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Volume 16

The Catcher in the Rye

John C. Unrue
University of Nevada at Las Vegas

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THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

Matthew J. Bruccoli and Richard Layman, *Editorial Directors*

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A NOTE TO THE READER

Think of it this way: you are about to embark on a journey. This book is, among other things, designed to be at once a reservation and a round-trip ticket. The purpose of the journey, the goal and destination, is for you to experience, as fully and as deeply as you can, a masterpiece of literature. Reading a great work is not a passive experience. It will be demanding and, as you will see, well rewarded.

by George Garrett,
Henry Hoyns
Professor of
Creative Writing,
the University of
Virginia

What is a masterpiece? The answer is easy if you are dealing with the great works of antiquity—for example, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—works that have endured for millennia and even outlasted their original language. Closer in time there are the accepted monuments of our languages and culture, such as the plays of Shakespeare, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, and the comedies of Molière. But here and now we are dealing with work that is nearer to us in time, that speaks to and about persons, places, and things that we either know at first hand or at least know about. These works are accepted by critical consensus (and tested in the marketplace and in the classroom) as among the most original and influential works of their times. It remains for you to experience their power and originality.

There is much to be gained from close and careful study of a great book. You will always find much more than you expected to, than you are looking for. Whether we know it and admit it or not, we are one and all constantly being changed and shaped by what we read. One definition of a literary masterpiece is that it is a great work that can touch us most deeply. It can be, is, if you are wide awake and fully engaged, a profound experience. Lighthearted or deadly serious, it is about things that matter to us. The Gale Study Guides are intended to help you to enjoy and to enlarge your understanding of literature. By an intense focus, these Guides enhance the values you discover in reading enduring works. Discovery is always an important part of the process. With guidance you will see how personal discoveries can be made and, equally important,

can be shared with others studying the same book. Our literary culture is, ideally, a community. This book is meant to serve as your introduction to that community.

From the earliest days of our history (until the here and now), readers have looked for pleasure and meaning in whatever they read. The two are inextricable in literature. Without pleasure and enjoyment, there can be no permanent meaning. Without value and significance, there is no real pleasure. Ideally, the close study of literary masterpieces—comedy or tragedy, past and present—will increase our pleasure and our sense of understanding not only of the individual work in and of itself but also of ourselves and the world we inhabit.)

There is hard work involved. What you have labored to master you will value more highly. And reading is never exclusively a passive experience. You have to bring the whole of yourself to the experience. It becomes not a monologue, but a dialogue between you and the author. What you gain from the experience depends, in large part, on what you bring and can give back. But, as great voices have told us since the dawn of literature, it is well worth all the effort, indeed worth any effort.

We learn how powerful words can be. The language of great voices speaking to us across time and space, yet close as a whisper, matters enormously. Sooner or later, our buildings will crumble; our most intricate and elegant machines will cough and die and become rusty junk; and our grand monuments and memorials will lose all their magic and meaning. But we know that our words, our language, will last longer than we do, speaking of and for us, over centuries and millennia. Listening to great voices, reading their words and stories in the enduring works of literature, we are given a reward of inestimable value. We earn a share in their immortality.)

You will meet some memorable characters, good and bad, and you are going to participate in unforgettable events. You will go to many places, among them the Africa of Chinua Achebe, the England of Virginia Woolf, the China of Maxine Hong Kingston. You can visit 1920s Paris with Ernest Hemingway, the magical Latin America of Gabriel García Márquez, the Mississippi of William Faulkner, the dark side of San Francisco with Dashiell Hammett. Gale Study Guides are good maps to the literary territory. Envision the journey as a kind of quest or pilgrimage, not without difficulty, that can change your understanding of life.)

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Salinger, J. D., and his daughter, Margaret. Margaret A. Salinger. *Dream Catcher: A Memoir*.

Salinger, J. D., at age thirty-one. Margaret A. Salinger. *Dream Catcher: A Memoir*.

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Salinger, J. D., with Claire Douglas Salinger, Matthew Salinger, and Margaret Salinger. Margaret A. Salinger. *Dream Catcher: A Memoir*.



