**Argument Stations – Passage-Holder Form – *Catcher* Model**

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| **Selected Passage from *The Catcher in the Rye*** |
| **“You take somebody that cries their goddam eyes out over phony stuff in the movies, and nine times out of ten they’re mean bastards at heart, I’m not kidding” (155).** |
| **Hyper-Individualism Station Reasoning** |
| **Holden is demonstrating his chronic tendency to judge others around him. This broader comment comes after he observes a mother being stern with her son, in the Radio City movie theater, despite the fact that she “cried all through the goddam picture” (155). Her crying makes her appear “kindhearted as hell” to other people, but Holden perceives that in reality she is “as kindhearted as a goddam wolf” (155). Not only does Holden chronically separate himself from others through this type of judgmentalism, he also asserts his ability not to be gulled into thinking of others the way most people do: fooled by surfaces and appearances. The outcome, though, is that Holden is unable to enjoy the common entertainment that movies offer, not only because they are “phony,” but also because he is hyper-alert for the deceptions that people commonly live by. Instead of relaxing himself, his characteristically individualist time at the cinema makes him even more agitated and more unhappy.** |
| **Response to Hyper-Individualism Reasoning** |
| **This reading of the passage is compelling, as far as it goes. It is clear that in this passage Holden is yet again separating himself from others and insisting on the validity of his own perspective, regardless of what others think. What isn’t clear from the reasoning here, however, is whether this individualist move is *causing* Holden’s unhappiness, or whether it is what he is doing to *explain* his alienation and unhappiness. In other words, it isn’t clear to me whether Holden’s individualism is a cause or an effect.** |
| **Insensitive and Insincere Society Station Reasoning** |
| **The episode in which this passage appears – Holden in the Radio City theater – is typical in that it centers on the disappointing, hypocritical behavior of the adults he encounters. The mother that he observes is in fact acting insensitively toward her son: he has to go to the bathroom, while she indulges her own emotional response to the film, telling him to “sit still” (155). While he may react more strongly than most would, he has a point; it does seem inconsistent, at a minimum, for the mother to care more about the images on the screen than about her son’s discomfort and boredom. Nothing undercuts Holden’s descriptions of the basic facts of the incident. Holden is constantly noticing adult failings, which upsets him, but those adult failings are evidently real, within the world of the novel.** |
| **Response to Insensitive and Insincere Society Reasoning** |
| **Holden may be right about this mother’s uncaring response to her son’s needs. And she may be a kind of mild hypocrite in demonstrating such a strong emotional response to the characters in the movie on the screen. But this is an incident that doesn’t affect Holden in any immediate way. His response to this incident seems much too strong, given that these two are complete strangers to him. Better evidence for this reading would be the incidents in the novel in which others’ insensitivity and insincerity are directed toward, or directly affect, Holden himself.** |
| **Mental Illness Station Reasoning** |
| **The key to understanding this passage is to examine its connection with the incident in the narrative that elicits it. Holden observes a mother having an emotional moment while watching a movie, and she doesn’t want to interrupted from that to take her son (likely yet again) to the bathroom. Not admirable, perhaps, but certainly not abusive, and actually quite understandable. But from this incident, Holden makes the sweeping generalization that 90% of all those who respond emotionally to a movie are “mean bastards.” This is clearly an unwarranted leap, and it reflects the kind of bleak pessimism and negativity that are characteristic of people with clinical depression. Further, Holden’s semi-scientific certainty (his quantifying the percentage of moviegoers who are hypocrites) borders on the delusional. This is a minor incident in the novel, but it is indicative: Holden is mentally unwell.** |
| **Response to Mental Illness Reasoning** |
| **The reasoning here makes a compelling point that Holden’s generalization from the incident he observes is unwarranted and unsubstantiated. The diction he uses in and around this passage could be added to this analysis: he is using profanity gratuitously, injecting an intensity of emotion that isn’t in the incident, and that the incident doesn’t justify. What is questionable about this reasoning, however, is the connection between Holden’s hyperbolic response to this incident and mental illness. Holden does make a faux-scientific claim about the percentage of crying filmgoers, but that may be more of a common tendency people have to make unsupported claims than it is a sign of mental illness. And, yes, he is unhappy, but does that make him clinically depressed? Maybe, but this evidence isn’t strong enough by itself to be sufficient to support this position.** |