

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

A literary work is more than just words; it is a way to connect with emotions, memories, and thoughts that live inside the reader. It is like a mirror that reflects the reader's soul, showing their personal feelings and reactions. These responses help us see how powerful and meaningful the work really is. In the world of literary studies, we call these heartfelt reactions as responses. Each person's response is shaped by their personal journey with reading, their education, what they know, and how they understand the text (Pradopo, 2003). Readers approach a text with their own unique backgrounds and perspectives, which naturally leads to a variety of interpretations. While some may engage in critical analysis of themes and character development, others might focus on the aesthetic qualities of the language or the overall narrative experience. The act of interpreting literature is a personal experience. It often brings out emotions and creates a special connection between the reader and the text.

The relationship between a reader and a text is well explained by the reader response theory. This theory emphasizes that each reader interprets a literary work based on their own experiences, background, and knowledge. It values the individual perspectives of readers, highlighting how personal experiences shape the way a text is understood. Reader response theory also focuses on the human side of reading, showing that the same text can be experienced differently by different people. It suggests that meaning is not fixed within the text, but is instead created through the reader's active engagement with it. Sometimes, a book can truly speak to us, reflecting human feelings, experiences, and struggles. Certain stories become important parts of our lives, helping us understand the world around us and even ourselves. One such book is *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. Since it was first published in 1951, this novel has touched the hearts of many readers and is still one of the most well-known and widely read books today. It continues to sell about a million copies each year, with over 65 million copies sold in total.

According to recent data on GoodReads, around 42,800 people are reading the novel, showing that it still matters to readers both young and old. Its enduring popularity suggests that it speaks to people of different ages and backgrounds (GoodReads, 2025). A survey by YouGov also found that 81% of people interviewed view the novel as well-respected and important (YouGov, 2024). The story explores themes like anxiety, loss, and identity, feelings that are especially important for teenagers



growing into adulthood. At the same time, *The Catcher in the Rye* offers a quiet but powerful look at the shallow parts of society, giving readers a chance to reflect on the world around them in a meaningful way. Although *The Catcher in the Rye* is often seen as one of the most important literary works of the 20th century and is frequently included in lists of the greatest books of all time, it has also sparked debate. Some readers question J.D. Salinger's writing style or find Holden Caulfield, the main character, to be self-centered. In Indonesia, the novel has been translated as *Amarah Anak Muda* (Anger of Youth), a title that adds a new layer to its meaning. This version captures the emotional struggles of young people, helping readers connect more deeply with Holden's inner world. It also shows how literature can cross cultural lines, staying meaningful to readers from different backgrounds. What makes *The Catcher in the Rye* so powerful is how honestly it talks about growing up. Holden's efforts to stay true to himself and his discomfort with society reflect the challenges young people face when dealing with pressure and expectations. His story also touches on mental health, a topic that has become more important in today's world. Because of this, the novel remains a valuable read for anyone who wants to understand the emotional journey of youth.

As a person grows and changes, so too do the interpretations of stories. This raises an interesting question: How does our understanding of a story evolve over time? Can the same story be understood in entirely different ways depending on who we are as readers? These questions bring the ideas of Louise Rosenblatt, particularly her reader response theory, which views reading as a dynamic exchange between the text and the reader. She suggests two primary approaches to this interaction: transactional model and efferent vs aesthetic reading. Transactional model presents the interaction between the readers and the text while the efferent approach, which focuses on gathering factual information, and the aesthetic approach, which engages readers emotionally and imaginatively. These approaches guide how we interpret a text.

Every reader brings their own age, experiences, and background to a story, which makes each person's understanding of it unique. This idea is in line with Rosenblatt's (1982) view that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text. It reminds us that our interpretations are influenced by our culture, emotions, and knowledge. What the researcher finds especially



Rosenblatt's theory is how it connects literature with us how our personal experiences and background affect the applying this theory to *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. The researcher wants to show how the novel can reflect our personal a space for self-reflection, depending on where we are in theory suggests that meaning is created through the

interaction between the reader's background and the text. Since each reader brings their own history, emotions, and perspectives, no two reading experiences are ever the same. This makes literature an exciting area for exploration and discussion, more than just a way to analyze texts, Rosenblatt's theory helps us understand the changing relationship between the text and the reader, showing how literature evolves with its audience. This connection between the reader and the story is what makes studying literature so meaningful and always interesting.