ABOUT THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

When *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in Boston by Little, Brown and Company on 16 July 1951, J. D. Salinger had already achieved commercial success and critical acclaim as a short-story writer. The first edition of his novel sold for \$3.00. Salinger's later books were the story collections *Nine Stories* (1953), *Franny and Zooey* (1961), and *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (1963). Thirty years after the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, the paperback edition of the novel was selling at the rate of twenty thousand to thirty thousand copies per month. Before the end of the twentieth century, it had been reprinted more than seventy times and translated into thirty languages.¹

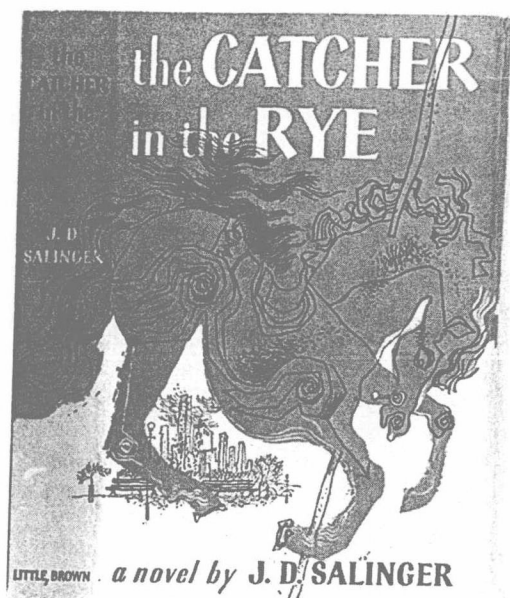
PLOT SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Seventeen-year-old Holden Caulfield, the narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye*, has flunked out of Pencey Preparatory School in Agers town, Pennsylvania. Consequently, he must return home to New York during the Christmas season and explain to his parents the latest of three academic expulsions. Although he intended to depart on a Wednesday, he decides after a fight with his roommate, Ward Stradlater, to leave Pencey on Saturday night, travel to New York, and stay in an inexpensive hotel until he returns home. Holden has never recovered from the loss of his younger brother, Allie, who died from leukemia on 18 July 1946, four years before the time of the narrative. Haunted by Allie's memory, he spends two exhausting days in New York, dancing, drinking, going to shows, and unsuccessfully hosting a prostitute, whose pimp punches him in order to get more money.

During the weekend, Holden grows increasingly more depressed, confronted with overwhelming examples of "phoniness"—hypocrisy, insincerity, and lack of compassion—in the adult world he is

materialist



the CATCHER in the RYE

by J. D. Salinger

Anyone who has read J. D. Salinger's New Yorker stories—particularly *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*, *Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut*, *The Laughing Man*, and *For Esme—With Love and Squalor*, will not be surprised by the fact that his first novel is full of children.

The hero-narrator of the CATCHER in the RYE is an ancient child of sixteen, a native New Yorker named Holden Caulfield. Through circumstances that tend to preclude adult, secondhand description, he leaves his prep school in Pennsylvania and goes underground in New York City for three days.

The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say about Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost hopelessly impaled on it.

There are many voices in this novel: children's voices, adult voices, underground voices—but Holden's voice is the

(Continued on back flap)

(Continued from front flap)

most eloquent of all. Transcending his own vernacular, yet remaining marvelously faithful to it, he issues a perfectly articulated cry of mixed pain and pleasure. However, like most lovers and clowns and poets of the higher orders, he keeps most of the pain to, and for, himself. The pleasure he gives away, or sets aside, with all his heart. It is there for the reader who can handle it to keep.

J. D. Salinger was born in New York City in 1919 and attended Manhattan public schools, a military academy in Pennsylvania and three colleges (no degrees). "A happy tourist's year in Europe," he writes, "when I was eighteen and nineteen. In the Army from '42 to '46, most of the time with the Fourth Division. I'm now living in Westport, Connecticut, some fifty miles out of New York.

"I've been writing since I was fifteen or so. My short stories have appeared in a number of magazines over the last ten years, mostly—and most happily—in *The New Yorker*. I worked on the CATCHER in the RYE, on and off, for ten years."

