



# *The Catcher in the Rye*

## STUDY GUIDE

### **About the Author**

SALINGER, J. D. (1919-2010). Although he is one of the most widely read authors in the English language, J. D. Salinger successfully kept himself out of the public eye for most of his career. His preference for seclusion made his life a matter of speculation among fans and his literary output a subject of controversy among critics.

Jerome David Salinger was born in New York City on Jan. 1, 1919. After studying at Columbia and New York universities, he turned to writing. His first short story appeared in *Story* magazine in 1940. After service in World War II, his stories appeared regularly in *The New Yorker* magazine. Major recognition and a large following came with his novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, published in 1951. This touching and humorous story about a rebellious teenager became a cult book among university students. It was followed by *Nine Stories* (1953), *Franny and Zooey* (1961), *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*; and *Seymour: an Introduction* (1963). The last three are mostly stories about the Glass family.

Altogether Salinger produced 13 short stories and one novel. Some of the stories made use of his wartime experiences, as in "For Esme-With Love and Squalor" (1950). "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (1948) concerns the suicide of veteran Seymour Glass. Salinger seemed at his best in dramatizing the lives of children. Much of his work concerns the lost innocence of childhood.

### **About the Book**

*Catcher in the Rye* is a 1951 novel by J.D. Salinger. Originally published for adults, it has since become popular with adolescent readers for its themes of teenage confusion, angst, sexuality, alienation, and rebellion. It has been translated into almost all of the world's major languages. Around 250,000 copies are sold each year, with total sales of more than sixty-five million. The novel's protagonist and antihero, Holden Caulfield, has become an icon for teenage rebellion.

The novel was included on a 2005 *Time Magazine* list of the 100 best English-language novels written since 1923, and it was named by Modern Library and its readers as one of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century.

**Use the following questions to guide your reading. But you must answer 5 of the questions on page 3.**

### Chapters 1-4

1. Who is Holden Caulfield?
2. Where is Holden as he narrates the story?
3. Why wasn't Holden at the big football game?
4. Why wouldn't Holden be back to Pencey after Christmas vacation?
5. What "dirty trick" did Mr. Spencer pull on Holden?
6. Who was Robert Ackley?
7. Who was Stradlater?
8. Identify Jane Gallagher.
9. Why doesn't Holden go down to see Jane?

Chapters 5-9

1. About what did Holden write Stradlater's composition?
2. Why did Holden tear up the composition he had written for Stradlater?
3. Why did Stradlater hit Holden?
4. Where did Holden decide to go?
5. Who did Holden meet on his train ride? Why did Holden lie to her about Ernie?

Chapters 10-13

1. Who is Phoebe?
2. Identify Bernice, Marty and Laverne.
3. Describe Holden's relationship with Jane Gallagher.
4. Why did Holden have to leave Ernie's?
5. What do we learn about Holden from his diversion about his gloves being stolen at Pencey?
6. What was the "big mess" Holden got into when he got back to the hotel after being at Ernie's?

Chapters 14-17

1. Why did Maurice hit Holden?
2. Holden said he felt like committing suicide. Why didn't he?
3. Identify Sally Hayes.
4. Why did Holden check out of the hotel, and where did he go?
5. Who did Holden meet at the "little sandwich bar" after he locked his bags at the station? What did they talk about?
6. What record did Holden get for Phoebe? Why?
7. What made Holden "not so depressed anymore" on his way to the record store?
8. Why didn't Holden like actors?
9. Why did Holden like the museum so much?
10. What did Holden think of "George something--"?
11. How did Holden's feelings for Sally change from the beginning of the date to the end?

Chapters 18-21

1. What did Holden think of the show at Radio City?
2. Why did Holden call Carl Luce even though he didn't like him much?
3. What did Holden and Luce discuss?
4. Why did Holden go home so early (before Wednesday)?
5. What was Phoebe's reaction when she first saw Holden? What was her reaction when she found out that he had been expelled?

Chapters 22-26

1. What was Holden's reply when Phoebe asked him why he "got the ax again"?
2. Identify James Castle.
3. Why did Holden go to Mr. Antolini's house?
4. Why did Holden leave Mr. Antolini's home before morning?
5. What advice did Mr. Antolini give Holden?
6. How did Phoebe surprise Holden? What was Holden's reaction?
7. Why did Holden sit on the bench in the rain even though it was coming down in buckets?
8. How did Holden explain his catcher in the rye daydream?

### Summer Reading Assignment

Select and answer **Five** of the following questions using complete sentences. Each response should be at least a paragraph in length—somewhere between five and twelve sentences long. **You must include textual support for your answers.** The responses should be **typed** with **proper MLA headings and parenthetical citations.**

#### Interpretation Questions

1. Is Holden an insane person in a sane world, or is he a sane person in an insane world?
2. Describe Holden's relationship with Phoebe.
3. Why does Holden like the museum so much?
4. Holden often says he is going to call someone, but he doesn't do it because he isn't in the mood. What could these uncompleted calls symbolize?
5. Explain how the title relates to the events of the novel and the themes of *The Catcher in the Rye*.
6. Compare and contrast Jane Gallagher and Sally Hayes.
7. Why does Holden want to know about the ducks in Central Park?
8. In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. Discuss what past events have the most significant effect on Holden.
9. In a literary work, a minor character may possess traits that emphasize, by comparison or contrast, the distinctive qualities of the main character. Discuss a minor character from the novel who serves as a contrast to Holden.
10. Pick one of the following and explain its symbolic importance: the broken record, the ducks, Grand Central Station, and the hunting hat.
11. Is Holden a phony, a coward, or both?
12. Is Holden a sympathetic character? (Do we sympathize with him?)
13. The ending of the novel does not make it clear what will happen to Holden in the future. Using evidence from the story, predict what will happen to Holden when he returns to school in the fall.

**Be sure to provide textual support for your answers and cite the pages where you found the information.**