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# ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

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## Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná práce se bude věnovat problematice dospívání a odcizení v literatuře pro mládež (YA). V úvodu práce studentka s využitím relevantních odborných zdrojů definuje pojem odcizení a stručně pojedná o tzv. YA literatuře. Dále představí zvolená díla, zasadí je do uvedeného literárního kontextu a jejich výběr zdůvodní. Jádrem práce pak bude analýza Salingerova románu *Catcher in the Rye* a *Bog Child* od S. Dowd(ové), v níž se studentka zaměří na téma odcizení a jeho literární obraz. Svá tvrzení bude ilustrovat ukázkami z primárních textů a kritických zdrojů k nim. Obě díla z hlediska přístupu k tématu odcizení závěrem porovná.

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- Bloom, Harold. *The Catcher in the Rye: J.D. Salinger*. Chelsea House, 2009.
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## **Annotation**

This bachelor's thesis examines the theme of alienation in Young Adult literature through the works *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*. The theoretical section defines terms alienation and Young Adult literature, while the historical context explores Post-war America and the Hunger Strikes, providing context for the selected works. The analytical section presents a literary analysis of both novels and compares them.

## **Keywords**

Alienation, Young Adult Literature, adolescent, identity, estrangement

## **Název**

Odcizení v literatuře pro mladé dospělé

## **Anotace**

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá téma odcizení v literatuře pro mladé dospělé na příkladu děl *Kdo chytá v žitě* a *Bog Child*. Teoretická část definuje pojmy odcizení a literaturu pro mladé dospělé, zatímco historický kontext se zaměřuje na poválečnou Ameriku a hladové stávky, které poskytují pozadí pro vybraná díla. Analytická část představuje literární analýzu obou románů a porovnává je.

## **Klíčová slova**

Odcizení, literatura pro mládež, adolescence, identita, odloučení

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## Introduction

This thesis explores the theme of alienation in Young Adult Literature through an analysis of selected works, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*. The theoretical chapters define the terms young adult literature and alienation for the purposes of this thesis, and later chapters focus on the contexts of the novels.

The first chapter introduces the genre of Young Adult Literature, examining its recent evolution and its unique approach to addressing the concerns and experiences of adolescent readers. The second chapter delves into the concept of alienation, analysing its emotional, social, and existential forms, with a focus on those relevant to this thesis. It also explores how alienation has become a central theme in Young Adult Literature.

Chapter three provides historical context for the alienation experienced by the protagonists in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, examining how the societal and economic changes and disillusionment following World War II influenced both the characters' sense of self and the narratives of alienation in American YA literature. Chapter four focuses on the hunger strikes in Northern Ireland, particularly in the 1980s, setting the stage for understanding Fergus's alienation in Siobhan Dowd's *Bog Child*, as well as the broader political and social unrest affecting young people during the conflict.

The analytical section of the thesis begins with chapter five, which provides an in-depth analysis of alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye*, focusing on the life of Holden Caulfield, particularly during the three days described in the novel. Chapter six shifts focus to *Bog Child*, analysing the main character Fergus's alienation, examining his distinct causes for isolation. These chapters explore how Holden and Fergus experience alienation in different ways, shaped by their unique environments, personal struggles, and relationships.

The final chapter offers a comparative analysis of alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*, contrasting Holden's disillusionment in post-war America with Fergus's struggles in politically unstable Northern Ireland during the Troubles. This comparison highlights both universal and context-specific elements of alienation in YA literature, noting their similarities and differences. Furthermore, it examines how alienation is not only shaped by external environmental factors but also by the protagonists' developmental stage and personal issues, aiming to reveal the complex relationship between societal pressures and individual growth.

Through the chapters, the thesis aims to explore the theme of alienation in Young Adult literature, examining how it develops and behaves within the selected works. It seeks to highlight the various factors that contribute to alienation, shaped by both personal and societal influences. It emphasizes the importance of examining each instance of alienation individually, with the theoretical framework providing the necessary context for these explorations. By analysing these key texts, the study aims to create a comprehensive picture of how YA literature offers a platform for young readers to reflect on and understand their own feelings of isolation and disconnection, while relating these experiences to broader societal and personal challenges.

## 1. Young Adult Literature

The first chapter will focus on young adult literature, tracing its history and development as a distinct genre. It will explore what defines young adult literature and how it has evolved to suit the readers of the time.

Our society only made a distinction between two groups of people until the 1900: adults and children. In times before World War II, the term young adult, the label of an age group discussed in this chapter, was hardly ever used. At the time of the beginning use of the word teenager, the young adult was a term with synonymous usage. According to Keri Jo Carroll, the term “young adult” started to be officially used for the period of transitioning out of adolescence to adulthood, the term being the middle ground between the terms teenager and adult. The formation of love relationships and the struggle between intimacy and isolation is a significant characteristic of young adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Roberta Seelinger Trites argues that the young adult literature as a separate genre was in fact defined in the two decades following the Second World War and by the end of the 1960s became a distinct literary genre.<sup>2</sup>

Wei-Kong Too states that works written in the young adult category are understood as works written for readers approximately around the ages of twelve to twenty.<sup>3</sup> Authors of YA books frequently claim that the reason they write such books is for the possibility of readers identifying with the main characters and the challenges they stumble upon. In this way, Janet Alsup claims, readers can better understand and learn more about themselves.<sup>4</sup> Great attractions in the works of young adult literature are, according to Too, the reflection of the reality in the lives of young adults, not portraying false optimism and also not being didactic in nature.<sup>5</sup>

To this day, young adult literature continues to play a crucial role in shaping how young readers understand themselves and the world around them. Through relatable characters and realistic portrayals of personal growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Keri Jo Carroll, “The Crossover Phenomenon in Young Adult Literature” (Undergraduate thesis, Eastern Illinois University, 2012), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 7-10.

<sup>3</sup> Wei-Keong Too. “Young Adult Literature: An Alternative Genre in the Classroom Reading List,” *The English Teacher* 35, no.1 (December 2006): 42.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Alsup, “Introduction: Identification, Actualization, or Education: Why Read YAL?,” *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms* 1, 48 (2010): 9.

<sup>5</sup> Too, “Young Adult Literature,” 42.

## 2. Alienation

When attempting to define any term, it is important to consider it from as many perspectives as possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The same applies in the case of defining the term alienation. There is no single definition that can precisely capture what exactly alienation means in a way that would be universally accepted. Moreover, there are numerous diverse ways of approaching this topic in different situations, concerning different people. That is why the focus of this chapter will be limited solely to the aspects of this comprehensive concept that are most relevant to the aim of this thesis.

First of all, it is necessary to explore how the term can be understood in general terms. As cited by anthropologist Igor S. Kon, one of the descriptions of alienation could be that the people “who reject what they see as the dominant values, roles and institutions of their society”<sup>6</sup> which could also be explained as “the conflict between the social role given to the individual and his own value orientations”.<sup>7</sup> The individuals struggle to align their personal values with the demands of society.

Sociologist Eldon L. Wegner suggests that alienation can be found in circumstances of a clash between the person’s characteristics and the social characteristic they are participating in. In such situations, the individual may have a choice to withdraw from the unsatisfactory relationships or organisations and possibly join others. The conditions are probably one of two: either participation is forced, or withdrawing would be challenging, or individuals are not chosen based on personal traits such as in education, employment, family, and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

Focusing on the sources of alienation, Kon observes in his work that the way various authors perceive the sources are very diverse. The main sources are stated to be certain definite social factors, psychological factors, overall conditions of human existence, and so on. Experts differ not only in their opinions but also in their approaches to the problem.<sup>9</sup>

Overlooking any specific social context of the alienated individuals, the concept could be reduced into measurable parameters. Wegner states that according to Seeman: “Alienation is not a single phenomenon, but refers to the experiences of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement.”<sup>10</sup> This perception is mentioned in

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<sup>6</sup> Igor S. Kon, “The Concept Of Alienation In Modern Sociology.” *Social Research* 34, no. 3 (1967): 510.

<sup>7</sup> Kon, “The Concept Of Alienation.” 10.

<sup>8</sup> Eldon L. Wegner, “The Concept of Alienation: A Critique and Some Suggestions for a Context Specific Approach.” *Pacific Sociological Review* 18, no. 2 (1975): 183.

<sup>9</sup> Kon, “The Concept Of Alienation” 512.

<sup>10</sup> Wegner, “The Concept of Alienation” 184.

several other works and thus seems to be generally viewed as applicable in the studies of the concept.

In his work, Wegner also closely examines the possible roots of alienation. It may not be the case that the feeling of unhappiness roots from a single cause; a person can be dissatisfied with one specific aspect of life while simultaneously finding comfort in others. However, a different person in a comparable situation may experience it in a shockingly different manner. Therefore, alienation should be examined within its specific social context rather than perceived as a mere feeling of dissatisfaction.<sup>11</sup> The author also stresses that not only may the reasons for alienation vary across different social situations, but individuals may experience alienation in different ways, even within the same social context. In this way, it is emphasised to approach every situation individually.<sup>12</sup>

Several sociologists identify recurring general causes for alienation, one being low status. While this reason may seem plausible, it cannot be considered the ultimate or sufficient cause for explaining all instances of alienation. Not all persons of low status experience alienation, meaning it must be viewed with other attributes of the person. Middle-class persons experience such a feeling as well, often due to unrealistic success goals. Alienation from parents, the university, and society as a whole is most common among upper-middle-class youth. Cynicism and dissatisfaction with institutions are evident across nearly every social role, including professors, students, parents and many others.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that the five causes of alienation apply to all social contexts.