Previous research has primarily focused on analyzing the themes or the character of Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*, without considering how interpretations may differ based on the reader's age. This study is offering fresh perspective in that it compares the interpretation of adults and teenagers; it shows new insights into how age and life experiences shape readers' views of the novel. By exploring the impact of age, personal experiences, and maturity level on the interpretation of *The Catcher in the Rye*, this research aims to fill a gap in earlier studies. With this goal in mind, the study is titled *A Reader Response Analysis: Teen and Adult Interpretations of The Catcher in the Rye*, in the hope that the findings will reveal how the perspectives of teenage and adult readers differ and how life events and age influence the way literary works are understood.

1.2 Identification of Problems

After reading the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, several issues that can be explored include:

1. Readers' interpretations of the characters and themes presented in *The Catcher in the Rye*
2. The primary conflicts and themes that surface throughout *The Catcher in the Rye*
3. The impact of J.D. Salinger's writing approach in *The Catcher in the Rye* on Readers' comprehension
4. The significance of *The Catcher in the Rye* in today's context
5. The influence of age and life experiences on the intellectual analysis of readers' perspectives.
6. The role of cultural context in shaping interpretations of the novel.



ces in emotional engagement between teens and adults
reting *The Catcher in the Rye*.

blems

uses on examining the differences in reader responses to
Rye between teenagers (aged 13-19) and adults (aged 20
plores how age, life experiences, and maturity influence

emotional, intellectual, and interpretative reactions to the novel. The research is limited to contemporary readers and does not include cross-cultural or historical perspectives.

1.4 Research Questions

According to what has been discussed in the background of the study, along with the identification and scope of the problem, the research aims to answer the following research question:

1. How do teenage and adult readers differ in their interpretation of *The Catcher in the Rye* based on Louise Rosenblatt Theory?
2. In what ways do life experiences and maturity influence teens and adults interpretations?

1.5 Objectives of Study

Based on the research questions above, this study aims to answer the research problems, namely:

1. To explore how teenagers and adults interpret *The Catcher in the Rye* based on Louise Rosenblatt Theory
2. To analyze the influence of age, life experiences, and maturity on reader responses to *The Catcher in the Rye*.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how readers engage with *The Catcher in the Rye* by examining the perspectives of both teenagers and adults. Through this comparison, the research highlights how factors such as age and personal background influence the way individuals interpret literature. In doing so, it not only offers a renewed appreciation for Salinger's novel but also emphasizes literature's role in shaping both personal and shared identities. It sheds light on the relationship between readers and texts, demonstrating how meaning is shaped through individual interpretation.

a. Theoretical Significance

This study adds to our understanding of how people respond to literature by looking at how age and life stage influence the way readers text. By focusing on *The Catcher in the Rye*, it offers insights into how teenagers and adults make sense of the through different psychological and personal lenses. The might how things like maturity and life experiences shape the nnect with literature. Overall, the study helps us better how our relationship with books changes over time and



opens the door for more research into how we read and relate to stories at different points in our lives.

b. Practical Significance

The findings of this research have practical value in several areas, including education, therapy, and literacy programs:

- 1) Literary Education: This research can be used to design a curriculum that better meets students' needs. By understanding how teenagers and adults respond to *The Catcher in the Rye* educators can develop more effective teaching methods, such as group discussions that encourage students to share personal experiences related to the novel's themes.
- 2) Literature-Based Therapy: In a therapeutic context, this research can guide how *The Catcher in the Rye* or similar novels are used to facilitate discussions about identity, mental health, and personal growth. Therapy can use elements from the novel to help individuals explore feelings of alienation and trauma, as well as develop better coping strategies. For example, therapists can use Holden's character to help clients understand and cope with feelings of loss and uncertainty.
- 3) Literacy Program Development: This research can also contribute to the development of more inclusive literacy programs that consider audience diversity. By highlighting how readers of different ages interact with texts, these programs can be designed to improve reading skills and comprehension among students from various backgrounds.

1.7 Sequence of The Chapter

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research, covering the background of the study, the problem being addressed, its scope, the research questions, the study's objectives, and an outline of the chapters that follow. Chapter Two provides a review of related literature and presents relevant theories that support the analysis. Chapter Three explains the research methodology, detailing the research design, participants, data sources, as well as the methods used for collecting and analyzing the data. Chapter Four presents the findings and offers a discussion of the results. Chapter Five concludes the study and offers suggestions for future practical application.



CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Related Studies

The research titled *A Reader Response Analysis: Teen and Adult Interpretations of The Catcher in the Rye*, explore how life experience and maturity influence readers' interpretations of the novel, applying Rosenblatt's reader-response theory. This study looks at how teenagers and adults relate to Holden Caulfield's story in different ways. It emphasizes how personal experiences and emotional maturity influence each group engages with the text. By exploring how meaning in literature can change, this research shows that *The Catcher in the Rye* has different impacts at various stages of life, offering insights into how the relationship between readers and the text evolves over time.

In contrast, the study by Yan and Linjuan (2021), titled *A Study on the Interaction Between The Catcher in the Rye and the Readers from the Perspective of Iser's Reader-Response Criticism*, dives into how readers interact with *The Catcher in the Rye* using Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory. This research focuses on elements like the implied reader, the framework that invites responses, and the gaps in the text to see how the novel encourages readers to engage actively. It points out how Holden's identity and feelings reflect a sense of alienation in society, pushing readers to rethink their own realities and connect with the story on a personal level. While the current study looks at differences based on age, Yan and Linjuan's work is more about the textual features that invite and maintain reader interaction.

Zahra et al. (2023) take a different approach in their study *Literary Reception in Tere Liye's Novel Rembulan Tenggelam di Wajahmu (Aesthetic Studies of Experimental Reception)* by using surveys to look at how readers respond to the book. They assess responses based on things like character development, emotional connection, narrative techniques, and themes, ranking them as high, medium, or low. This research gives concrete data on how readers perceive and engage with the story, but it doesn't focus on age or the



the text and readers. Unlike the current study, which looks at age, this one focuses on an Indonesian novel and emphasizes aesthetic qualities.

Zahra et al. (2023) thesis, *The Catcher in the Rye: Performing Class* at Holden's quest for authenticity within the framework of

societal norms and class issues. This study examines how the novel critiques the social structures of 1950s America and shows how they affect identity and personal struggles. While Lentini's work also focuses on *The Catcher in the Rye*, it differs from the current study by highlighting class dynamics and social critique instead of reader engagement. It presents Holden's journey as both a warning and an inspiring story about self-discovery.

The studies share common ground in their focus on how readers engage with literature, emphasizing the role of personal and contextual factors in shaping interpretations. All four studies highlight the active participation of readers in making sense of a text. Notably, *The Catcher in the Rye* serves as the central text for the current study, as well as for Yan and Linjuan (2021) and Lentini (2023), with Holden Caulfield's narrative acting as a reflective tool on societal and personal struggles. Additionally, three of the studies, this research, Yan and Linjuan (2021), and Zahra et al. (2023) apply reader-response criticism, though through different theoretical lenses. They also explore themes of personal and societal reflection, encouraging readers to reconsider their realities and identities through their engagement with the text.

Even though these studies share some similarities, they each have their own focus, methods, and theoretical angles. The current study stands out by looking at how teenagers and adults interpret *The Catcher in the Rye*, highlighting how age and life experiences shape their views. On the other hand, Yan and Linjuan (2021) dig into the text itself, analyzing elements like the implied reader and frameworks that invite responses, without considering demographic differences. Zahra et al. (2023) take a different approach by focusing on how readers appreciate *Rembulan Tenggelam di Wajahmu* by Tere Liye, using surveys to categorize responses based on narrative elements. Lentini (2023) also looks at *The Catcher in the Rye*, but shifts the focus to class dynamics and social critique, stepping away from reader-response theory to explore themes of authenticity and social hierarchies.

The methods used in these studies are also quite different. The current study takes an interpretive approach based on Rosenblatt's reader-response theory, concentrating on generational viewpoints. Yan and Linjuan (2021) use textual analysis grounded in Iser's framework, while Zahra et al. (2023) take an analyzing reader surveys to evaluate responses to narrative (2023), meanwhile, employs a sociocultural critique to performance and authenticity in Holden's journey. These differences highlight the unique perspectives and contributions to understanding of literary reception.



Each study offers its own valuable insights. The current research shows how our age and life experiences affect how we interpret Holden's story. Yan and Linjuan (2021) point out that the way a text is structured can help engage readers and encourage them to reflect on themselves. Zahra et al. (2023) explain that different parts of the story resonate with readers in various ways, depending on how they respond. Lentini (2023) discusses *The Catcher in the Rye* as a critique of society, focusing on themes like self-healing and being true to oneself. These studies help us understand how readers connect with stories and highlight the different ways that texts, readers, and their surroundings interact.

