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QUESTION 1: The Catcher in the Rye

Phoebe Caulfield is one of the main characters we encounter in “The Catcher in the Rye”. She is Holden’s ten-year-old little sister. The reader gets to know her through the eyes of her brother Holden. She could be seen as a flat character because she is two-dimensional. The reader does not learn anything about what she is thinking or how she feeling. She is also plays a big part in the book but are not affected by the plot. She is not influenced by the Holden’s actions but is able to influence him. Relevant but what about your thesis statement?

Phoebe is much more mature and intellectual than her brother. Even Holden describes her as “very smart” (Salinger 1970: 171). This maturity and intellect does not change during the course of the book – which again confirms her as a flat character. Our first real encounter of Phoebe is in when Holden goes to the Caulfield home in New York. Although he mentions her beforehand, when he wanted to buy her a record she’d like and take it to her at the park where “Phoebe goes roller skating in the park on Sundays quite frequently” (Salinger 1970: 121). Holden finds Phoebe in D.B.’s room where she “likes to spread out” (Salinger 1970:166) whenever D.B. is not home. Both these instances suggest that Phoebe is still the predictable child that Holden knows. In her notebook which Holden reads she writes her name over and over – like any normal innocent 10 year old. Even changing her middle name “Josephine” to “Weatherfield” (Salinger 1970: 167). We do get to see some of the entries into her notebook, of which she has “about five thousand” (Salinger 1970: 167). They are however superficial and do not give us any insight into who Phoebe is or what she thinks. When she wakes up she “was glad as hell to see” Holden (Salinger 1970: 168), which most little sisters would be if their big bother came home from school. The picture you get of Phoebe on page 169 is of a typical little girl full of excitement and trying to tell her brother everything all at once, once she is “wide awake” (Salinger 1970: 169). She then realizes her brother is early from school and deducts quickly that he was expelled – confirming her intellectual maturity for her age. Here again she acts like
the innocent little girl she is when she thinks “Daddy’ll kill you!” (Salinger 1970:171) by putting the pillow over her head and refusing to listen any further to Holden. Accurate prose.

After Holden came back the second significant encounter with Phoebe took place. She asked him “why did you do it” (Salinger 1970: 171) referring to the “pinch on the behind” (Salinger 1970: 170) which got him expelled. This shows the maturity of her character which is to be expected. She also asks him about his future plans and try to help him decide on what he could be doing. It is during this conversation that Holden mentions “If a body catch a body coming’ through the rye” (Salinger 1970: 179), Phoebe corrects him. She gives him the correct wording and even tell him: “ ‘It’s a poem. By Robert Burns’ ”, (Salinger 1970: 179). This again confirms the fact that Phoebe is intellectually Holden’s superior, as he misquoted the poem, and she needed to correct him. He here stated that he wanted to be the catcher who caught the kids the whole day from falling of the cliff. Even after this challenging encounter you would expect Phoebe to react to this. But like any other innocent child she goes right back to something childlike, like talking about her “belching lessons” (Salinger 1970: 180), and therefore remains the same Phoebe we get to know. This encounter however is significant in the fact that it inspires the main character Holden to become “the catcher in the rye”. Well supported from the text.

Another example of her childlike behaviour is during the encounter at the “Museum of Art” where Phoebe “turn her back” (Salinger 1970: 213) on Holden because he does not want to take her with him. She also threw back his “red hunting hat” (Salinger 1970: 214) and refused to look at him or even follow him back after he changed his mind about going away. She kept walking on the other side of the street. After “crossing the street” (Salinger 1970: 215) she still walked behind him without talking to him. By talking to him again regarding the open carousel “she probably forgot she was supposed to be sore” at Holden (Salinger 1970: 217) is also typical of a child not being able to stay angry at someone for long.
This is also another characteristic of a flat character where she was able to change his mind about leaving New York. Even though his decisions made huge impacts on his life and character it did not have a significant impact on Phoebe as a character in the story.

Through the above mentioned examples it could be clearly seen that Phoebe is a flat character. She was Holden’s voice of reason and support system. He as a round character changed and evolved, but even though Phoebe was part of these changes her character remained the same Phoebe. She was not affected by any of Holden’s decisions or his behaviour.    Well argued.  35/50

QUESTION 2: When Rain Clouds Gather

The story of “When Rain Clouds Gather” starts where one of the main characters (Makhaya) are on his way over the border of South Africa where he “just want to step on free ground” (Head 2008: 4). This is a young man who lived under the oppression of an apartheid era South Africa and did not “care about people” (Head 2008: 4) anymore and just wanted to be free. It is apparent at this stage of his life that Makhaya did not want, or need anyone else in his life except freedom. This sets the tone for the rest of the book, where we get to know more about the impact apartheid and inequality had not only on South Africans, but also how this migrated to the rest of Africa, especially our border countries. He then finds himself in the village of Golema Mmiddi.