One of the possible causes for alienation can be encoded in the age of the individual. Mary Hanemann Lystad argues that the main core of a typical nuclear family is the parents and young children. As the remaining groups of elderly and college-aged youths move away from the households, and neither the young nor old hold distinct roles, a sense of estrangement from the rest may occur. Among the youth, alienation from specific groups can be observed, and two key examples can be highlighted. First, they usually become alienated from their families. Second, in some cases, alienation from school occurs, resulting in academic failure and quitting school.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Wegner "The Concept of Alienation" 182-184.

<sup>12</sup> Wegner "The Concept of Alienation" 187.

<sup>13</sup> Wegner "The Concept of Alienation" 183-184.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Hanemann Lystad. "Social Alienation: A Review of Current Literature." *The Sociological Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1972): 97-98.

Alienation is a complex issue with different causes and effects, influenced by social, psychological, and personal factors. Its impact varies depending on the individual and their social situation, so it is crucial to look at each case separately. Alienation can take many forms, such as a disconnect from family, institutions, or society. It often arises from the conflict between a person's values and the roles that society assigns to them. To fully understand it, it is important to consider the specific social context in which alienation occurs.

### 3. Post-war America

This chapter will examine post-war America, the historical context for *The Catcher in the Rye*. It will explore the social, economic, and cultural shifts that occurred following World War II, including the rise of new social dynamics, the impact of the Cold War and other. The chapter will mention key changes, such as the evolving roles of women, the rise of the teenage subculture, and the growing tensions of the Red Scare, all of which significantly influenced American society and culture during this period.

Even before the war, America went through very difficult times called the Great Depression, which brought poverty to many people. When the war came, America did not want to get involved at first, nevertheless, it did not last long, for the Pearl Harbor attack forced America to participate in the terrible Second World War. With the war times, shortages came, especially of cars and certain luxuries, however, for most Americans not engaged in the fighting, owing to the rising wages, better food production and manufacturing the standard of living improved considerably. Suddenly, there was no shortage of jobs, on the contrary, there was a shortage of people to do all the necessary work, the war managed to get the country out of the Depression.

With men leaving for war, women had to fill their places and start working, which was quite a change from the previous opinions in society that married women should not be working outside the home. When the men returned after the war, the women were expected to leave their jobs once again and were encouraged to return to the home. As many of them enjoyed making money and having a role outside the family, they desired to continue with their employment.

A new devastating weapon was invented, and that is the atomic bomb. As it later turned out, this invention was devastating not only for Japan and its cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were bombed by the USA and lost thousands of lives but was quite a threat to America and the whole world. With that, the Cold War came, an age of fear of nuclear war.

After the war, a number of countries faced terrible consequences, some of them being economic, devastation of land and the loss of a great number of lives, both military and civilian. The country's biggest rival in the post-war years was the Soviet Union. Suddenly, America was plagued by the fear of the spread of Communism and also of the Soviets developing and using atomic weapons, which later greatly shaped American culture, society and politics. Senator Joseph McCarthy is a significant politician in American history, being at the lead concerning

the war of ideas and ideologies, of psychology and propaganda.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Patrick Doherty states that with McCarthy's contribution, the fear of Communism grew into an anti-Communist hysteria, the Red Scare, which is often referred to as a witch hunt for its extent.<sup>16</sup>

Today's well-known term for a developmental period and a social phenomenon, teenager, was in fact starting to be recognised in the 1950s, as already mentioned in a previous chapter. These young people spent less time with their families and more with their peers, moreover, growth in the industry was caused by developing leisure products and services with teenagers specifically in mind, adapting to these facts. The young people's generation desired to differentiate themselves from the previous generations and the world they created, which meant that products from various industries had to be adjusted to their needs, part of those products were clothes, books, films and music. Nevertheless, the freedom of the young people was not well received by society, their lifestyle was seen as troublesome. Studies by social commentators on one side inclined to the pessimistic opinions, on the other side promoted understanding.

Following this development, a new subculture arose, the so-called Beat Generation. This group was antagonistic towards the consumerist culture and conformist tendency by their lifestyles and even literature. Their works of experimentalism became more and more popular at that time, frequently depicting taboo themes such as experiences with drugs and sex.<sup>17</sup>

Post-war America was a period of significant change, driven by economic growth, shifting social roles, and rising political tensions. These changes shaped the cultural landscape and influenced works like *The Catcher in the Rye*, reflecting the complexities of the era.

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah Graham, *JD Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye: A Routledge Study Guide* (Routledge, 2007), 9-11.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2003): 131.

<sup>17</sup> Graham, *JD Salinger's The Catcher*, 11-17.

#### 4. The Hunger Strikes

This chapter focuses on a part of The Troubles conflict, the hunger strikes in the 1980s. Dowd's *Bog Child* is set in these times of the struggle in the North Ireland town Drumleash, near the border with the Irish Republic.

The Trouble's hunger strikes were not the first nor the last of demonstrating through refusal of food. Hunger striking in general arose as the potential solution to problems in modern prisons, dealing with poor food quality, bullying, etc.<sup>18</sup> In the twentieth century, other groups protesting in such a fashion were The British suffragettes, prisoners on Robben Island and the focus of this chapter, the Irish republican prisoners in Belfast. All these groups are considered a part of a broader social movement to challenge and undermine the legitimacy of the state, a weapon of the powerless against the powerful.

In March 1981, one of the most known hunger strikes began in the Long Kesh Prison, later called Maze Prison. The prisoners participating were mostly nationalists or republicans. It started with ten republican prisoners led by IRA OC Bobby Sands, the prisoners refusing food one after another. In order for the death of starvation to occur after certain time periods and attract more long-term attention, their plan expected the prisoners to begin their strike not at once, but at a few days intervals. The goal of the strike was to achieve the IRA's five demands:

The strikers had five formal demands, which together would constitute the prisoners receiving a special or political status: 1. The right to wear their own clothes. 2. The right to abstain from prison work. 3. The right to free association. 4. The restoration of all lost remission as a result of the protest. 5. The right to educational and recreational facilities.<sup>19</sup>

They held the belief that as political prisoners, they should be granted certain rights as Prisoners of War and should not be treated as criminals. The strikers wanted to show their motives were not selfish and demonstrate it by giving up their lives.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ian Miller. "Experiencing Hunger Striking: Remembering the Maze Prison Hunger Strikes." *The Irish Review (Cork)*, no. 55 (2020): 23.

<sup>19</sup> As cited in: Amanda Machin. "Hunger Power: The Embodied Protest of the Political Hunger Strike." *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 8, no. 1 (May 2016): 163.

<sup>20</sup> Machin. "Hunger Power" 162.

However, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher refused their demands with her statement “Crime is crime is crime: it is not political”<sup>21</sup>. This conflict between the prisoners and Thatcher brought the attention of the media all over the world.

As Machin describes in his work, during the process of starvation, the body goes through several stages, which later end up in failure of the body, resulting in the individual’s death. In one of those stages, the body starts consuming itself, breaking down unnecessary protein such as eye muscles, as it has already consumed everything it could. Provided the individual is a healthy adult, and the estimated period of time left to live is estimated at 60 days.<sup>22</sup> Debates started on whether force-feeding is ethical as it is providing help in the form of food against the will of a patient. These methods were used in the United Kingdom earlier, however, due to various problems not used that frequently throughout the time.<sup>23</sup>

After a few months, the pressure from the families of the prisoners was so great that the strike ended in October 1981 without any of the demands being granted. It seems as if they did not succeed, but they gained a lot of local and worldwide attention, which has helped with increasing the number of recruits for Sinn Fein and the IRA.<sup>24</sup>

The 1980s hunger strikes during The Troubles became a powerful symbol of resistance, drawing attention to the political struggle of Irish republicans. While they did not achieve their goals, the strikes intensified global awareness and strengthened the support for the IRA and Sinn Féin, influencing the course of the conflict.

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<sup>21</sup> As cited in: Machin. “Hunger Power” 163.

<sup>22</sup> Machin. “Hunger Power” 160.

<sup>23</sup> Miller, “Experiencing Hunger Striking” 24–25.

<sup>24</sup> Machin. “Hunger Power”: 163–164.

## 5. Alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye*

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the story unfolds over three days following Holden Caulfield's expulsion from his latest prep school. At the age of sixteen, Holden struggles with deep feelings of alienation, which manifest in his disconnection from those around him. The novel, written by J.D. Salinger, is widely recognised for its exploration of alienation during the adolescent years, a theme that resonates deeply with young adult readers. It also examines the broader challenges adolescents face, such as the search for identity and the struggle to establish their place in society. Additionally, it has faced controversy and has often been banned or challenged for its candid treatment of topics such as identity, sexuality, and rebellion.

Holden often speaks of his parents in a distant and somewhat cold manner. He notes that they are wealthy, though he doesn't seem particularly concerned with or interested in the details. His parents want him to focus on his studies, worrying about him and his future, but it seems that he is not emotionally close to them. He describes their behaviour as often hysterical and overreactive, especially that of his mothers, yet despite this, he still seems to care about them. For example, he expresses a fear of them discovering his expulsion, possibly because he is afraid of disappointing them once again. Furthermore, Holden observes that his mother's health has deteriorated since the death of his brother, Allie, and as she is struggling, he is trying to be considerate of her. She, even after those years, is still deeply affected by Allie's death, unable to sleep at night and often smoking to cope with her grief.<sup>25</sup> He wants to delay the moment when his parents find out about his expulsion, preferring to keep it from them as long as possible. Although Holden frequently criticizes his parents for their flaws, it is clear that he still cares about them. This tendency to mention the mistakes of those around him is consistent with his overall worldview. Seemingly the only family member Holden talks about without any kind of dislike is his younger sister Phoebe, the main person he still maintains a strong and positive bond with. While Holden recalls positive memories with all of his siblings, his relationships with his brothers slowly diminished, as time and circumstances led to their emotional distance.

