



约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES

The Catcher in the Rye

麦田里的守望者

J. D. Salinger

世界图书出版公司



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J.D. Salinger

Notes by Nigel Tooke



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PREFACE

York Notes are designed to give you a broader perspective on works of literature studied at GCSE and equivalent levels. We have carried out extensive research into the needs of the modern literature student prior to publishing this new edition. Our research showed that no existing series fully met students' requirements. Rather than present a single authoritative approach, we have provided alternative viewpoints, empowering students to reach their own interpretations of the text. York Notes provide a close examination of the work and include biographical and historical background, summaries, glossaries, analyses of characters, themes, structure and language, cultural connections and literary terms.

If you look at the Contents page you will see the structure for the series. However, there's no need to read from the beginning to the end as you would with a novel, play, poem or short story. Use the Notes in a way that suits you. Our aim is to help you with your understanding of the work, not to dictate how you should learn.

York Notes are written by English teachers and examiners, with an expert knowledge of the subject. They show you how to succeed in coursework and examination assignments, guiding you through the text and offering practical advice. Questions and comments will extend, test and reinforce your knowledge. Attractive colour design and illustrations improve clarity and understanding, making these Notes easy to use and handy for quick reference.

York Notes are ideal for:

- Essay writing
- Exam preparation
- Class discussion


The author of these Notes, Nigel Tookey, is Head of English at a large Further Education college near London. He is an English graduate and a Senior Examiner for GCSE English.

The text used in these Notes is the 1994 Penguin Books edition (see Context and Setting for the history of this text).

Health Warning: This study guide will enhance your understanding, but should not replace the reading of the original text and/or study in class.

I

NTRODUCTION



H

OW TO STUDY A NOVEL

You have bought this book because you wanted to study a novel on your own. This may supplement classwork.

- You will need to read the novel several times. Start by reading it quickly for pleasure, then read it slowly and carefully. Further readings will generate new ideas and help you to memorise the details of the story.
- Make careful notes on themes, plot and characters of the novel. The plot will change some of the characters. Who changes?
- The novel may not present events chronologically. Does the novel you are reading begin at the beginning of the story or does it contain flashbacks and a muddled time sequence? Can you think why?
- How is the story told? Is it narrated by one of the characters or by an all-seeing ('omniscient') narrator?
- Does the same person tell the story all the way through? Or do we see the events through the minds and feelings of a number of different people.
- Which characters does the narrator like? Which characters do you like or dislike? Do your sympathies change during the course of the book? Why? When?
- Any piece of writing (including your notes and essays) is the result of thousands of choices. No book had to be written in just one way: the author could have chosen other words, other phrases, other characters, other events. How could the author of your novel have written the story differently? If events were recounted by a minor character how would this change the novel?

Studying on your own requires self-discipline and a carefully thought-out work plan in order to be effective. Good luck.

J.D. SALINGER'S BACKGROUND

Family background

J.D. Salinger was born in New York City in 1919. His full name is Jerome David Salinger. His background is not literary as his father, Sol Salinger, was in the food import business and his mother, Miriam Jillich, was a housewife. His writing is probably based on his life to some extent; some of his childhood experiences seem to link to parts of *The Catcher in the Rye* although there are no really obvious connections; he had a sister who was eight years older than him, called Doris, and no brothers.

Education

J.D. Salinger went to school in Manhattan, the same district as Phoebe's school in the novel, and his schoolwork was of average standard. At the age of thirteen he was sent to a school called the McBurney School where he lasted one year before 'flunking', just as Holden does in *The Catcher in the Rye*. At the age of fifteen his parents enrolled him in the Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania, the state where Salinger places Pencey Prep. In the novel Holden also says that his parents will probably send him to a military academy when they find out he has been expelled from Pencey Prep. J.D. Salinger successfully finished at Valley Forge in 1936.

In 1937 he joined New York University but only stayed a short while before going to Vienna with his father to learn about the family business. He came back to America after a short time and took a short story writing course. This led to his first story being published in 1940 in a magazine called *Story*.