Again, exactly what should go into your introduction?

It seems that this village is not at all like the rest of Botswana’s villages. This village was not one of one tribe, but an amalgamation of individuals coming together because of one trait: “to escape the tragedies of life” (Head 2008: 17). These people did not migrate like the other villages but build themselves permanent “thatched huts” (Head 2008: 14) and tried to make a living. The Supreme chief Sekoto however later realised someone should look at the “small administrative” (Head 2008: 18) issues which arises. He therefore appointed his “unpopular younger
brother, Matenge as subchief” (Head 2008: 18) If he was unpopular at his previous village he was definitely also this and more at Golema Mmidi. Even though Sekoto was aware of this and even sided with the villagers (Head 2008: 18) he left him in the position of subchief. Sekoto himself though is described as a “good chief” (Head 2008: 19). In walks Gilbert Balfour, an Englishman wanting to settle in Botswana because he loved the country and the potential it presented him. Both Makhaya and Gilbert were two of the important characters to ensure the hierarchy of the village changed. They however did not accomplish this alone, Paulina (the widow who later marries Makhaya) was also a big role player in the changes of the hierarchy. Matenge was totally opposed to any changes in “his” village and his worst trait was that “people were not people to him” (Head 2008: 185 – 186) but things to use. He tried to accuse Paulina of a crime which in the end turned to his downfall where he could not face the villagers who wanted to talk to him about “the unknown offence” (Head 2008:191) she committed and decided to commit suicide instead. This was then the end of a chief “exploiting his own people” (Head 2008: 193) just like the in the South Afrika Makhaya was used to. It seems to the writer that this was also a pivotal point for Makhaya, thinking about who would be the next chief? The book ends by not really saying who, but it seems as if, even Gilbert would have been a choice for the people of the village.

In the beginning of the book the inequality of women, and even the fact that women were mere objects came quickly to the fore. This happened when the old woman offered her daughter to Makhaya for money for the night (Head 2008:9). In the villages the women were the labourers and caretakers of the village while the men took the cattle to pastures. Makhaya’s background ensures that he does not want to let anyone feel “unworthy” or “unequal” and therefore his interaction with the people of Golema Mmidi is as equals to everyone, men and women. Maria is married to the white Gilbert which in those time would have been seen as a crime against the state. In the end Makhaya also asks Paulina to marry him. These two women were a driving force to recon with
regarding the new developments in Golema Mmiddi not only for the way
they helped Gilbert towards a different type of farming, but also to the
role of the women as a whole. Not only did these changes better the
world of the village but also the women in the village. Mma-Millipede
captured the humankind and its warped way of living beautifully: “people
who err against human life like our chief and the white man do so only
because they are more blind than others to the mystery of life” (Head
2008: 137) which to me also give her an honorary role-player status
because she saw people for who they are, and in her weird and
sometimes scary ways she had wisdom regarding the kind of tolerance
we should have.

In the end the village changed in more ways than one. It did not have a
ruler who “exploited his own” people (Head 2008: 193) anymore. Women
were not just taking care of the village. Through the tobacco farming,
“over 150 women” (Head 2008: 142) got to “farm” and even build the
sheds needed for the curing of the tobacco. A borehole was sunk, dams
were built at each homestead and “pits blasted” (Head 2008: 143) to ensure
that the village was not dependent on the small rainfall each year for their
tobacco crops. It could therefore be said that the village changed from a
cattle village to a self-sustaining little economic power on its own.

I therefore agree fully with Zeleza’s statement. Through the course of this
book even the hardened Makhaya found love with Paulina. Gilbert and
Maria’s marriage is another example of no boundary should stand in the
way of progress and love. This is a testament to people who tolerate
each other for who they are and not by any other group or name.
Through this working together of Gilbert, Paulina and Makhaya (who
during these times would never have been each other’s equals), they
were able to show just how liberating a democratized community could
be. It does not guarantee no hardships nor conflict, but tolerance and
the ability to see another’s point of view. A good conclusion.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Study Guide, ENG 1501

DECLARATION REGARDING PLAGIARISM

DECLARATION

Name and student number: [Redacted]

Assignment topic: [Redacted]

I declare that this assignment is my own original work. Where secondary material has been used (either from a printed source or from the Internet), this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the department’s policy in this regard. I have not allowed anyone else to borrow or copy my work.

Signature: [Redacted]

Date: 10/07/2013