Holden's older brother D.B. is a writer, with whom he shares a quite positive relationship. D.B. is a former soldier and after the end of WWII, he experienced a loss of enthusiasm for life just as many other soldiers did.<sup>26</sup> During Holden's three-day journey he visits several places D.B. used to take him to. Since the older brother does not live at home and works in Hollywood, the brothers do not have many opportunities to meet. Holden loves the

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<sup>25</sup> Jerome David Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, (Harlow, England: Penguin Books, 2018), 116.

<sup>26</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 151.

idea that his brother is a writer, however, since D.B. started writing movies instead of short stories, the pride in his brother's work has faded:

He's got a lot of dough, now. He didn't use to. 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*. It was about this little kid that wouldn't let anybody look at his goldfish because he'd bought it with his own money. It killed me. Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me.<sup>27</sup>

As for many other subjects popular with ordinary people, Holden despises movies and Hollywood in particular.

Holden's younger brother, who was even closer to him, passed away from leukaemia and Holden has not recovered from his death yet. Similarly to his mother he still holds the great grief for over two years. After finding out about Allie's death, Holden impulsively shattered garage windows, resulting in a broken wrist and had to stay in a hospital for a certain period of time.<sup>28</sup> The aftermath of this incident was that he could not attend Allie's funeral and was not able to give a last farewell to him properly. Holden frequently remembers the moments he shared with Allie, sometimes even imagining different scenarios:

Boy, I felt so miserable. I felt so depressed, you can't imagine. What I did, I started talking, sort of out loud, to Allie. I do that sometimes when I get very depressed. I keep telling him to go home and get his bike and meet me in front of Bobby Fallon's house. Bobby Fallon used to live quite near us in Maine – this is, years ago. Anyway, what happened was, one day Bobby and I were going to Lake Sedebego on our bikes. We were going to take our lunches and all, and our BB guns – we were kids and all, and we thought we could shoot something with our BB guns. Anyway, Allie heard us talking about it, and he wanted to go, and I wouldn't let him. I told him he was a child. So once in a while, now, when I get very depressed, I keep saying to him 'Okay. Go home and get your bike and meet me in front of Bobby's house. Hurry up.'<sup>29</sup>

The need for his younger brother not only in his thoughts manifests in the fact that Holden takes with him Allie's baseball mitt, which bears poems written by Allie, as a reminder of their bond.

Holden's youngest sibling, Phoebe, is still a child, and he holds a deep affection for her. He views her as a symbol of purity and innocence, admiring her for these qualities. The bond between them is particularly strong, and during some of his most difficult moments, Holden thinks of her, he even visits her at home when he feels lost and lonely, uncertain of what to do. Many of Holden's fondest memories with Phoebe are shared with his siblings, and these

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<sup>27</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 1–2.

<sup>28</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 107.

recollections are often associated with happiness. Phoebe plays a crucial role in the narrative, ultimately serving as the one who helps bring resolution to Holden's emotional turmoil, becoming his saviour.

He admires children in general, not only Phoebe. Whenever he thinks or speaks about children, it is in a positive way, and they represent one of the few relationships in his life that feel genuine. In the moments he spends with Phoebe or other children, he does not feel lonely. Instead, he experiences a sense of connection, as though someone truly understands him. What he values most about children is their innocence. He likely envies them for their ability to live without worries, as their roles in life are clear and they are not yet burdened with the complexities of adulthood. He admires their open-mindedness and their relentless curiosity as they attempt to understand the world. Additionally, he is captivated by their boundless imagination, unrestrained by the limitations that adults face. A particularly tender moment in Holden's journey through New York occurs when he decides to find Phoebe at the park where she often goes skating. While there, he encounters a young girl and asks her if she knows where Phoebe is. The girl's and Holden's interaction marks a shift in his behaviour and emotions. His mood quickly becomes more positive compared to his usual interactions with adults. He is genuinely glad to converse with her and offers to help her with tying her skates. The park, filled with children, becomes one of the rare places where Holden can reconnect with his own childhood memories. He recalls the activities he enjoyed at that age and longs to return to those simpler years.

According to Chen Lingdi Holden's resistance to growing up is reflected in protecting children's innocence. Holden rejects the artificiality and cruelty of the adult world and deeply admires those who embody or protect innocence.<sup>30</sup> This theme is further explored during his visit to a museum, where he reflects on his childhood. He fondly remembers how the exhibits never changed, year after year, which gives him a sense of stability and comfort. He yearns for everything, especially children, to remain the same, untouched by the passage of time, and to preserve their innocence. Holden's fear of growing up is evident in his attachment to the museum's permanence.

The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, and that Eskimo would still be just finished catching those two fish, the birds would still be on their way south, the deers would still be drinking out of that water hole, with their pretty antlers

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<sup>30</sup> Lingdi Chen, "An Analysis of the Adolescent Problems in *The Catcher in the Rye*." *Asian Social* 5, no. 5 (2009), 143–46.

and their pretty, skinny legs, and that squaw with the naked bosom would still be weaving that same blanket. Nobody'd be different. The only thing that would be different would be you.<sup>31</sup>

His thoughts reveal his longing for stability and his desire for both himself and the children around him to never grow up or change, just as the exhibits in the museum remain frozen in time.

Holden himself is still caught in a transitional phase, not fully a child but also not yet an adult. The adult world feels foreign and confusing to him, yet he is too old to be considered a child. Lisa Privitera highlights a significant moment in the novel when Holden meets Carl Luce, a person he dislikes but still seeks out for companionship, illustrating his loneliness. During their conversation, Carl becomes increasingly irritated with Holden, telling him, "When in hell are you going to grow up"<sup>32</sup>, "Your mind is immature"<sup>33</sup> and similar exclamations, implying that Holden may need professional help, such as psychoanalysis.<sup>34</sup> This encounter highlights Holden's internal struggle as he resists the inevitable process of growing up, which he finds unsettling and unnatural.

Robert C. Evans analyses *The Catcher in the Rye* as a critique of capitalist materialism in the post-World War II era, focusing on the alienation caused by a class-driven society. According to Evans, one of the key factors behind Holden Caulfield's alienation is the society he lives in. While Holden may not fully understand these issues, he symbolizes the negative effects of greed, competition, and materialism. The novel highlights the shallowness and self-centeredness of individuals, emphasizing the alienation that arises in a materialistic, competitive society.<sup>35</sup> Holden's experience with his previous roommate's inexpensive suitcases reflects the real-life struggles of materialism and class differences.

For a while when I was at Elkton Hills, I roomed with this boy, Dick Slagle, that had these very inexpensive suitcases. He used to keep them under the bed, instead of on the rack, so that nobody'd see them standing next to mine. It depressed holy hell out of me, and I kept wanting to throw mine out or something, or even trade with him. [...] What I did, I finally put my suitcases under my bed, instead of on the rack, so that old Slagle wouldn't get a goddam inferiority complex about it.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 131.

<sup>32</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 157.

<sup>33</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 159.

<sup>34</sup> Privitera, Lisa. "Holden's Irony in Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye*." *The Explicator* 66, no. 4 (Summer, 2008): 205.

<sup>35</sup> Robert C. Evans. "Alienation, materialism, and religion in JD Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*". *Bloom's Literary Themes: Alienation*, (2009), 42-43.

<sup>36</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 117.

His discomfort highlights how societal values around wealth and status can create feelings of alienation and inadequacy.

Holden's encounter with the nuns represents a rare moment of connection with the adult world. He is struck by their innocence and lack of materialism, noting their modesty in carrying cheap suitcases and having a simple breakfast, as well as their refusal to accept money for themselves. He donates to them, seeing it as a good cause, but the interaction still leaves him not completely relaxed.

I said I'd enjoyed talking to them a lot, too. I meant it, too. I'd have enjoyed it even more though, I think, if I hadn't been sort of afraid, the whole time I was talking to them, that they'd all of a sudden try to find out if I was a Catholic. Catholics are always trying to find out if you're a Catholic.<sup>37</sup>

This statement reveals his underlying fear that the nuns would judge him differently or reject him if they discovered that he is not Catholic. His discomfort stems from a fear of rejection, rooted in a past experience at a previous school.

The thing was, you could tell by the way he asked me that he was trying to find out if I was a Catholic. He really was. Not that he was prejudiced or anything, but he just wanted to know. He was enjoying the conversation about tennis and all, but you could tell he would've enjoyed it more if I was a Catholic and all.<sup>38</sup>

The boy in question attempts to determine Holden's religious background, subtly signalling a desire for shared identity. When Holden does not share this connection, he feels further estranged. This interaction highlights Holden's persistent sense of alienation and his struggle to find belonging, even in seemingly innocent encounters.

He struggles to fit into the role of a student and expresses a strong dislike for the expectations of school. His journey begins with his failure at yet another school, not in just one subject, but in nearly all of them except English. This academic failure confuses those around him, as they cannot understand the reasons behind it. He, however, shows little concern and does not attempt to address the issue, displaying a lack of motivation. His detachment is further intensified by the success of his brothers. D.B. is highly successful, with people constantly asking about him and praising his accomplishments. He also reflects on his younger brother Allie, who was successful in school and had a bright future before his untimely death. Despite being frequently compared to his brothers, he does not make any effort to improve his own

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<sup>37</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 121.

<sup>38</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 122.

situation. Instead, he feels increasingly alienated and overlooked, as the achievements of D.B. and the memory of Allie continue to overshadow his own.

Throughout the novel, Holden consistently expresses negative opinions about nearly everything he encounters. He often criticizes people, institutions, and societal norms, reflecting his deep sense of disillusionment. A recurring term in his narrative is “phony”, which he uses to describe anything he perceives as inauthentic, superficial, or hypocritical. This frequent use of the word highlights Holden’s intense dissatisfaction with the world around him and his struggle to find authenticity in a society he views as fake. His aversion to popular culture further isolates him, as he feels disconnected from the people around him, exemplifying his outsider status and resistance to conforming to mainstream societal expectations. Holden frequently resorts to sarcasm, telling people what he believes they want to hear, yet immediately revealing to the reader that his true opinions are often quite the opposite. This behaviour underscores his internal conflict and highlights the gap between his disillusioned perspective and the social world he inhabits.