Jacket design by Michael Mitchell.
THE CATCHER IN THE RYE
is a Book-of-the-Month
Club selection



Earliest dust jacket for Salinger's novel. At his insistence, the photo was removed from subsequent jackets.

expected to join. Art and religion have lost touch with the sources of their inspiration, and material possessions have become more important than people. Even his brother D. B., a gifted writer, has sacrificed his talent to write screenplays for Hollywood. Holden finds comfort, strength, and virtue only in children, whose innocence he is obsessed with protecting and preserving: a little girl tightening her skates, a boy singing the Robert Burns song "Coming Through the Rye," and especially his ten-year-old sister, Phoebe, who exudes a spontaneity and love essential to his regeneration and survival. Holden makes a brief trip home to see Phoebe while their parents are out. Inspired by the singing child's garbled version of a line of the Burns song, he confesses that what he would most like to do is stand on the edge of a cliff and save children playing in a rye field from falling.

Holden spends Sunday night at the home of a former English teacher, (Mr. Antolini) whose studied advice is ineffective and whose homosexual advances cause him to flee to Grand Central Station for the night. Resigned to leave for the West, Holden suddenly changes his mind when Phoebe announces that she is going with him. He accepts responsibility for his sister and takes her to the park, where she rides a carousel while, enlightened and euphoric, he watches her. Holden ends his narrative where he began it, in the West, where he is a patient in a psychiatric hospital, determined to live only in the present moment.

CHAPTER 1: Holden is recuperating from an emotional breakdown in an institution in the West, near enough to Hollywood for his brother D. B., a screenwriter, to drive over to see him on weekends. Holden, who hates movies, considers D. B. to have prostituted his writing talent. Holden tells his story, which he says is "about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas."² The story begins on a Saturday, his last day at Pencey Prep, from which he has been expelled for unsatisfactory academic performance. Holden has just returned from New York, where Pencey's fencing match with McBurney School was canceled because he left the fencing equipment on a subway train, after which the team "ostracized" him (6). He is standing by a Revolutionary War-era cannon on Thomsen Hill looking down on the football game between Pencey and Saxon Hall and "trying to feel some kind of good-by" (7). Holden then runs to the house of his history teacher, "old Spencer," for another farewell.)

CHAPTER 2: Holden is sensitive to the age of the Spencers, "both around seventy years old" (10), and also to the medicinal smells of the room in which Mr. Spencer is recovering from the grippe. Holden is "not too crazy about sick people, anyway," and seeing his teacher sitting in a

"ratty" bathrobe, with his "bumpy old chest" and his "old guy's legs . . . white and unhappy," is depressing (11). Spencer questions Holden about his meeting with Pencey's headmaster, Dr. Thurmer, who told him that "life is a game" that must be played "according to the rules" (12). Spencer seeks reasons for Holden's poor academic performance and reads aloud his unsatisfactory examination essay, which focused primarily upon the Egyptians' ability to preserve their dead so that their faces "would not rot" (16). Holden absolves Spencer of any guilt for his academic failure. His mind wanders, however, to a lake in New York's Central Park, and he wonders "where the ducks went" (18) when the water froze. He recalls that he has flunked out of Whooton School and Elkton Hills as well. Elkton Hills was full of "phonies," and its headmaster was "the phoniest bastard" (19) he ever met. After leaving the room, Holden hopes that Spencer's parting words, which he cannot quite hear through the closed door, are not "Good Luck!" (21), words that sound terrible to him because he cannot bear to think about the future.)

CHAPTER 3: Holden returns to his room in the Ossenburger Memorial Wing of the dormitory, named for a donor who "made a pot of dough in the undertaking business" (22). He puts on his red hunting hat, newly purchased on the fencing-team trip, and begins reading Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* (1937) when the physically repulsive Robert Ackley from the next room enters. Ackley is "sort of a nasty guy" with "pimples" and "lousy teeth," and Holden is not "too crazy about him" (26). Ackley interrupts Holden's reading, begins "fiddling around" (27) with a photograph of a girl Holden dated, and clips "horny-looking nails" (31) onto the floor. In the midst of Ackley's complaints about Holden's roommate, Stradlater, whom Holden defends, Stradlater comes into the room asking to borrow Holden's jacket to wear on a date. Holden permits him to take the jacket, although he fears his roommate's "very broad shoulders" will stretch it. Stradlater, who has a "pretty heavy beard," heads off to the bathroom to shave; Holden notes that Stradlater always has his shirt off to display his "good build" (34).

