The Psychoanalysis of Holden Caulfield

YOUR PROJECT:
Throughout our extensive conversation with Holden Caulfield, we have come to know him quite well, as he has revealed to us many of his most intimate thoughts and feelings about family, friends, relationships, and society. Knowing Holden on this intimate level enables us to then analyze his desire to be a “catcher in the rye,” which is his self-ascribed occupation, and use it as a vehicle to further our understanding of his problems, concerns, and anger with people and society as a whole. We must look at and care for Holden as if we are the counselors who are responsible for diagnosing and prescribing for his current predicament.

Here is your assignment: As a team of psychiatrists (groups of 4), prepare a written report (please, no less than four pages) that offers your perspectives and conclusions about your patient, Holden Caulfield. Your report must consist of the following elements:

BACKGROUND:
Give the background of the patient, Holden Caulfield, so that all who read the report will be able to know the necessary details that brought him to you in the first place. Make sure that whatever you bring up later in terms of analysis, diagnosis or prognosis appears in your background material. If you mention a character later on in your report, make sure you have mentioned that character here in the background first. There are times when you may simply list the character in a category (e.g., Ward Stradlater, Mal Brossard, Robert Ackley are students at Pency Prep.) If there is a significant incident that you will discuss later on, make sure that you mention it in your background first so that the reader knows about the incident in which you are referring to.

ANALYSIS:
What are the problems (life, family, school, friendships and relationships) that Holden is facing? You ought to find an extensive list of problems, because Holden has quite a few. He has been thrown out of several schools, his grades are suffering, and he talks to his dead brother. There are many other problems as well, but you get the idea. Essentially, analyze and evaluate what incidents, life experiences, and situations you see as most influential to Holden’s distressed state. (Hint: We have been doing this extensively in class)

DIAGNOSIS:
Holden may have problems, but are they symptoms of mental illness or are they problems of a normal adolescent mind? Both? You must decide. There are causes for Holden's problems. What are they? Support your conclusions. What incidents in the book support your contentions? What, if anything, do his parents have to do with what he is going through? Does D. B. have any part in this? What about Holden himself? Please diagnose Holden's problems to the best of your ability, and ultimately conclude not only what exactly he is suffering from, but also elaborate on the symptoms generally associated with what he is suffering from. Explain precisely how the behavior Holden exhibits aligns with the various symptoms of any disorder and make a solid case for your diagnosis.

PRESCRIPTION:
What do you recommend for Holden to improve his life? Assume you have no authority to prescribe drugs. What life changing recommendations are you going to make for Holden, his family or for any other character in the book? Essentially, this is an intervention, whereby you as the team of doctors are prescribing ways to change Holden’s life for the better.

PROGNOSIS:
What will happen to Holden if he follows your advice? What will happen to Holden if he does not? Based on your team’s prescription, predict what Holden’s future may hold if he does AND does not heed your informed advice.

This is YOUR opportunity to save Holden Caulfield from his epic fall. How will you do so?