The hunting hat serves as a symbol of Holden's desire for individuality, making him stand out from those around him and feel unique. However, he often removes it when he is concerned about appearing odd or drawing attention to himself. He frequently mentions the hat, particularly noting its distinctiveness, with the flaps down. The hat’s red colour holds personal significance for Holden, as it reminds him of the red hair of his younger sister Phoebe and his late brother Allie, almost the only people he speaks of with genuine fondness. Through the hat, Holden expresses his desire to be different, yet it also serves as a reminder of his connection to the few individuals he truly cares about.

Holden is deeply afraid of intimacy, and this fear leads him to push others away through his actions. He struggles to connect with others in a natural and meaningful way. His thoughts frequently return to Jane Gallagher, and one of his most cherished memories is of the time they played checkers, where she would consistently leave her kings in the back row. Holden remembers her with a sense of innocence, viewing this simple, childlike act as a symbol of her purity. This memory also triggers Holden’s protective instincts toward her. When he observes Holden's need to protect Jane when he comforts her after a troubling encounter with her stepfather, illustrating his deep concern for her well-being, worrying for her safety and possible sexual advances from the drunken stepfather. The same fear arises when he learns about her

date with his roommate, Stradlater.<sup>39</sup> While traveling through New York he frequently thinks about Jane, wondering whether to call her. Despite his strong feelings for her and the cherished memories he holds, Holden avoids meeting Jane, fearing that she may not remember him with the same affection. This fear allows him to protect his emotions from potential disappointment. Instead, he decides to meet Sally, hoping that their connection will return to the way it once was. However, his time with Sally fails to fulfil his expectations. Throughout their meeting, Holden becomes increasingly irritated with her, and even before she arrives, his pessimism takes over, leading him to predict that she will be late. At one point, Holden impulsively tells Sally that he loves her, despite the awareness that he doesn't truly feel that way, yet he becomes swept up in the moment. Another attempt at seeking intimacy occurs when Holden, in a moment of desperation, accepts the offer of a prostitute. However, he later desires only conversation, and later the whole situation goes terribly wrong. Eventually, he is forced into paying more than the agreed-upon amount and also beaten up by a pimp.

Holden distances himself from everyone around him. Even Stradlater, who could be considered a friend, is someone with whom he cannot get along. Their relationship deteriorates to the point where Holden becomes angry and wants to fight. He leaves school and does not say goodbye to any of his friends. Any new connections he attempts to form with strangers are insincere, with the exceptions being his interactions with children and nuns. While he makes efforts to engage with people, such as women in bars, fellow passengers on the train, or taxi drivers, his interactions lack genuineness. He dislikes everyone's opinions and behaviour, viewing the world as a society filled with phonies, to which he feels alienated. He frequently distances himself subconsciously, longing for connection while simultaneously pushing others away.

Holden, like many young people, is trying to find his place in society. He despises who he is and creates a different image of himself in his mind. When meeting new people, he often pretends to be someone completely different, hoping to evoke emotions like pity or admiration. He wants to be seen as better than he thinks he is, believing that if he were honest, people would react negatively. This habit of using fake names and telling false stories appears throughout the novel, reflecting his difficulty with being genuine.

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<sup>39</sup> Chen, "An Analysis" 143–46.

Holden also pretends for his own sake, creating scenarios in his mind where he plays different roles. For example, he imagines being seriously injured, pretending that Maurice shot him instead of just beating him up.

But I'm crazy. I swear to God I am. About halfway to the bathroom, I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts. Old Maurice had plugged me. Now I was on the way to the bathroom to get a good shot of bourbon or something to steady my nerves and help me really go into action.<sup>40</sup>

When he cannot physically act out these imagined scenarios, he plays them out mentally, even picturing himself shooting Maurice like a character in an action movie. Though Holden says he dislikes movies, he often acts out the dramatic, heroic scenes he claims to despise, especially when dealing with his own feelings of shame and cowardice, such as when he pays for a prostitute and then gets beaten up. He imagines himself as a hero, even though readers sometimes perceive him as an anti-hero in the novel. This contradiction shows Holden's struggle with his identity and his desire to escape from his problems. He himself realises his tendency to lie, admitting: "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It's awful. If I'm on my way to the store to buy a magazine, even, and somebody asks me where I'm going, I'm liable to say I'm going to the opera. It's terrible."<sup>41</sup> Through these lies, he tries to create a version of himself that is more acceptable, as he searches for a role and identity that would fit him.

Privitera suggests that Holden may even enjoy the beatings from both Stradlater and Maurice and feels like he deserves them. This interpretation implies that Holden views himself as unworthy of being part of society, believing he is too different to fit in.<sup>42</sup> He thinks that he is not as exceptional as he often portrays himself to be and, consequently, feels as though he deserves the punishment.

A recurring question in Holden's mind during his time in New York is where the ducks in Central Park go when the lake freezes. He discusses this question with several people, including taxi drivers, one of whom gets mad for even being asked, and the other compares ducks to fish, misunderstanding the situation completely. These interactions highlight Holden's persistent sense of being misunderstood by others. Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller observe that Holden's concern for the ducks is symbolic; he sees himself as similar to the ducks, lost and without a place to go, much like how he sneaks into his own home.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Privitera, "Holden's Irony" 203-206.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller Jr., "J.D. Salinger: Some Crazy Cliff," in *The Catcher in the Rye: New Essays*, ed. James E. Miller Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 183.

The title of the novel originates from Holden's envisioned role in society. During a conversation with his sister Phoebe, she asks him a surprisingly mature question about his future aspirations. In response, Holden describes a vivid, though unrealistic, image:

I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around – nobody big, I mean – except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff – I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy.<sup>44</sup>

This response reveals Holden's naive and idealistic view of the world. His desire to be the "catcher in the rye" symbolizes his wish to protect the innocence of children from the harshness of adulthood. Holden sees himself as the guardian who saves children from falling into the dangers and complexities of adult life, reflecting his longing to shield them from the inevitable loss of innocence and the disillusionment that adulthood brings. Even though he is searching for his place in society, his understanding of the world is still immature and childlike, demonstrating his struggle to come to terms with the reality of growing up.

Holden is completely lost, struggling with his alienation and having no clear plan to address it. His only responses to his issues are to either run away to New England, as he suggests to Sally, or flee to the West and pretend to be a deaf-mute, as he tells Phoebe. Both of these plans are simplistic and unrealistic, showing his failure to consider the real complexities and consequences of his situation. Similarly, his desire to become the "catcher in the rye" is an impractical solution to the problems he perceives in the "world. Holden's ideas reflect a childish mentality, where he believes that things can be solved in simple, straightforward ways without acknowledging the responsibilities or difficulties involved. He is unable to take real action to resolve his problems, avoiding accountability for his expulsions and the mistakes and decisions he has made. In doing so, he positions himself as someone who needs to be saved rather than someone capable of resolving his own issues.

The culmination of Holden's three-day journey reaches a breaking point when, in the middle of the night at Mr. Antolini's house, he becomes overwhelmed by his deteriorating

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<sup>44</sup> Salinger, *Catcher*, 186.

mental and physical state and abruptly leaves, still shaken from recent events. The following day, he decides to run away and leaves a note for Phoebe at her school to inform her of his plans. His decision to leave leads to a series of reactions that further highlight his emotional turmoil. Eventually, his condition worsens, and he collapses from the pressure, emphasizing the severity of his situation.

As Holden struggles with his emotions, his interactions with Phoebe become a turning point in his journey. Upon discovering Holden's intention to leave, Phoebe, determined to join him, brings her suitcase, which shocks him. Furious and unable to understand her decision, he scolds her for abandoning everything, not realizing that her desire to follow him reflects his own choice to leave everything behind. Despite his anger, Phoebe's actions demonstrate her deep care for him, and in turn, Holden, still protective of her, takes her to the park, where he begins to calm down. After a heartfelt appeal from Phoebe, Holden agrees to stay, and seeing her joyful on the carousel brings him a moment of happiness. This brief moment of joy helps him realize that he can face his problems instead of continuing to run away from them. Holden also expresses a fondness for the way children act freely, noting that if they want to reach for the gold ring on the carousel, they simply do so without hesitation or concern. In the final chapter, Holden reflects from a psychiatric ward, where he is receiving help, and the reader may hope that he will confront his issues and, perhaps, begin the journey toward self-understanding and healing. Ultimately, Holden's story leaves the possibility open that he may find peace, but it remains uncertain whether he can truly overcome the challenges that have troubled him.

Holden Caulfield's experience of alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* is a complex reflection of his deep disconnection from the adult world, sense of not belonging, societal expectations, and even his own sense of self. Throughout the novel, Holden's constant struggle with feelings of isolation and his rejection of anything he considers insincere highlight his difficulty in navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood. His alienation is not only an internal conflict but is also intensified by the materialism, hypocrisy, and superficiality he perceives in those around him. By the end of the novel, the events following Holden's breakdown may suggest a possibility of him confronting his alienation, offering a glimmer of hope that he might begin the journey toward self-understanding. Ultimately, the novel leaves open the potential for Holden's growth and reconciliation with both himself and the world around him.

## 6. Alienation in *Bog Child*

Siobhan Dowd's novel *Bog Child* follows eighteen-year-old Fergus McCann through some of the most life-changing experiences of his life. Set in 1981 on the border between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, during the Troubles conflict and the second hunger strike, Fergus faces numerous challenges shaped by the turbulent time and place in which he lives. Additionally, the reader witnesses the discovery of a dead girl's body, which is later revealed to be prehistoric. Over the course of several months in the main character's life, the reader accompanies Fergus through typical teenage experiences, including potential future studies, first romance and other life-altering decisions that will shape his future.