2.2 Reader Response Approach

Reader response, also known as reader-response criticism, is a theory developed by various scholars and literary critics that explores how readers derive meaning from texts. The relationship between the reader and the text is central to this theory; without a reader, a text holds no meaning. Essentially, a text comes to life through the reader's engagement with it. There are misconceptions surrounding reader response theory, particularly the idea that it allows for any interpretation of a text. While this approach is more open than formalist or structuralist theories, it does not imply that all interpretations are valid. Prominent figures in reader-response theory include Richards (1974), Rosenblatt (1993), Fish (1970), and Iser (1978). They argue that reading is a transactional process involving an interaction between the reader and the text, with each reading experience being unique and engaging readers on ethical, intellectual, social, and aesthetic levels. The origins of this theory can be traced back to Louise Rosenblatt, a pioneering literary theorist from the 1930s, who emphasized that understanding a literary work can lead to self-awareness and a clearer perspective on one's values and concerns.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory highlights the active role of readers in constructing meaning, asserting that the interaction between the text and the reader generates awareness, with written words triggering consciousness and allowing readers to draw upon their prior experiences. According to Rosenblatt (1993), "*whether as a listener, writer, speaker, or reader, each person engages in interaction using their own linguistic and experiential resources.*" This



ss enables multiple interpretations of a text, challenging the fixed meaning. Reader response approaches, often referred to as reader-oriented approaches, focus on how readers engage with a text. Adi (2011) distinguishes between these terms by noting that reader-oriented approaches emphasize how readers form aesthetic judgments, while reader-response approaches are more concerned with the impact of the text on the reader,

including enjoyment and background influences. Both approaches underscore the active role of the reader in creating meaning.

In reader response theory, there are no right or wrong interpretations; each reader's reaction is subjective and shaped by personal experiences. However, these responses can be analyzed for their adequacy. Rosenblatt (1978) describes reader response as a connection between the reader and the text, emphasizing that a reader's background significantly influences their interpretation. The meaning of a literary work arises from this dynamic interaction rather than being an inherent quality of the text. The study of literature through the lens of reader response or reception is known as Literary Reception. Factors such as time, place, and social context play crucial roles in how texts are delivered and received. The term Reception, derived from the Latin word *recipere*, means *to receive or welcome*, indicating how readers accept and emotionally respond to a work of art (Ratna, 2015). Readers' responses are part of a broader historical and social process.

According to Pradopo (2007), reception studies focus on the aesthetics of how readers react to literary works. Teeuw (as cited in Pradopo, 2007) emphasizes that literature must resonate with readers' tastes, suggesting a strong connection between literature and its audience. The value of literary works is derived from the readers who engage with them, making readers responsible for the meaning and significance of the text. Understanding literary reception involves examining individual works within a larger historical context, which situates a work's theoretical significance and literary position within the broader literary landscape. The reception of literary works is crucial for understanding literary history, reflecting the ongoing interaction between authorship and audience, even if that interaction is sometimes passive.

Hans Robert Jauss is a significant figure in discussions of literary reception, known for his concept of the horizon of reader expectations. He posits that a reader's reactions are closely tied to their previous experiences and expectations (Khurosan, 2020). Sungkowati (2016) notes that engaging with literature can expand a person's understanding and horizons. Wolfgang Iser also contributed to this field by suggesting that effective literature empowers readers to influence how it is received. In summary, reader response theory



the active role of readers in interpreting texts, shaped by their experiences. This interaction is essential for understanding the value of literature, highlighting the dynamic relationship between readers and texts.

Each (1993), there are five different ways that readers interpret texts. These categories help us understand that people read in

various ways based on their unique experiences and backgrounds. Each type reflects how readers engage with literature and the strategies they use. The five types are: Textual Reader Response, Experiential Reader Response, Psychological Reader Response, Social Reader Response, and Cultural Reader Response. Here's a closer look at each type:

1. Textual Reader Response

This type focuses on the text itself, its language, structure, and writing style. It looks at how these elements guide readers in understanding the story. Authors often use specific techniques to influence how readers interpret the text and feel about it. The main goal here is to help readers analyze meanings that are directly tied to the text.

2. Experiential Reader Response

In this approach, Beach points out that a reader's personal experiences, emotions, and memories play a big role in how they interpret a text. This response is very subjective, meaning that each reader will have a unique reaction based on their own life. It emphasizes the importance of connecting emotionally and imaginatively with the text, which can lead to very different interpretations among readers.