Later life and work

During the Second World War J.D. Salinger mainly did intelligence work, but he was part of the D-day invasion force. He came back to New York at the end of the war and lived with his parents while he was writing *The Catcher in the Rye*, which was published as a serial in a magazine between 1945 and 1946; it was first published in novel form in 1951. He moved out of New

York to various places in the countryside before settling in a town called Cornish, in the state of New Hampshire. He married a woman called Claire Douglas and they now have two children. Since the popularity of *The Catcher in the Rye* and since his marriage, J.D. Salinger has been a recluse, seeking privacy and never giving interviews to the media. He refuses to talk about his fiction and will not even allow quotations to be used from his work.

The Catcher in the Rye is his only novel, but it became a classic amongst students and young people everywhere and remains so today. J.D. Salinger did write other books; all collections of his short stories were first published individually in a famous American magazine called *The New Yorker*. These include *Nine Stories*, published in 1953, and then a series of linked stories dealing with the Glass family. *Franny and Zooey* deals with the relationship between a brother and sister, strongly echoing Holden and Phoebe's relationship. The other two books are *Raise High the Roofbeam*, *Carpenters* and *Seymour: An Introduction* which is a series of stories about a bright but troubled young man, Seymour Glass, who eventually commits suicide.

CONTEXT & SETTING

History of the text

The Catcher in the Rye was originally published in London in 1951 by Hamish Hamilton, and this edition and the following edition published by Penguin were different from the original American version. Minor changes were made to the original text, for instance American spellings changed to British ones, the author's use of italic removed and words taken out like 'fuck' and 'goddam', which were unacceptable to people in the 1950s.

In 1994 Hamish Hamilton and Penguin published the original American text, on which this Note is based. The use of italics in this original text gives extra emphasis to Holden's phrases, for example 'They're *nice* and all' on the first page of the novel.

Response to the novel

When first published in America by Little Brown and Co. in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* caused instant controversy. Many reviews said it was a sensational achievement while others objected to its use of 'bad' language and the shocking nature of some of the scenes. The novel's narrator and main character, Holden Caulfield, was also thought to be a bad example to young people. In fact the novel was banned in certain areas and some education authorities condemned it. To understand why the novel caused so much fuss, it is important to think about the time it was written and the prevailing attitudes of Americans at that time.

America's outlook

The Catcher in the Rye is set just after the Second World War; America had just played a major part in helping to win the war and had become a 'superpower'. The country was very wealthy and had a huge military force; society was affluent and very materialistic. At this time, America became the first real 'consumer society'; its people were generally well off and believed that America was the greatest country in the world.

However, America was also very conservative at this time and the people were often suspicious of anyone who was different from others, or who did not share their beliefs about American society's greatness; it was the beginning of the 'cold war' and people whose beliefs differed from the norm were often denounced as 'un-American' or 'communist sympathisers'. In *The Catcher in the Rye* Holden Caulfield rebels against some of these social attitudes and values; one small sign of this is, perhaps, Holden's red hunting hat (red being the colour associated with communism).

Rise of the teenager

The novel can also be seen as an example of the rise of teenage rebellion. Before the 1950s there was no real notion of a 'teenager'. *The Catcher in the Rye* dealt with teenagers' feelings towards the society in which they lived and became an instant success with students and young people. During the 1950s American teenagers started to make an identity for themselves and the decade saw the rise of Rock and Roll and teenage fashions. Young film actors like James Dean and Marlon Brando became huge stars with the films *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Wild Ones*. The start of the decade was in some ways the beginning of the 'generation gap' between teenagers and their parents and Holden Caulfield was one of its first spokespersons.

New York City *The Catcher in the Rye* is an urban novel. It is set in a large city which acts as the background to Holden's story. When the story begins we find ourselves in the enclosed little world of a boarding school with its own rules and values. Holden 'escapes' to the world of New York City, but he often finds it a frightening place; if not frightening, then full of shallow people, or 'phonies' as he calls them. The fact that J.D. Salinger sets his novel in a real city with recognisable landmarks and buildings adds to the sense of realism (see Literary Terms) we feel when reading it. If we wished, we could go there and trace Holden's wanderings.