The main character, Fergus McCann, is one of four children in his family, with two younger sisters Theresa and Cathy and an older brother Joe. Theresa and Cathy are seen by Fergus as small girls, an embodiment of innocence and purity. He spends time with them as a responsible older brother, engaging in activities such as taking them swimming, and even participating in their various games.

One of the aspects that makes the novel distinctive is the setting. Drumleash is a challenging place to live in, particularly in the times of The Troubles, given its location right on the border with the Irish Republic. While Fergus loves his family, this affection does little to improve his situation. He despises the situation he is trapped in, caught in the middle of a conflict to which he does not belong. His mother shares similar feelings toward the place and exhausted by her family's struggles blames the town for her situation "I swear to God. I wish I stayed in Leitrim where I was born and never married into all this trouble."<sup>45</sup> A main concern for the whole family throughout the novel is Joey's ongoing imprisonment and his involvement in the hunger strike, which distances him further from the family and leads him toward what seems to be inevitable death. Many of the family's hardships likely would not have arisen had they lived in a different place and both Fergus and his mother are fully aware of this fact. The main character feels disconnected from his surroundings for these reasons, the place holds little significance for him, unlike his brother, father, and uncle, who would be willing to sacrifice everything for it, even their lives. Fergus also struggles to understand and relate to the extreme opinions surrounding the conflict, finding life itself far more important than the ideological battles tearing the community apart. He does not feel as a part of such society, which becomes the main cause for his feelings of alienation, making him feel as if he does not belong there

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<sup>45</sup> Siobhan Dowd, *Bog Child*, (London, England: Definitions, 2015), 26.

with the people. Not associating with the radical ideas of the place, he does not share the same sense of patriotism, unlike his brother. He intends to continue distancing himself from the conflict as he has done throughout his whole life.

The person closest to him throughout his whole life must be Joey, not only an older brother but also a sort of a father figure, being the one who taught Fergus how to properly shave for the first time and more, guiding him through his life overall. However, since Joe went to jail for his involvement with the IRA, they have grown apart. Fergus keeps his brother's watch as a kind of treasure, reminding him of Joe and the situation he is in. The main character realises the change in their relationship the most when visiting his brother for the first time after Joey's joining the hunger strike: "It was as if Joe had an incubus in him doing the talking. It wasn't his old, familiar brother on the other side of the glass, but somebody new, with new associations, new purposes."<sup>46</sup> Fergus realises that the place and people surrounding his brother in jail changed him and now he grows towards the more radical opinions connected to The Troubles. Prior to him being taken to prison, no one had the slightest suspicion of what was happening with him, he seemed like an ordinary young boy living a quiet life. An exception to his collected behaviour was being along with Michael Rafter's the two famous troublemakers at high school. After a year of serving his sentence, his earlier opinions and love for Lenon's music changed significantly. He expresses his opinions after Fergus tries to persuade him to change his mind by reciting a few lines from Lenon's song:

'I don't wanna be a soldier Mama, I don't wanna die' Joe laughed 'You're a card Ferg. Just a song. Written in another place, another time' [...] 'Pacifism's a luxury, Ferg. It's not for the likes of us.'<sup>47</sup>

After this incident, Fergus understands that none of his arguments would be of any use and that Joe is determined to continue his mission until the very end. Joe's joining the hunger strike by starving becomes one of the main disputes in the family, the father proudly supporting him, however, it is a painful matter for his siblings and especially his mother.

The hunger strike not only divides the community but also splits the McCann family. Part of Fergus is lost during his final visit to his brother in prison, when Joe, in such a critical condition, asks Fergus never to visit him again, fearing for his safety and acting out of love for

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<sup>46</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 83.

his brother.<sup>48</sup> Fergus understands this, later breaking into tears as he realises he is seeing his brother for the last time alive. As the community increasingly leans toward radical opinions, Fergus and his mother remain in the smaller group opposed to the deaths of starvation for political reasons. The differing opinions within the family clash especially when a phone call from the prison announces Joe's falling into a coma, and the mother proposes a plan to save him by force-feeding. The father strongly disagrees at first, holding firm to his opinions and not wanting to go against Joe's ideals. At this moment, Fergus decides to confront the situation and make a change. He manages to convince his father to agree to save Joe, preventing not only his death but also the disintegration of the family. From that moment, the family slowly becomes less estranged, gradually returning to the form of a strong unit.

His intention to distance himself from the conflict is successful, until approached by Michael Rafter and his request. Fergus's love for running could be viewed both as a means to clear his mind and a metaphor for running from his problems and the harsh reality of his situation. However, even these brief moments of peace are ruined by Rafter's packages. When asked to carry the mysterious packages across the border, he intends to withstand and remain neutral. Unfortunately, after being promised that his brother will receive help and will be ordered to withdraw from the hunger strike and save his life, he agrees. What was initially supposed to be a one-time errand soon transforms into a frequent unpleasant obligation. Warned not to tell a single soul, Fergus bears the burden alone, careful not to mention it even to his uncle he is very close to. Nevertheless, none of his actions helped his brother in any way. Frustrated by his sense of being cornered and feeling powerless, he even attempts to write a persuasive letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. After several failed attempts to formulate his thoughts, and realisation any of it would be pointless, he gives up, burning the letters in the garden and again accepting there is nothing he could possibly do to help his brother and improve the situation. When wanting to stop with the errands, Rafter threatens him. "Keep on with those packets.' 'No.' 'I would if I were you.' His words were almost sinuous. 'Why?' 'Because otherwise that squaddie of yours will end up a has-been.'"<sup>49</sup> Fearing for Owain's life, Fergus obediently agrees to avoid having his friend's blood on his own hands. This incident further confirms his belief that the place is unsuitable for him and harms innocent people.

Regarding Fergus's future, he intends to leave his hometown in order to distance himself from all the trouble and to live in a place far away from it. His plan is to perform to the best of

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<sup>48</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 180.

<sup>49</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 173.

his abilities at his A-level exams and provided he scores no more than three Bs, he will pursue medical studies. His mother's encouragement for his A-level exam studies shows her support for his pursuit of a brighter future. Even Uncle Tally agrees with his plans when presented with them and wishes for Fergus not to get involved in any conflict.<sup>50</sup> As Fergus says to Michael when deciding to help him with package-carrying: "Michael, I don't want to join you. I'm leaving for Aberdeen when the summer's over. Whatever my results. If I can't go to college, I'll dig the roads."<sup>51</sup> That displays his desire to start a new life even at the cost of leaving everyone and departing into the unknown. Luckily, he managed to attain high scores in his exams, meaning he was one step closer to fulfilling his dream and was able to leave for college.

In Drumleash, attendance at mass is expected of everyone, and religion plays a significant role both in the community and in the conflict itself. Fergus dutifully attends with his family, despite no longer finding meaning in the practice after losing his faith.

Fergus had stopped believing in God when he was eight, after he'd seen his da come in with a Christmas stocking and realized Santa didn't exist. If Santa didn't exist, then God didn't either. As far as he was concerned, grown-ups had done one big cheat about the two of them. Years went by and he hadn't changed his mind.<sup>52</sup>

When he learns of a bombing, he decides not to attend mass that Sunday. He justifies his absence to his mother, stating, "No. I'm not going. I don't believe a word of it."<sup>53</sup> but the true reason lies in his overwhelming sense of guilt. Upon hearing of the bombing, his prevailing thought is that he now has blood on his hands, feeling partly responsible for the deaths of innocent people.<sup>54</sup> This guilt makes everything seem meaningless and distances him further from his community. By breaking his routine of attending mass, he takes another step into a new life in which this tradition no longer holds significance. His guilt consumes him, and he feels trapped, forbidden from revealing to anyone his supposed involvement due to the circumstances. If this guilt were justified, it would haunt him for the rest of his life, and he would never be able to escape its consequences and the troubles, even within his own mind. Orla T. Muldoon, a social and political psychologist, examines the impact of the Troubles on children and young people in Northern Ireland. She discovered that, for those transitioning to university, religious and national identities became less significant than family, friends, and student identities. This shift

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<sup>50</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 54.

<sup>51</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 98.

<sup>52</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 66.

<sup>53</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 229.

<sup>54</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 225.

is evident in Fergus's life, where both national and religious identities have become increasingly irrelevant.<sup>55</sup>

An important part of every young person's life is their friendships. This crucial part of Fergus's life is represented mainly by two of his friends. Firstly Padraig, a friend from school and second, Owain, a relatively new friendship. Padraig is a classmate with whom he shares the dream of continuing with their studies, Padraig wanting to become an Engineer, and later move into a safer place. His jokes help ease every situation and allow Fergus to forget how serious everything may seem. In *Bog Child*, however, the more significant focus, given the harsh political situation, is on Owain, a border guard who comes from the Valleys in Wales, a rough area: "The army or the mines. That was the choice"<sup>56</sup> Fergus feels a connection to Owain because of the shared harshness of their lives and their mutual desire to escape their troubled environments. Owain did not want to remain in his birthplace and become just another victim of the place. As Rory Bines-Morris notes, Owain is caught between two conflicts of the 1980s, one in Ireland where he travelled as a soldier and the other in Wales, where he would have found himself in a strike a decade later if he had decided to stay and work in the mines.<sup>57</sup> Like Fergus, he sought a better life rather than sacrificing it to circumstances. However, even friendships are not without complications in such places. The two friends represent opposing sides in the political conflict: Owain, as a soldier, is on one side of the conflict, while Fergus, by carrying packages, believes himself to be tied to the terrorists, the opposite side that Owain is supposed to fight against. Despite their differences, the two gradually discover that even this divide can sometimes be overcome, and they become friends, exchanging greetings and brief words whenever possible. A similar type of cooperation between opposing sides can be observed when transporting the body of Mel, where people from no matter which side must cooperate to ensure the operation succeeds.