CHAPTER 4: Stradlater asks Holden to write an English composition, a descriptive essay, for him. Stradlater knows that their English teacher thinks Holden is a "hot-shot" writer, even though he is flunking out of school (37). Holden is noncommittal. When Stradlater tells him that his date is Jane Gallagher, Holden is surprised. An old friend of Holden's, Jane lived near him two summers ago. He remembers that she kept "her kings in the back row" when they played checkers and that she had a stepfather who was a "booze hound" and ran around "naked" when Jane was home (42). He asks Stradlater not to tell Jane he has been

expelled. Stradlater's date with Jane makes Holden "sort of nervous" because his roommate is a "sexy bastard" (45).

CHAPTER 5: After Saturday-night dinner, Holden, his friend Mal Brossard, and Ackley take a bus to Agerstown intending to see "a lousy movie" (47). Because Brossard and Ackley have already seen the movie, they do not go, choosing instead to eat hamburgers and play pinball. Holden, who hates movies, returns to his room and writes the essay for Stradlater, choosing for a topic the baseball mitt of his brother Allie, who died of leukemia. The mitt, which Holden keeps in his suitcase, has poems written on it in green ink, and Allie read them while no one was batting. The night Allie died, Holden, who was thirteen at the time, slept in the garage and broke all the windows with his fist. Following this incident, Holden's parents determined that he should be psychoanalyzed.

CHAPTER 6: Holden worries about Stradlater's date with Jane. When Stradlater returns, he reads the essay Holden has written but does not like it because it does not describe "a room or a house or something" (53). Holden rips up the essay and, to annoy Stradlater, smokes in the room. He questions his roommate intensely about his date. When Stradlater says that they just sat in the car, Holden asks whether he gave Jane "the time" in the backseat. Stradlater responds that the answer is "a professional secret" (57); Holden, enraged, socks him in the head and immediately finds himself on the floor, with Stradlater sitting on his chest. Holden repeatedly calls his roommate "a goddamn stupid moron" (44). Upon being released, Holden continues to call him a moron until Stradlater knocks him down again, leaving him with a bloody mouth. Holden then goes to Ackley's room.

CHAPTER 7: Holden asks whether he can sleep in Ackley's roommate's bed. Holden feels "lonesome" and "almost wished" he were "dead" (62). He lies on the roommate's bed, thinking of Jane and fearing that Stradlater might have had sex with her. Holden leaves Ackley's room and decides to leave Pencey that night, go to New York, stay through the weekend, and return to his parents' home on Wednesday after they have had time to digest his expulsion letter. When he takes his last look down the corridor of the dormitory, he is "sort of crying" (68).

CHAPTER 8: Holden walks to a train station and takes a train to New York. A woman sits down beside him, notices a Pencey sticker on his suitcase, and tells him that her son, Ernest Morrow, also attends the school. Holden introduces himself as "Rudolf Schmidt" (the name of the janitor in Holden's dorm) and tells an elaborate lie about Morrow, who, in Holden's opinion, is "doubtless the biggest bastard" (71) ever to attend

Pencey. Holden tells Mrs. Morrow, however, that her son "adapts" (71) well and would have been class president had he not been too shy to permit other students to nominate him. Holden responds to her question about his going home early by saying that he needs surgery on "this tiny little tumor" on his brain but that the operation is minor, requiring only "about two minutes" (75). Mrs. Morrow invites him to visit during the summer, but he declines by telling another lie, saying that he is going to South America with his grandmother.

CHAPTER 9: When his train arrives at Penn Station, Holden wants to telephone someone. After considering several people to call, he instead decides to take a cab to a hotel. During the ride, he asks the driver where the ducks go when the lake in South Central Park freezes. The driver rejects the question and looks at him as if he were "a mad-man" (78). Holden directs the driver to the Edmont Hotel and invites him to stop for a drink with him on the way, but he declines the invitation. Holden checks into "a very crumby room" at the Edmont. He concludes the hotel is "full of perverts and morons" (79). He looks through his window and sees "a very distinguished-looking guy" in another room dressing in "real women's clothes," including "a very tight black evening dress" (80), and walking before a mirror. In the room above the transvestite's are a woman and a man squirting mouthfuls of their drinks on each other. Again, Holden wants to call someone on the telephone. He calls a young woman, "a stripper or something" (83), whose name a Princeton student gave him, and asks her to have a drink with him. Although she responds favorably to the name of the Princeton student, she says that she cannot meet Holden for a drink that night.