The city represents that which Holden sees as bad in the world; it is full of falsity and corruption. When Holden arrives in New York he immediately talks of the 'perverts' in the hotel where he stays. He has his encounter with the prostitute there and gets beaten up. All of his worst moments occur because of the city. The social world of night-clubs and bars in which he spends his time are full of uncaring people with no real moral values; no-one seems to have time for anybody else, everyone is thinking about themselves. Nearly all the

MAP OF NEW YORK



city-dwellers seem flawed in some way, as if the city has corrupted them. As Holden sees it, they all let him down when he needs them:

- Sally Hayes won't run away with him
- Carl Luce is not interested in Holden's problems
- Even Mr Antolini is perceived by Holden as making advances to him

The only exception is his sister, Phoebe, who is too young to have been influenced by the values of the city.

Central Park

The only place where Holden finds some moments of happiness is when he is in Central Park or the museums nearby. The park is a green space, a small piece of nature in a vast, man-made environment. The museums represent the past, a time when things were easier and not subject to the stresses and strains of city life. In these places Holden remembers his childhood before his brother's death and his own problems; he wishes things could stay the same as they were then. It is in the park that he finally has a moment of true happiness, when he sees his sister riding the carrousel. It is as if these places are innocent and untainted by man. In a way the park is a metaphor (see *Literary Terms*) for the wide open spaces to which Holden dreams of running away.

Literary traditions

Although *The Catcher in the Rye* is very much a modern, twentieth century novel, it does have links with the literary tradition of America and of Western civilisation in general. The narrative revolves around the idea of an individual battling with the values of the society in which he lives. This is quite a common theme throughout American literature, appearing in books like *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison.

Like some of the earliest known literature, one of the central ideas in the novel is that the main character is on a quest. However, Holden's quest does not involve

defeating strange monsters to get to his home, like the Ancient Greek story of Ulysses, or slaying dragons while looking for the Holy Grail, as in the stories of King Arthur. Holden's quest is to find an answer to his own problems; he is searching for his own lost innocence and for a sense of moral values. He is not like a traditional hero but rather an anti-hero (see *Literary Terms*), a type of character commonly found in twentieth-century fiction.

SUMMARIES

GENERAL SUMMARY

The novel concerns three days in the life of Holden Caulfield, a troubled sixteen-year-old who has been expelled from three schools. Although the main action takes place over three days, there are frequent flashbacks (see Literary Terms) to earlier events in Holden's life. It is a first-person narrative (see Literary Terms) told to us by Holden, who is recuperating from a mental breakdown in a Californian hospital. He begins by explaining that he is only going to tell us what he has told his brother, D.B., who visits him from time to time as he is working in Hollywood, near to the hospital.

Chapters 1–7: Holden's story begins on the day he leaves his school, a Saturday. Holden has been expelled and has to leave four days before the end of term. He begins by telling us about a farewell visit to his History teacher, Mr Spencer, and also explaining something of his own character.

We meet Ackley, the boy who has the room next to Holden's. We also meet Stradlater, Holden's roommate, who asks Holden to write a homework essay for him because he is taking a girl out that evening. Holden discovers that Stradlater's 'date' is Jane Gallagher, a girl he knows and with whom he spent a summer two years before. Holden writes the essay based on his brother Allie's baseball mitt. We find out that Allie died of leukaemia on 18 July 1946 and that Holden was very disturbed by his death. When Stradlater returns Holden gives him the essay but Stradlater is not happy with it. Holden gets upset and tears up the essay. Next, Holden asks Stradlater about his date with Jane Gallagher, becoming increasingly agitated about what Stradlater

may have tried to do with her sexually. They end up fighting and this provokes Holden's early departure from school. He decides to go to New York and stay in a hotel until returning home to his parents on the Wednesday when term officially ends and when they will have received and absorbed the news of his expulsion.

**Chapters
8-14: The
Edmont Hotel**

Holden leaves for New York by train. Whilst on the train he meets the mother of one of the students he knows at Pencey, Ernest Morrow. They talk for a while and Holden lies to her about his opinion of her son.