'Normally we hear nothing of what you locals get up to. It was just when we were carrying her on that piece of tin, I heard the talk.' He sighed 'One day we we're helping out with a bit of archaeology, shoulder to shoulder with you lot. Next day we're out escorting the coffins of the hunger strikers and we may as well have been beamed in from another planet. Everyone treats us like freaks. And before you know it, the petrol bombs and stones are flying.'<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Orla T. Muldoon, "Children of the Troubles: The Impact of Political Violence in Northern Ireland". *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 3 (2004): 463.

<sup>56</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 128.

<sup>57</sup> Rory Bines-Morris, "Reappearing in Different Forms: Ancient and Contemporary Irish Hunger in 'Bog Child,'" *Journal of Irish Studies* 14, no. 2 (October 30, 2021): 11.

<sup>58</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 127.

This shows how their situation is not easy and can be quite confusing when they can be side by side, and in the next moment, trying to kill each other. On the bright side, Owain's friendship and the pleasant moments spent together bring Fergus hope in his life, which is filled with negativity. The trust in Owain is so immense that Fergus decides to share one of his secrets, showing him the mysterious packages. Later in the story, Fergus loses both Owain and Uncle Tally. One is an innocent victim of the conflict, while the other's death results from his own choices. Regardless, Fergus loses two people who were close to him. The destructive power of the conflict strikes again, confirming his desire to leave.

Romance and first love are also crucial parts of a teenager's life. Fergus's experience of his first love with Cora, the daughter of Felicity, a scientist investigating Mel's case. Fergus, having discovered the body, becomes familiar with Cora and her mother. When he offers them the opportunity to stay at his house, they begin to spend more time together, allowing their relationship to deepen. As they grow closer, Fergus experiences romantic affection for the first time. However, even this aspect of his life is not without complications, as their paths eventually separate. Cora is to move to America to live with her father, while Fergus leaves to pursue his studies. Though they promise to write letters, their separation remains inevitable. Before parting ways, Felicity has a conversation with Fergus about Cora and her romantic interests, suggesting that Cora may not feel as strongly as he does about their relationship, but still offering slight hope: "“And I'm not right for her?” ‘You may be. Who knows? But you're not the only lad who's fallen for her. And her boyfriends never last long. Like I said, she has fads.’”<sup>59</sup> Felicity then reassures him, suggesting that Cora seems happier and calmer when she is with him, encouraging Fergus to perhaps not give up on the possibility of a shared future.

As the title suggests, what initially appears to be a child found in a bog plays a significant role in the narrative. Fergus is the one who miraculously discovers her and saves her body from destruction and erasure, preventing her from being crushed and wiped from existence. Initially, it is believed that she is a murdered child, someone as innocent as Fergus's younger sisters. However, as the scientist later discovers, thanks to her wisdom teeth, she was not a child. Her small stature was evidently caused by dwarfism, and her father affectionately referred to her as “He called me the child time forgot. And the joke stuck”<sup>60</sup>, and he was right, Mel was truly

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<sup>59</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 290.

<sup>60</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 13.

forgotten for millennia until found by Fergus. By discovering her body, Fergus was granted the privilege to name her, Mel, which created a special connection between them.

Mel herself lived in times of struggle. She became a victim of hatred and the human tendency to assign blame to what is not understood, and she made peace with this. She was excluded by her community, primarily due to her physical appearance, as such a medical condition was unexplainable and strange to the people of that era. Despite being loved by her family, as she grew older, her life took a tragic turn. She became involuntarily estranged from her community further and further. Her relationship with Rur, the leader's son, became increasingly distant, sacrificing her happiness for him by keeping her distance. Mel was subsequently blamed for the death of their leader, Boss Shaughn. Moreover, she was accused of being a witch and blamed for the famine the community suffered from. In an act of selflessness, she chose to sacrifice herself in order to save her brother, Brennor, who was responsible for the leader's death. Through this act, she hoped to offer hope to others, believing that, despite the hardships, things would eventually improve. Only after her trial, and shortly before her execution, did she find at least some consolation, realising that her and Rur's feelings were mutual. Nevertheless, Mel was ultimately denied the chance to be with her loved one. Both she and Fergus share the experience of not being able to experience their desired everlasting moments with their loved ones. Moreover, they are both loved by their families but do not truly belong to their communities, either by choice or circumstance.

A significant element in Dowd's work is the magical realism aspect of the connection between Mel, the prehistoric girl that was found in the bog, and her discoverer, Fergus. This phenomenon could be explained in two different ways. Firstly, as it was probably originally intended, the visions of Mel's life represent an element of magical realism. In this interpretation, the magical connection between Fergus and Mel is created because Fergus is the one who discovers and names her. Both are connected to the land where they were born, grew up and lived in times of unrest. Gradually, she tells him her story piece by piece, revealing the struggles of her time. One of the interesting connections of the hard times generally, in these cases too, in every instance, there are victims who pay the ultimate price, often with their lives. One of these victims was Mel, innocent girl who paid with her life due to her unusual physical appearance. Secondly, this connection could be explained from a more rational perspective. For Fergus, the times were exceedingly stressful. He faced everyday pressures, particularly after his brother joined the hunger strike. He found a dead body, a traumatic event in itself, let alone finding a body of what looks like a little girl, reminiscing his little sisters. reminding Fergus of

his younger sisters. He was also preparing for his A-level exams, an important point that would determine his future. Regardless of how the reader chooses to interpret this unusual connection, it significantly impacts Fergus's life. It provides him with a sense of reassurance, showing him that he is not alone in facing hardships and that everyone endures struggles, some, like Mel, endure even worse. Towards the end of the story of Mel's life, she conveys a powerful message. Sacrificing herself for her brother's sake, giving hope to the people of her village: "'OK, Mel, my girl,' he whispered, 'If you can do it, so can I.'"<sup>61</sup> This moment gives Fergus the strength to carry on, motivating him to gather his strength on one last journey, delivering packages for his brother, with the possible risk of sacrificing himself for a cause greater than his own.

Despite the difficulties Fergus faces, nothing breaks his spirit. Not giving up, he manages to deal with every situation he can, proving his determination to make a change no matter how hard it is. His fighting spirit, starting with carrying packages for his brother's sake and later deciding to sacrifice himself and surrender for committing crimes, becomes evident. His courage to express himself ultimately saves Joe's life. Fergus continues with his determination to study and refuses to remain trapped in a bad situation, taking control of his life. In doing so, he manages to save not only himself but also his and his brother's future.

What makes him feel isolated and that he is on his own is the lack of options to confide in anyone. No one is in the same situation, no one having the chance to understand or feel with him, no one being in the same set of circumstances. Either they are completely outside of the conflict, such as Felicity and Cora, so he cannot tell them about his brother being on the hunger strike, or concerning his struggles with the packages, he is forbidden to talk to anyone. Joey, to whom he would tell all his secrets, he is not able to talk to normally, for he is in prison. Moreover, he has changed as a person. Later, he could not even visit for he wanted to respect his brother's wish. The second person who knows all of his life and could potentially confide in is Uncle Tally. However, as Fergus views him as someone who does not want to get involved in any of the troubles, he does not want to burden him with any of his problems. The third option, Owain, is on the other side of the conflict, and he would not understand many of Fergus's troubles. He is also the one Fergus tries to smuggle the packages past. Later, Owain becomes the one Fergus decides to reveal one of his secrets to, finally sharing his burden with a friend. This turns out to be a great choice, and with his help, Fergus finds out he was not carrying explosives and is able to get rid of the guilt he had after the bomb explosion. Towards

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<sup>61</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 232.

the end of the novel, both Owain and Uncle Tally are taken from him, both falling victim to the conflict, Owain being an innocent victim and Uncle Tally involved by choice and risking knowingly. Losing two of his friends and gaining back his brother, the troubles show once again its power.

Even after everything the place brought him and caused, Fergus intends to keep in touch with his family. He plans to visit during the Christmas break, not completely erasing the struggles he faced or his life there, but instead carrying forward the lessons learned. However, Valerie Coghlan highlights the excerpt from the end of the novel “But the old Fergus of that time would never return. [...] The Fergus who’d return at Christmas would already be different. He’d years of the changing to come”<sup>62</sup> and how his way of turning his back and going towards the deck shows his determination to move forward and continue with his life rather than stay stuck in the past and look back.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, while he seeks to distance himself from his troubles, he does not wish to leave his family behind, emphasizing his desire to move forward while maintaining important connections.

The theme of alienation in *Bog Child* highlights Fergus’s sense of disconnection from his community and the world around him. While his age contributes to his feelings of isolation, the primary cause of his alienation stems from being part of a society he feels he does not belong to. The political unrest, the trauma of his brother’s death, and the tension within his family all contribute to his sense of being an outsider. Fergus’s struggle is further intensified by his inability to confide in anyone about his secrets, leaving him feeling even more isolated. However, through his visions of Mel, a girl who lived in a similarly harsh situation, Fergus finds some comfort. Her presence reminds him that, despite the isolation, he is not entirely alone. By the end of the novel, while Fergus begins to confront his struggles, the events suggest that his path toward overcoming alienation is still unfolding. Ultimately, the story leaves readers with the hope that Fergus, despite his challenges, will find a way to build a future for himself, gradually finding his place in a world that has often seemed distant and hostile.

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<sup>62</sup> Dowd, *Bog Child*, 322.

<sup>63</sup> Valerie Coghlan. “Questions of Identity and Otherness in Irish Writing for Young People.” *Neohelicon* 36, no. 1 (June, 2009): 99.

## 7. Comparison of Alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*

Although the two works may initially seem vastly different in terms of the protagonists' experiences and backgrounds, a closer analysis reveals several important parallels. This chapter will explore both the similarities and differences in how alienation is represented in each novel, focusing on key aspects of the main characters' lives.

