

NAME: _____

Literature and Composition II
The Catcher in the Rye and *Stand by Me*

Both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Stand by Me* are stories of a character's journey towards adulthood. In the novel genre, this type of story is called a **bildungsroman**.

Whereas Holden Caulfield's thoughts reveal him to be actively opposed to joining the social order, Gordie and Chris seem to be more prepared to join society at the movie's end. Why do the main characters seem to be more willing to assimilate into society than Holden?

A few points to consider:

- Notice that the boys talk about their problems together, whereas Holden tends to avoid talking about his problems
- Consider whether the boys' problems hurt them more on an intellectual level or an emotional level. Then consider whether the Holden's problems hurt him more on an intellectual level or an emotional level.
- Is innocence an issue for these boys? Why or why not?

The term *Bildungsroman* denotes a novel of all-around self-development.

Etymology:

German, from *Bildung* education + *Roman* novel

1. A Bildungsroman is, most generally, the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The growth process, at its roots a quest story, has been described as both "an apprenticeship to life" and a "search for meaningful existence within society."

2. To spur the hero or heroine on to their journey, some form of loss or discontent must jar them at an early stage away from the home or family setting.

3. The process of maturity is long, arduous, and gradual, consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order.

4. Eventually, the spirit and values of the social order become manifest in the protagonist, who is then accommodated into society. The novel ends with an assessment by the protagonist of himself and his new place in that society.

Information provided by: <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/hader1.html>

4. Compare the boys' families to that of Holden Caulfield's (add notes throughout film).
 - a. Gordie's family:

 - b. Chris's family:

 - c. Teddy's family:

 - d. Which boy's situation most resembles Holden's?
5. Train scene: Teddy's desire to the train dodge train. Compare to Antolini's fear that Holden will die for an unworthy cause. Why do the two troubled boys desire to risk and prove themselves?
6. Compare Teddy's insistence that his father "stormed the beach at Normandy" to the junkyard men who insults his father with Holden's reluctance to go home. What are both boys afraid to face?
7. Gordie's story around the campfire—why does he construct a plot in which a persecuted child gets revenge on his community?
8. Compare/Contrast the way that the boys cope with their own family demons to the way that Holden Caulfield deals with his? Defend which way is more effective.
9. Connect Gordie's need to see the dead body to the fact that he didn't cry at his brother's funeral. Compare Gordie's need to see the dead body with the fact that Holden was not present at Allie's funeral.
10. Why must twelve-year-old boys feel the need to discover the body that the town has been searching for? Given the boys' social standing, what do you think motivates them?
11. If you had to choose one of the characters to fit the mould of "catcher in the rye," which of the characters would it be?

Important Quotes

1. Chris Chambers: Everyone just knew he'd turn out bad—including him.
2. Chris: Wish the hell I was your dad. You wouldn't be goin' around talkin' about takin' these stupid shop courses if I was. It's like God gave you something man, all those stories you can make up. And He said, "this is what we got for ya kid, try not to lose it." Kids lose everything unless there's someone there to look out for them. And if your parents are too f%^\$^ up to do it, then maybe I should!
3. Teddy: This is my age! I'm in the prime of my youth and I'll only be young once.
Chris: Yeah, but you're gonna be stupid for the rest of your life.
4. The Writer: [*voiceover*] I was 12 going on 13 the first time I saw a dead human being. It happened in the summer of 1959 - a long time ago, but only if you measure in terms of years. I was living in a small town in Oregon called Castle Rock; there were only twelve hundred and eighty-one people, but to me it was the whole world.
5. The Writer: It was weird to me how, then, Teddy could care so much about his father, who practically tried to kill him, and I couldn't give a s*&* about my old man and he hadn't laid a hand on me since I was three.
6. The Writer: [*typing on computer*] I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?