Catcher In The Rye-Reasons Against Teaching It

The Catcher In The Rye, by J.D. Salinger, is one of the most controversial novels of the twentieth century, and one of the most frequently challenged and banned novels in American schools. Despite its status as a seminal coming of age story, many authority figures feel it deals with themes too advanced for adolescents to process.

Despite what parents may want to think, adolescents are on the cusp of adulthood and are often experimenting with and exploring elements of life that are considered adult in nature. Holden Caulfield’s thoughts and drives reflect this. Holden worries, even obsesses about sexuality and the opposite gender. This is not abnormal for a teenage boy, and to pretend otherwise is foolish, but it is beyond the comfort level of many parents.

Holden uses language that society as a whole deems obscene and offensive extensively throughout the novel. Once again, this is not a strange occurrence amongst adolescent males, but it also pushes the envelope of acceptability.

Holden also engages in extensive use of alcohol and tobacco products; while the novel in no way glorifies this, our society does try to minimize the exposure of our youth to alcohol and tobacco. While cigarettes were far less frowned upon in the 1950’s, in the current era, we know much more about the ill effects tobacco has on public health, and the idea of anyone that can possibly be a role model for teenagers engaging in tobacco use makes many uncomfortable.

Also, there is a question as to whether Holden Caulfield is still relevant to modern teenagers. Can today’s digitally connected adolescents, always connected to their social network and the world around them, relate to Holden, fumbling his way through phone booths and social contacts, alone in a city? While I believe that today’s teenagers can understand Holden’s isolation now more than ever before, the feeling of being alone in a crowd, some believe the opposite and publicly argue whether the book is still relevant in today’s high school classroom.