Lost in Translation –
Holden Caulfield, Sinner or Saint?

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J.D. Salinger’s novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), was described by *Encyclopedia Britannica* thusly: “From the beginning it attracted devoted admirers and serious critics….Salinger appears at his best in his dramatization of children; all of his work seems haunted with the lost innocence of childhood.” Sixty years after its publication, this novel remains one of the most controversial works of twentieth-century American literature, due in large part to its shocking language. The purpose of this paper is to examine the language used in *The Catcher in the Rye* to determine whether it is indeed written in “an authentic, teen-age idiom,” and to examine reactions to the novel. An ancillary objective is to evaluate the claim that it should be placed “in the native tradition of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn.*”

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