CHAPTER 10: Holden goes down to the hotel's nightclub, the Lavender Room. Again, he "damn near" calls his sister, Phoebe, who is "really smart" (87), and he remembers trips to the park with her and their late brother, Allie. He orders a drink, but the waiter will not serve him without proof that he is at least twenty-one. The room is nearly empty except for a few "pimpy-looking guys" and "whorey-looking blonds" (90). Holden notices three young women at a table nearby, and he succeeds in getting one of them to dance with him. Although the band is "putrid" (90), his dancing partner is good. She tells him that she and her friends saw Peter Lorre on the street, and Holden, who hates actors, is repulsed. Later, while dancing with one of the other women, Marty, Holden tells her that she "just missed" (96) seeing Gary Cooper leave. Back at the table, Marty tells her friends about the incident, saying she "only caught a glimpse of him" (97). Hearing that the young women will rise early to see the first show at Radio City Music Hall, Holden leaves

"so depressed" he "can't stand it" (98). That these women would travel from Seattle to New York and go to the first show at Radio City Music Hall saddens him.

CHAPTER 11: Holden goes into the lobby of the hotel after leaving the Lavender Room and thinks again about Jane and her date with Stradlater. He sits in "a vomity-looking chair" (99) and remembers meeting her when she lived next door to his family's house in Maine, playing golf with her, and showing her Allie's baseball mitt. Holden especially remembers sitting one afternoon on the Gallaghers' porch during a rainstorm, the only time he and Jane "got close to necking" (101). They were playing checkers when Jane's "booze hound" (102) stepfather came out and asked twice whether she knew if there were cigarettes in the house. Jane did not answer, nor would she tell Holden what was the matter. Her only response was to rub away a tear that had fallen onto the checkerboard. Because the hotel lobby is depressing, Holden decides to go to Ernie's, a Greenwich Village nightclub where the "colored" (104) Ernie plays the piano. Ernie is a snob, Holden says.

CHAPTER 12: Holden takes a cab to Ernie's and again asks the driver what happens to the ducks when the lake in South Central Park freezes. The driver, "a very impatient-type guy," considers the question "stupid" (107) and becomes increasingly angry. Ernie's place is crowded with "prep school jerks" and "college jerks," all regarding Ernie's playing as "something holy" (109). They applaud wildly at Ernie's "show-offy ripples," which Holden finds "very phony." He believes that the undeserved praise by Ernie's fans encourages his poor playing, and he is "depressed" again (110). The conversation in the club is inane. Holden sends a note to Ernie telling the pianist that he is D. B.'s brother and inviting him to have a drink. There is no response, and Holden is convinced that the waiter did not give Ernie his message because waiters, he says, never give messages to anybody. A "phony" young woman who dated D. B. approaches Holden with her date, a navy man, "Commander Blop or something" (113). Holden thinks that her friendliness is insincere and that she is interested only in having him tell D. B. he saw her. He concludes that people ruin things.

CHAPTER 13: Walking back to his hotel in the cold, Holden misses his gloves, which someone stole at Pencey. He admits that even if he knew who took the gloves, he probably would not do anything because he is "one of those very yellow guys" (115). He has never cared much about anything he lost, and he does not like to think about hitting anyone in the face. Back in the hotel, the elevator operator, Maurice, asks whether Holden would like a girl for the night, "five bucks a throw" and

SALINGER ON HOLDEN CAULFIELD

My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book, and it was a great relief telling people about it."

J. D. Salinger

quoted in Shirley Blaney, "Twin State Telescope," *Claremont New Hampshire Daily Eagle*, 13 November 1953, p. 1.