*'Phony' is one of
Holden's favourite
words for
describing people
and places of which
he has a low
opinion.*

When he gets to New York, Holden checks in to the Edmont Hotel. He tries phoning the number of a woman given to him by an old acquaintance from school. She refuses to see him and he goes downstairs to the hotel night-club. He tells us about his younger sister, Phoebe. Holden dances with three girls before leaving and going to another night-club. In the meantime he has told us about Jane Gallagher and how fond he was of her. He still thinks about the Stradlater episode. Holden stays at the club but does not enjoy it, telling us the place was full of 'phonies'.

After leaving the club, Holden walks back to the hotel. As he goes in he makes an arrangement with the elevator-man, Maurice, for a prostitute to be sent to his room. When she arrives Holden does not want sex. He pays her but a little later the woman and Maurice return, demanding more money. Holden refuses to pay but Maurice hits Holden and they take the money by force. At the end of this section Holden reveals to us that he feels depressed enough to kill himself.

**Chapters
15-20: Faces
from the past**

Holden checks out of the hotel. Before doing so, he thinks about phoning Jane Gallagher but does not, instead phoning another girl he knows, Sally Hayes. They arrange to go out that afternoon. While waiting until he meets Sally, Holden meets two nuns and talks

to them. He admires them and speaks of how unselfish they are. He goes to buy a record for his sister. On his way he hears a young boy singing a song that forms the basis for the novel's title. It cheers him up a little.

He takes Sally Hayes to the theatre and then on to an ice-skating rink. Holden tells Sally Hayes about his problems and asks her to run away with him, but she is unsympathetic and they part company.

Holden makes an arrangement to meet Carl Luce, a boy who used to be his student adviser at Whooton, one of the other schools Holden has attended. They talk but it is obvious that they have little in common any more. Holden has many such conversations throughout the novel, illustrating his desire to find someone to relate to and the fact that this does not really happen. His continued comments about wanting to phone Jane Gallagher also reinforce this theme.

Holden leaves the bar where he met Carl Luce and goes to Central Park; he is very drunk and drops his sister's record, which smashes. He sits in the park feeling very depressed. During this section of the novel we are frequently reminded of Holden's worsening mental state: he seems emotionally disturbed. Finally he leaves the park and decides to sneak into his parents' house and see his sister Phoebe.

Chapters

21-26:

*Reunited with
Phoebe*

Holden gets into his parents' house and finds his sister. They have a long conversation during which Phoebe realises that Holden has been expelled. She becomes very upset and Holden tries to explain himself. She accuses him of liking nothing and not wanting to do anything with his life. He tells her he wants to be a 'catcher in the rye'. Eventually Holden leaves his parents' house after making an arrangement to see Mr Antolini, one of his old teachers whom he liked, and to stay at his house until the Wednesday he

is due home. Before Holden leaves he borrows his sister's Christmas savings.

When he arrives at Mr Antolini's, Holden has a long conversation with him. Mr Antolini gives Holden some serious advice about his future. Holden goes to sleep and wakes up to find Mr Antolini stroking his hair. He becomes upset and rushes out of Mr Antolini's house.

Holden decides to go away and arranges to meet his sister to give her back her money. She arrives and explains she is going with him. He realises that this cannot happen and the turning point of the novel is reached. Holden takes his sister to the park and watches her ride on a carousel. He now feels happy and the story ends. There is one final, brief chapter where Holden tells us he will return to school next September and that he is recovering.

DETAILED SUMMARIES

CHAPTER 1 The novel opens with a young man explaining that he is going to tell us about what happened to him over one Christmas. He is in a hospital near Hollywood and is talking about his brother D.B. who is a writer and has just bought a new sports car.

The narrator says that his story began when he left his school, Pencey Prep. It was a Saturday and an American football game was being played which was important for the school. He tells us that he was not at the game but was standing on top of Thomsen Hill looking down on the action.

He was on his way to say goodbye to his History teacher. He had been expelled from school and that is the reason he had to leave. He remembers an earlier episode when he was playing football with two