3. Psychological Reader Response

This type looks at the mental processes that occur when a reader engages with a text. It explores how readers perceive and interpret what they read. Factors like a reader's mood and mental state can greatly influence their responses. Additionally, unconscious thoughts and feelings can also shape how they understand the text, providing deeper insights into the reading experience.

4. Social Reader Response

This approach highlights the importance of community and culture in shaping how readers respond to texts. It emphasizes that social contexts, like the groups we belong to, can influence our interpretations. When readers share their thoughts and interpretations with others, it creates a collective understanding that can develop within specific communities.



ader Response

e emphasizes how a reader's cultural background affects g experience. Factors such as cultural context, historical , and personal beliefs can shape how someone interprets a ortant to consider the wider cultural and historical settings in

which both the text and the reader exist, as this can enrich our understanding of how different cultures interpret the same work.

However, in this research, the theory that used is Rosenblatt's theory of literary reception. Rosenblatt's approach emphasizes the interaction between the reader and the text, focusing on how personal experiences and emotions influence the reading experience. In contrast to Hans Robert Jauss's theory, which centers on the concept of the horizon of expectations that readers bring to a text based on their cultural and historical context, Rosenblatt's theory highlights the individual and subjective nature of reading, Rosenblatt emphasizes the immediate emotional and aesthetic responses that arise during the act of reading.

This research focus on how readers connect with literature through their unique perspectives and feelings. By emphasizing these personal experiences, this research aims to provide a deeper and more vibrant understanding of the text. This approach will highlight the many different ways literature can resonate with individuals, making reading a truly personal and enriching experience.

2.3 Louise Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory

Louise Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory revolutionized literary studies by shifting the focus from the text itself to the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. Introduced in her works *Literature as Exploration* (1938) and *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978), Rosenblatt emphasized that meaning does not reside solely in the text or within the reader but emerges from the transactional process between the two. This perspective marked a significant departure from formalist approaches that treated the text as an isolated artifact. Rosenblatt's central contribution to literary theory is her concept of the transaction between the reader and the text. She argued that this process is influenced by the reader's individual experiences, emotions, and prior knowledge, which shape how they interpret the text. Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory is central to reader-response criticism:

1. Transactional Model (Rosenblatt, 1994)

Rosenblatt proposed that reading is a transaction between the text (the stimulus) and the reader (the responder). This interaction creates a unique reading experience.



Aesthetic Reading (Rosenblatt, 1978)

Informational Reading: Focused on extracting information or facts.

Aesthetic Reading: Centered on experiencing emotions and engagement with a text

Interplay Between Aesthetic and Efferent Reading (Rosenblatt, 1978)

1. **Transactional Theory:** According to Louise Rosenblatt, readers often shift between aesthetic and efferent stances depending on their purpose for reading. This dynamic interaction allows for a richer understanding of texts.
2. **Integration in Education:** In educational settings, both reading approaches can be integrated to enhance comprehension and engagement. For instance, students might analyze a literary work for its themes (aesthetic) while also researching historical context (efferent).
3. **Artistic Responses:** Engaging with literature through visual arts can blend both stances, allowing students to express their interpretations while also grounding their work in textual analysis and research.

Rosenblatt's reading theory suggests that literature gives readers a special space to explore their own values, feelings, and identities. She believes that the reader is the main part of the reading experience. Meaning is not set by the author; instead, readers create meaning through their interaction with the text. Each reading is unique, shaped by the reader's background, emotions, and choices. This makes reading a personal experience, where all interpretations based on the text are valid and meaningful. Her reader-response theory is useful for studying how different groups interpret literature based on their backgrounds.

This approach helps us understand why certain themes or characters resonate differently with various audiences. For example, Rosenblatt's theory is useful for analyzing how different age groups interpret *The Catcher in the Rye*. The novel's themes of identity, alienation, and growing up provide a great opportunity to explore the interactions she described. Teenagers might connect with Holden Caulfield's struggles with self-discovery, while adults may see his experiences through a nostalgic or critical lens. By using Rosenblatt's theory, this study can reveal how personal experiences and age influence the meaning readers find in the text. Her theory shows how everyone has their own way of understanding literature. It keeps influencing how we teach and study books, giving us valuable insights into how our connection with literature evolves over time.

