

Name _____



Protecting Innocence

Holden Caulfield cared deeply about protecting innocence, especially when it came to children. For him, kids represented honesty and purity in a world that he thought was full of “phonies.” One of the most important relationships in his life was with his younger sister, Phoebe. Holden loved Phoebe because she was smart, kind, and never tried to act like someone she wasn’t. She was everything that Holden admired about childhood.

Holden would do anything to protect children from losing their innocence. He imagined himself standing in a field of rye, saving kids who were about to fall off a cliff. To Holden, the cliff symbolized growing up and entering adulthood—a place he believed was full of dishonesty and disappointment. His dream of being “the catcher in the rye” showed just how much he wanted to shield children from the harsh realities of life.

Phoebe often helped Holden see things more clearly. When Holden was feeling lost and ready to give up, Phoebe reminded him that not everything in the world was bad. Her honesty and love gave Holden hope, even when he felt the most alone. For example, when Holden told Phoebe he wanted to run away and escape from everything, she didn’t just agree with him. Instead, she asked him real questions, like where he would go and what he would do. Her words made Holden realize that running away wouldn’t fix anything.

Even though Holden wanted to protect children from growing up, he started to understand that growing up is part of life. Watching Phoebe ride the carousel was a turning point for him. He saw her laughing and enjoying herself, and in that moment, he felt happy, too. He realized that while he couldn’t stop Phoebe or any other child from growing up, he could still love and support them as they faced the world.

Holden’s relationship with Phoebe shows how much he valued innocence and honesty. She helped him see that life, even with all its challenges, could still have good moments. Through her, Holden began to understand that protecting innocence didn’t mean stopping change—it meant being there for the people he loved as they grew.