William Chen

Instructor Name

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English Essay: Mr. Antolini

A lot of people have a habit of making snap judgments about people. In the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye,* Holden Caulfield is a troubled 16-year old adolescent who is on a personal mission to protect the innocence of children that adults lack, in his view. Holden develops deep respect and admiration for his teacher, Mr. Antolini, and sees him to be Intellectual, perceptive, and a caring Individual. Moreover, he hopes to find in him an ‘innocent' adult role model that he can emulate. However, the encounter between the two in Mr. Antolini's apartment changed the way Holden saw his teacher, despite the fact that Mr. Antolini's actions were innocent and harmless.

In the story, Holden decides to spend the night in Mr. Antolini’s house, after a long late discussion he had with his teacher. He falls asleep soon after the discussion but suddenly awakes to find Mr. Antolini petting and stroking his head gently. Given Holden’s traumatic past experiences, he is shocked and horrified by this apparently homosexual advance by the sole adult he saw to be innocent. In turn, this triggers a disturbed psychological response in Holden who immediately compared it to the abuse he had suffered as a child multiple times. The event disillusions him from his teacher as his idol seemingly fell right before his eyes. However, it is highly likely that Holden misjudged his teacher's attention and overreacted to the situation, even if Mr. Antolini's gestures felt inappropriate or uncomfortable. Although, Mr. Antolini's actions may seem out of the ordinary, or overstepping a boundary, however, that display of affection and concern does not seem to have sexual undertones. This is evident from the fact that Mr. Antolini was neither angry, embarra1ssed, nor defensive about his actions, something that can be expected of a sexual predator in such a situation. At most, it can be seen akin to a paternal way of affection as opposed to Holden’s misinterpretation.

The significance of Mr. Antolini's actions can be understood in the context of his prior relationship with Holden and from his own past experiences. Mr. Antolini and Holden had noticeably become close after being friends for a long time. Mr. Antolini would often meet Holden's parents, play tennis with him together, and would frequently advise him about the problems he faced in life. The lengthy discussions he would have with Holden point to the fact that Mr. Antolini personally cared about his student, saw himself as a life coach and mentor to the child and had only the best intentions for him. Secondly, Mr. Antolini had earlier tended to another boy, James Castle, who had committed suicide out of depression. In his discussions with Holden, Mr. Antolini had heard him express depressive and suicidal thoughts, which may have moved him and reminded him of James. He did not want to see another young boy end up dying in the same manner as James and thus wanted to save Holden by consoling him and demonstrating that someone still cares for him. Nevertheless, Holden’s past experiences with violence and sexual abuse triggered traumatic memories of the past that led him to misinterpret his teacher’s actions, and which in turn, evoked a flight-or-fight response to an otherwise normal situation. In this regard, Holden's habit of making snap judgments about people overcame his ability to see the actions of his teacher in context.

A close reading of the novel’s text makes it quite evident that Mr. Antolini was not making a pass at Holden, instead, his actions were well-intentioned at attempting to console and care for Holden. Mr. Antolini’s advice, discussions, and actions point to his role in preventing Holden from ‘taking a fall’ into a bottomless pit where all human actions seem frightening, ill-intentioned, or sickening. Instead, he was attempting to console Holden concerned about his well-being. He knew that Holden saw in him a role model and wanted to use that opportunity to keep a close eye on the young people he encounters in his life in order to prevent them from meeting the same fate as James, who died in the most dismaying of manner. Covering a naked corpse with scattered blood and body parts was itself a traumatic experience that a compassionate man like Mr. Antolini had vowed never to let happen again. Thus, what Holden saw as a gay pass, what is, in fact, Mr. Antolini expressing care to a boy who obviously had a range of personal issues and problems. These problems had always led Holden to view the entire adult human race as despicable and perverted, in which no one was innocent. The fall into this bottomless pit may have led Holden to meet the same fate as James, yet in his panic, he pushed the only person away who understood his condition in an emphatic way and wanted to advise and console him.

In conclusion, the snap judgments Holden would often make about people led him to view the otherwise innocent, harmless, and compassionate actions of Mr. Antolini in a negative light. Although, Mr. Antolini's actions might have seemed inappropriate or discomforting to someone who does not understand the context of his actions, Holden's reaction was very hasty and critical. His habit of making snap judgments about people had led him to misinterpret his concerned teacher's actions to be a gay pass and in doing so he rejected a valuable and valid source of consolation, advice, and solace.

**Outline**

1. Introduction
   1. Attention getter: making snap judgments about people
   2. Background Information: Holden develops deep respect and admiration for his teacher, Mr. Antolini, looking an ‘innocent’ adult role model that he can emulate
   3. Thesis statement: the encounter between the two in Mr. Antolini’s apartment changed the way Holden saw his teacher, despite the fact that Mr. Antolini’s actions were innocent and harmless
2. Paragraph 1
   1. In Mr. Antolini’s house sleeping at night, Holden awakes suddenly to find Mr. Antolini petting and stroking his head gently and misinterprets his actions
   2. Holden is shocked and horrified by this apparently homosexual advance by the sole adult he saw to be innocent
   3. Mr. Antolini’s display of affection and concern does not seem to have sexual undertones as evidenced by the circumstances and context
3. Paragraph 2
   1. The significance of Mr. Antolini’s actions can be understood in context of his prior relationship with Holden and from his own past experiences
   2. Mr. Antolini was close to Holden and his family, personally cared about him, and saw himself as a mentor to help him out of multiple issues
   3. Wanted to save Holden by consoling him and demonstrating that someone still cares for him to prevent a fate like James
4. Paragraph 3
   1. Antolini’s actions were well-intentioned at attempting to console and care for Holden to prevent Holden from ‘taking a fall’
   2. Fall into this bottomless pit may have led Holden to meet the same fate as James
   3. Wanted to use that opportunity to keep a close eye on the young people he encounters in his life
5. Conclusion
   1. Restate thesis: Holden viewed the otherwise innocent, harmless, and compassionate actions of Mr. Antolini in a negative light
   2. Snap judgments about people led Holden to misinterpret his concerned teacher’s actions as a gay pass and in doing so he rejected a valuable and valid source of consolation