One crucial area of comparison is their family situations. Both protagonists come from families that are, at their core, loving and supportive. However, neither family is portrayed as perfect, reflecting the inherent complexities and imperfections found in real-life relationships. Both characters experience forms of familial tension or disconnection, underscoring that even within loving homes, alienation can still take root. A significant parallel between the two is in their relationships with their siblings, which plays a central role in shaping their experiences of alienation.

In both works, the main characters Holden and Fergus share the same love for their siblings. They view their sisters as full of innocence and purity hidden in their childhood minds. The sisters are a bright side in their lives, even though in the case of Fergus it does not act as such a crucial part of his life as in Holden's. Phoebe was the cause of Holden's willingness to not run away but to fight with himself and his problems.

Another similarity in their journeys of life is going through the process of losing a brother, the dearest people in their lives. In *Catcher* it acts as one of the main reasons for Holden's alienation and by Allie's death he lost one of his best friends and still can not make peace with the fact he is gone. In *Bog Child* the absence of a brother varies from the previous one as there is at least a faint hope of Joe returning to his brother's life fully. Nonetheless, the threat of losing Joey to starvation is present and it paralyses both Fergus and his mother, filling their minds with fear and influencing their everyday life. Joey's life was also the reason Fergus complied with carrying the packages over the border, complicating his life to a greater degree. These events or even secrets evoked in Fergus a feeling of isolation as he could not share them with anyone. The inability to communicate his thoughts and feelings not even with his closest frustrated him. As a reminder of their brothers, each boy carries with him an item which belonged to their brothers, Holden owns Allie's baseball mitt and Fergus Joe's watch, keeping them on their minds wherever they go.

By losing their brothers, both Holden and Fergus experience the loss of the closest familial bonds they once had. With neither Allie nor Joe present, they are left without anyone

as intimately connected as before, and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to allow others that close. Despite this, both characters strengthen their connections with the people they were once closest to. Holden becomes deeply attached to his younger sister, Phoebe, who ultimately becomes his most significant family member. Similarly, Fergus relies on his Uncle Tally, until he too is lost, and Fergus learns that his uncle was not the person he believed him to be. While this revelation initially feels like a betrayal, Fergus ultimately understands that his uncle withheld the truth out of a desire to protect him, which softens the sense of betrayal. Though both Holden and Fergus maintain generally positive relationships with the rest of their families, a sense of incompleteness remains. There are gaps in understanding, and these characters are forever marked by the differences that separate them from their families, leaving an emotional void that can be filled with difficulty.

In exploring the complexities of adolescent relationships, both Holden and Fergus face their own emotional struggles. Holden is afraid of intimacy, often engaging with girls in a superficial way rather than forming deep connections. Although he has genuine feelings for one girl, he avoids reaching out to her, even though she remains on his mind. Holden also struggles to connect with others in general, as many of his interactions are insincere, driven by his tendency to pretend to be someone he is not and his habit of lying. Fergus's romantic relationship initially develops more easily due to Cora's presence in their home, which brings them closer. However, this relationship does not work out in the long term, as their paths eventually separate. Holden, on the other hand, does not share Fergus's ease in forming connections, and he later faces disappointment in his own relationships. Both characters experience the common challenges of adolescent romance, though each struggles in their own way.

Many individuals find a sense of belonging and purpose by being part of a community, where they derive meaning in life. This connection is often fostered through religious or social groups. However, neither Holden nor Fergus fully experiences this sense of belonging. Despite living in an environment where religious observance is common, with everyone attending church regularly, Fergus distances himself from the community by choosing not to participate. Similarly, Holden, though not surrounded by religious individuals, engages in conversations about religion and expresses curiosity, perhaps longing to be part of something similar. Neither of them can rely on the hope or solace that religion offers

The concept of community is also complicated when considering their roles in other communities. Fergus belongs to the student community, yet Holden deliberately distances himself from it through repeated expulsions from school. This further highlights their disconnect from the groups they are expected to be a part of. In addition, both characters feel alienated from the larger societal community they live in. They reject the prevailing opinions and values of those around them, often opposing the mainstream views. In this way, both Holden and Fergus struggle to find a sense of belonging, as they separate themselves from various communities, whether by choice or circumstance.

Regarding their education, Holden shows a clear lack of interest in his studies, being expelled from several schools and demonstrating little concern for his academic or future prospects. His disengagement from education reflects his broader sense of alienation and uncertainty about his future. In contrast, Fergus is deeply committed to his education, viewing it as a path to secure a better future and pursue his dream of becoming a doctor. He approaches his studies with focus and determination, carefully preparing for his exams to ensure he is on track to achieve his aspirations. While Fergus takes his academic responsibilities seriously, Holden, by comparison, fails in nearly every subject except for one, underscoring his sense of disconnection and struggle to find direction.

One of the key differences between Fergus and Holden lies in their respective attitudes. Fergus exhibits a strong sense of self, confidently expressing his thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment, whereas Holden struggles with his identity, often adopting a false persona due to his discomfort with who he truly is and his fear of confronting his inner self. Both characters are experiencing the challenges of adolescence and attempting to define their roles in life. However, Fergus, being slightly older, has a more established sense of direction and a clearer understanding of his desires, while Holden remains uncertain and directionless, still struggling with his sense of self and purpose.

The two characters exhibit vastly different responses to their struggles. Fergus chooses to take matters into his own hands, actively seeking to change his circumstances. In contrast, Holden, feeling lost and directionless, requires the intervention of his sister to help him regain his footing before ultimately seeking professional help to reintegrate into society and function normally. While Holden's desire to escape is impulsive and without clear purpose, Fergus's decision to leave is driven by a thoughtful determination to alter his situation. This distinction highlights the difference between fleeing aimlessly and making a deliberate departure to effect

change. Ultimately, Fergus is able to save himself, whereas Holden, unable to navigate his difficulties alone, is saved first by his sister and then by professional assistance.

Both characters experience intense emotional struggles, though they manifest differently. Holden's breakdown is more outwardly visible and can be attributed to underlying mental health issues, requiring professional help. His instability contrasts with Fergus's greater emotional stability. While Fergus internalizes his emotions, he is better equipped to deal with difficult situations and finds comfort in his connection with Mel. Their responses to emotional challenges reflect differing approaches to coping with alienation and personal crisis.

Both Fergus and Holden experience situational alienation, but the causes and depth of their alienation differ. For Fergus, his alienation is primarily driven by external factors, particularly the political conflict and violence in Northern Ireland, where he lives. The societal divisions, political unrest, and the loss of his brother Joe form the core of his alienation, leading him to feel displaced and isolated within his community. In contrast, Holden's alienation arises from his confusion and frustration with society, rather than external political circumstances. While he experiences alienation, it is less rooted in external factors and more a result of his emotional instability and inability to understand or relate to the adult world. His repeated expulsions from schools and struggles with mental health contribute to his sense of disconnection, but his alienation stems more from internal conflict about societal expectations than from the harsh realities of his environment. Holden is more confused by his environment than it being the main cause of his alienation as some may see it. While both characters face situational alienation, Fergus's is deeply connected to the external, political world, whereas Holden's is a result of his personal struggles and misunderstandings of the society he lives in.

The comparison of alienation in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child* reveals both striking similarities and significant differences between the two protagonists. While both Holden and Fergus experience alienation stemming from personal loss, family dynamics, and emotional struggles, the sources and expressions of their alienation diverge. Holden's sense of disconnection arises from his internal struggles with identity, societal expectations, and mental health issues, while Fergus's alienation is more closely tied to the external political and social turmoil in Northern Ireland. Despite these differences, both characters move through a world in which they feel out of place, seeking connections and meaning but often finding themselves isolated. Their contrasting responses to their challenges further highlight

the complexity of adolescent alienation. Both works emphasize the significant impact of familial relationships, societal pressures, and personal loss in shaping the adolescent experience, offering valuable insights into the ways individuals cope with their sense of alienation.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the theme of alienation in Young Adult literature, focusing specifically on the key texts *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*. Through an analysis of these works, the study aimed to highlight the complex and varied nature of alienation, using the theoretical framework to provide context and depth to the exploration.

The first chapter established that the genre of Young Adult literature is relatively recent, emerging after World War II and continuing to evolve into the present day. The second chapter examined the complexity of the term “alienation,” narrowing the focus to the aspects most relevant to the objectives of this thesis. It was shown that alienation can stem from various sources, including economic, political, social, psychological, and personal influences.

The third and fourth theoretical chapters focused on the historical contexts of the periods in which the protagonists of the two novels live, providing the necessary background for understanding the causes of alienation within their environments. These chapters explored post-war America and its rapid societal changes, as well as the hunger strikes in 1980s Northern Ireland, shaped by the Irish Troubles, setting the stage for the protagonists' experiences of environmental and societal alienation.

The subsequent chapters focused on the practical analysis of alienation during adolescence. Chapter five examined *The Catcher in the Rye*, focusing on Holden Caulfield's alienation, which primarily arises from his internal struggles and personal losses, particularly the death of his younger brother, Allie. Holden's inability to move forward, coupled with his desire to protect the innocence of children, demonstrates his profound rejection of the adult world. His journey is marked by aimless wandering and personal collapse, culminating in his need for rescue.

Chapter six analysed Fergus McCann's experience of alienation in *Bog Child*. This chapter examined the historical context of Northern Ireland during the Troubles in the 1980s, providing essential background to understand how the socio-political unrest influenced Fergus's alienation. The violence and instability of the time deeply affected his environment, intensifying his sense of isolation. Additionally, Fergus is burdened by the loss of people he cares about, which heightens his feelings of alienation. He feels increasingly lonely, as he cannot share his burdens with anyone, further deepening his emotional distance from others. Despite these challenges, Fergus is able to manage his problems more effectively than expected. He

progresses through his adolescence relatively successfully, with the primary source of his alienation still rooted in his turbulent environment.

