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Ms. Hopkins

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Allie was a very important person in Holden’s life. When Allie dies, Holden is mentally a wreck. He thinks everybody is a phony who is as only in it for themselves, he exaggerates heavily when he is talking about people who are important to him, and he can’t stay at a school for more than a year without getting expelled. Those are not the traits of a mentally healthy person.

Holden describes almost everybody he meets or sees as “a phony.” To Holden, a phony is someone who does things that only advance their own agenda, and who try to make others think that they are a better person then they are. When he describes Stradlater, he says that Stradlater is “a phony kind of friendly.” When talking about an old classmate of his, the first thing he says after her name is “strictly a phony.” Sally, who he goes on a date on, is “quite a little phony” according to Holden. He feels as though everybody should say exactly what they are thinking all the time, and never to try to impress anyone or make an impression that makes others like them more. In this, he is somewhat hypocritical. When he is with Sally, who he knew from an old school, he tells her he loves her, but is completely lying. If he had heard himself, he would have called himself a phony.

When Holden talks about people who he cares about, he goes on and on about them and seems to be somewhat obsessed with them. This stems from his feelings of guilt around Allie’s death. He thinks that he should have paid more attention to Allie while Allie was alive, and so he tries to make up for it by paying immense attention to people who are important to him currently. For instance, when he talks about Jane Gallagher, he says that “[he] nearly dropped dead when [Stradlater] said that [he was dating Jane].” He says it multiple times, and then comes up with lots of tiny details about Jane that most people wouldn’t bring up. Also, when describing his younger sister Phoebe, he spends more consecutive time on the one topic of Phoebe than on anything else in the book. After Allie died, Phoebe became even more important to Holden, since he has seen that he can lose people who he cares about quickly and without warning. Holden doesn’t worry about other people thinking that he sounds strange or obsessed with certain people, but he can come across that way.

Holden goes to say goodbye to his history teacher, whom he likes but who is rather eccentric. For Holden, goodbyes are very important, since he feels that he never got to say goodbye to Allie and therefore is perpetually worried that he will miss important goodbyes with others. When Holden tells the teacher that he has been expelled, the teacher gives Holden a piece of his mind. He also brings up that Holden also “had some difficulty at the Whooton School and at Elkton Hills.” By this, he means that Holden was expelled from both of those schools as well as Pencey. Holden seems like a smart person, but he is so different from all the people at his schools mentally that he can’t fit in. The fact that he can barely pass any of his classes just goes to show in how bad a state his mental health is.

Allie’s death affected Holden immensely, even though Holden doesn’t seem to realize it. After Allie died, Holden’s behavior changed drastically, and will likely never be the same. Holden pays far more attention to people he loves, because he realizes how delicate life is, and that he could lose anyone at any moment.