepts organized, arranged and classified into complex relations with one another (Hall, 1997)." Therefore, J.D. Salinger's views on changes in American society in the 1940s depend on Holden Caulfield's antisocial perspectives which are phoniness, alienation and meltdown. And then the concepts of phoniness, alienation and meltdown share their meanings through signs or language which involve in the overall process of constructing meaning. As a result of an interrelationship between conceptual maps and signs, the concepts of phoniness, alienation and meltdown are correspondingly constructed of narrative techniques which are literary language.



The *Catcher in the Rye* is narrated by Holden Caulfield who is currently recuperating from some illness or breakdown in psychiatric care. He recalls what happened to him just before the previous Christmas. Throughout his story, in contrast to all adults who are perceived as being riddled with flaws and phoniness, Holden Caulfield recognizes that children are pure, gentle, innocent, and perfect. The characters Holden Caulfield speaks most fondly about in his story are all children: Allie, Phoebe, and the poor boy he hears singing the song about the "catcher in the rye." The only role that Holden Caulfield envisions for himself in life is to be the catcher to catch children before they fall off a cliff. Readers can interpret the meaning of the catcher which means that Holden Caulfield wishes to save himself and other children from having to one day grow up. In addition, according to Pamela Hunt Steinle, *The Catcher in the Rye* embraces 237 goddams, 58 bastards, 31 Chrissakes, and 1 fart (Steinle, 2000). And according to Richard Lacayo and Brinda Adhikari in LitChart.com, "Many critics dismissed the book as trash due to its healthy helping of four-letter words and sexual situations, and even today *Catcher in the Rye* has been banned in school districts in Washington, Ohio, Florida and Michigan (LitChart, 2011)." From that noteworthy information, consequently, in this novel, the question is what happens to a dichotomy between the profanity and four-letter words and the protection of childhood and growing up. In

the important aspect of this acclaimed novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* should, therefore, be examined in terms of semiology and signification.

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