Chapter seven provided a comparative analysis of the alienation experienced by the two protagonists. It compared their adolescent aspects, including friendships, romance, school, family dynamics, and their sense of belonging, revealing more similarities than initially expected. The analysis illustrated how alienation is shaped not only by internal emotional and psychological struggles but also by external societal, cultural, and political forces. By contextualizing alienation within the broader frameworks of postwar America and the political unrest in Northern Ireland, this thesis demonstrated how the protagonists of these novels, Holden and Fergus, experience alienation in ways that are intricately connected to their unique environments and personal histories.

By exploring the theme of alienation through these selected works, the thesis demonstrates how Young Adult literature serves as a powerful tool for understanding the emotional and social struggles adolescents face. It shows that alienation is not only an individual experience but also one deeply shaped by the societal, cultural, and historical forces that define the protagonists' lives. In examining *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Bog Child*, the thesis reveals that alienation takes different forms depending on the characters' environments, yet the core emotions and struggles remain relatable across time and space. This study emphasizes the importance of contextualizing alienation within both the personal and broader societal frameworks to fully understand its impact on adolescent development and the narrative potential of Young Adult literature.

## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na téma odcizení v literatuře pro mladé dospělé, přičemž analyzuje dvě významná díla: *Kdo chytá v žitě* (The Catcher in the Rye) amerického spisovatele J.D. Salingera a *Bog Child* irské autorky Siobhan Dowdové. Cílem této práce je prozkoumat, jak odcizení v těchto dílech ovlivňuje hlavní postavy a ukázat, jak tento fenomén souvisí nejen se širšími historickými, kulturními a politickými kontexty, v nichž postavy žijí, ale i s konkrétními kontexty jejich životů. S využitím literární analýzy a teoretických konceptů z oblasti psychologie a sociologie se práce soustředí na zkoumání příčin a projevů odcizení v kontextu individuálních životních zkušeností a širšího sociálního a politického prostředí.

V teoretické části práce je nejprve vymezen pojem „literatura pro mladé dospělé“ a jeho historický vývoj. Tento žánr vznikl po druhé světové válce a stále se vyvíjí, aby reflektoval aktuální problémy a potřeby mladých lidí. Literatura pro mladé dospělé se stala silným nástrojem pro zobrazení problémů dospívajících, jako je hledání identity, problémy ve vztazích a setkávání se s realitou dospělosti. Její specifická charakteristika spočívá ve schopnosti reflektovat vnitřní svět mladých lidí, čelících osobním, sociálním i politickým tlakům. Práce ukazuje, jak literatura pro mladé dospělé reaguje na změny v sociálních normách a hodnotách a jak se stále vyvíjí ve snaze pochopit a vyjádřit pocity a problémy dnešních mladých lidí. V první kapitole se podrobněji zkoumá vývoj literatury pro mladé dospělé, přičemž je zdůrazněno, že tento žánr je relativně nový a vyvinul se až po druhé světové válce. Mnoho děl v tomto žánru reflektuje pocity nejistoty a odcizení, s nimiž se mladí lidé potýkají při vstupu do dospělosti. Literatura pro mladé dospělé nejen zachycuje tyto pocity, ale také vytváří prostor pro jejich zkoumání a porozumění. Širší společenské otázky, jako je ekonomická situace, politické změny, otázky genderu, identity a vztahů, také ovlivňují životy mladých lidí. Skrz tento žánr mohou mladí lidé lépe poznat a pochopit sami sebe.

V druhé kapitole se analyzuje pojem odcizení, který je v práci vnímán jako komplexní fenomén, jenž má mnoho podob a je často vnímán velmi odlišně. Odcizení může mít různé příčiny, od ekonomických a politických problémů až po osobní, sociální a psychologické faktory. Tato kapitola se zaměřuje na to, jak odcizení může být vyjádřeno v různých formách, jako je emocionální, sociální a existenční izolace. Práce se soustředí na to, jak se tento pojem promítá do literárního zobrazení mladých postav, přičemž je ukázáno, že odcizení v literatuře pro mladé dospělé není pouze výsledkem individuálních problémů, ale také odrazem širších společenských tlaků.

Třetí a čtvrtá kapitola se zaměřují na historické kontexty, v nichž se hlavní postavy obou děl nacházejí. Tato část poskytuje nezbytný rámec pro pochopení příčin odcizení a jeho projevů v životě postav. Třetí kapitola detailně rozebírá poválečnou Ameriku a její rychlé společenské změny, například i příchod strachu z komunistické éry a studené války. Po druhé světové válce se Amerika dostala do období silného kulturního a sociálního přetváření, což mělo zásadní vliv na identitu mladých lidí. V tomto kontextu se nachází postava Holdena Caulfielda z *Kdo chytá v žitě*, jehož odcizení je formováno nejen osobními traumaty, ale také tlakem rychlých změn ve společnosti. Tento román, který se stal jedním z nejvýznamnějších děl v anglicky mluvící literatuře, byl mimo jiné několikrát zakázán kvůli kontroverzním tématům, jako jsou vulgarity, zobrazení sexuálních otázek a kritika dospělé společnosti. I přesto, že dílo bylo kritizováno, je široce uznáván pro svůj vhled do pocitu ztracení a odcizení v mladé dospělosti.

Čtvrtá kapitola se zaměřuje na politické a sociální konflikty v Severním Irsku v 80. letech 20. století, během tzv. irských problémů. Tato kapitola ukazuje, jak politický konflikt a násilí zasáhly každodenní životy lidí v Severním Irsku, a jak toto prostředí formovalo pocity odcizení u mladých lidí, kteří vyrůstali v tomto období. Velmi významným problémem je také hladovka v osmdesátých letech, které se zúčastnil i bratr hlavního hrdiny. Kapitola popisuje problémy spojené s touto hladovkou, její příčiny, průběh a také konec, zmiňuje i proces samotného hladovění, které vězni dobrovolně podstupovali pro dosažení svých cílů. V tomto kontextu je analyzováno odcizení hlavního hrdiny *Bog Child*, Ferguse McCanna, jehož život je ovlivněn nejen politickými nepokoji, ale i osobními ztrátami a rodinnými problémy.

Analytická část práce se zaměřuje na detailní rozbor obou děl. Pátá kapitola se věnuje románu *Kdo chytá v žitě*, který vypráví příběh mladé postavy Holdena Caulfielda, jehož pocity ztracení a odcizení vyplývají z nevyřešené smrti jeho bratra Allieho a jeho neschopnosti smířit se s dospělým světem. Salingerova kniha je považována za jedno z nejvýznamnějších děl, která se zabývá problematikou odcizení v mladé dospělosti. V románu je Holdenova izolace zcela zřejmá, když se snaží chránit děti před ztrátou nevinnosti, což odráží jeho vlastní strach a odpor vůči dospělosti. Jeho příběh ukazuje jeho složitý vztah s ním samým, častou přetvářkou a lhaním pro dosažení lepšího pocitu a schování nejistoty z jeho neúspěchů. Hlavním vyvrcholením románu je Holdenův psychický i fyzický kolaps a rozhodnutí utéct před svými problémy. Zasluhu za jeho záchranu má jeho mladší sestra Phoebe, která může být považována za hrdinu příběhu. Pro Holdena představuje hlavní ztělesnění nevinnosti díky ní si uvědomuje, že naděje na štěstí pro něj není ztracena a rozhoduje se čelit svým problémům.

Šestá kapitola se zaměřuje na analýzu postavy Ferguse McCanna z románu *Bog Child* spisovatelky Siobhan Dowdové, irské spisovatelky, která se ve svých dílech často zabývá složitými a politicky nabitými tématy, a v tomto románu zobrazuje Fergusovu zkušenost s odcizením v prostředí politického a sociálního konfliktu v Severním Irsku. Fergus se necítí ve velké míře ztracený ve smyslu ztráty identity, ale odcizení pramení zejména z prostředí, v němž žije, a také z nemožnosti sdílet své problémy s ostatními. V jeho případě je odcizení prohlubováno také tím, že se ocitá ve složité politické situaci a prochází těžkými osobními ztrátami, hlavní je zapojení jeho bratra do hladovky té doby. U této hlavní postavy je zjevné, že má jasno ve svých cílech a jde své budoucnosti naproti, bez přílišného strachu si prosadit své. Ve Fergusově případě je velmi jasná naděje na lepší budoucnost a potenciální vymanění z pocitu odcizení jaké zažívá v románu.

Sedmá kapitola obsahuje komparativní analýzu obou postav, přičemž se porovnávají jejich rodinné vztahy, přátelské a romantické vztahy, školní prostředí a pocit sounáležitosti. Analýza ukazuje, že ačkoli jsou situace obou postav v mnoha ohledech odlišné, existují i zřetelné podobnosti v jejich prožívání odcizení, které jsou utvářeny jak jejich vnitřními, tak vnějšími faktory. Odcizení je v obou případech nejen výsledkem vnitřního konfliktu, ale i vlivu širšího společenského a historického kontextu.

Tato práce ukazuje, že odcizení v literatuře pro mladé dospělé je složitý a komplexní fenomén, který je hluboce zakořeněn ve zkušenostech jednotlivců, ale také v širších společenských a politických kontextech. Literatura pro mladé dospělé poskytuje nejen prostor pro reflexi osobních problémů, ale i pro zkoumání širších otázek, které ovlivňují životy mladých lidí. Tato práce přispívá k hlubšímu porozumění tomu, jak literatura pro mladé dospělé odráží a zprostředkovává zkušenosti odcizení, které jsou pro tuto věkovou skupinu charakteristické.

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## **Statement**

During the preparation of this thesis, I used Chat GPT 4 in chapters five, six and seven to enhance readability and academic style of the text. After using this tool, I reviewed and edited the content as needed. I take full responsibility for the content of the thesis.