\$15.00 for the night (119). Holden agrees and waits in his room. Although he has had "quite a few opportunities," he has "never got around to" losing his virginity (120). Sunny, a prostitute who is about Holden's age, arrives, and he introduces himself as "Jim Steel." When she suddenly takes off her dress, he feels "peculiar" (123), not sexy at all, and asks her whether they might just talk for a while. Holden is sad thinking about the prostitute, and he continues to avoid having sex with her. He does not feel well, he says, having recently had an operation on his "clavichord" (126), and he offers to pay her the \$5.00 he owes her. Sunny insists

that the charge is \$10.00, but Holden argues that Maurice said the price was \$5.00. She leaves angrily with the lower amount.

CHAPTER 14: After Sunny leaves, Holden smokes and talks "sort of out loud" to Allie. He tells Allie to meet him at the home of Bobby Fallon, a childhood friend with whom Holden once shot air guns at a lake. Allie had wanted to go with them, but Holden did not take him and called him "a child" (129). Holden feels like praying, but he is unable to do so. Although he says he is an atheist, he likes Jesus, but he does not like the disciples because he believes they did not support Jesus. He likes "that lunatic" (130) in the Bible who lived in tombs and mutilated himself. Holden hears a knock on the door; Maurice and Sunny have come to collect \$5.00 more. Holden is adamant that Maurice had said "five bucks a throw" (132). Nevertheless, Sunny takes the money from Holden's wallet, and when he calls Maurice "a goddam dirty moron" (135), Maurice punches him in the stomach and leaves. Holden recovers and fantasizes about being shot, ringing for the elevator, and shooting six bullets into Maurice's hairy belly when he opens the door. Holden is depressed and feels like committing suicide.

CHAPTER 15: Holden remains in his room, hungry but afraid to call room service for fear that Maurice will bring the food. He calls Sally Hayes, a girl he once thought to be intelligent because she knew about literature and theater, and invites her to a matinee. She is to meet him under the clock at the Biltmore Hotel at two o'clock. Holden takes a cab to Grand Central Station and puts his luggage in a locker there. When he orders breakfast in the station, two nuns sit down beside him, and he notices their cheap suitcases. He recalls that a former roommate, Dick Slagle, had cheap suitcases and wanted him to leave his expensive lug-

gage in the room so that visitors would think it belonged to Slagle. Holden gives the nuns a \$10 donation. They are teachers, and he discusses literature with one of them, who is an English teacher. She asks about William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), and Holden says he liked Mercutio better than he liked the two lovers because Mercutio's death was someone else's fault. When the nuns leave, Holden regrets not giving them more money.

CHAPTER 16: Holden walks toward Broadway, eager to buy a particular phonograph record for Phoebe. It is called "Little Shirley Beans," and the lyrics tell of a little girl who stays inside because her two front teeth are missing. Holden sees a boy walking in the street next to the curb and hears him singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (150); the song lifts Holden's spirits. He buys the record for Phoebe and calls Jane, but he hangs up when her mother answers. He takes a cab to Central Park, hoping to find Phoebe there. In the park Holden asks a little girl whether she knows where Phoebe is, and he helps her tighten her skates. He is convinced that he will never forget the feeling of a skate key in his hand. The little girl says that Phoebe might be at the museum, and even though Holden knows Phoebe is probably not there, he walks to the Museum of Natural History, remembering his childhood visits there and recalling that he liked the museum because everything remained the same. Only "you" would be "different" as time passed (158). When he reaches the museum, he does not feel like entering and goes instead to the Biltmore Hotel to meet Sally.

CHAPTER 17: Holden waits for Sally and wonders what the future will hold for the young girls he sees on the street. Sally arrives, and they go to the theater. A famous acting couple, the Lunts, are playing. Sally is thrilled, but Holden finds the play "on the crappy side" (163). He does not mind the deaths in the drama because the dead are merely "actors" (163). When he and Sally go out for a cigarette after the first act, he sees "phonies" everywhere (164). When the play ends, Sally asks to go ice skating at Rockefeller Center, and Holden agrees. Because they are poor skaters, their ankle pain drives them off the ice, and they have a drink in a bar overlooking the rink. Holden is "fed up" with everything, from the "phony guys" in the theater who call the Lunts "angels" (169) to men obsessed with cars. He is "in lousy shape" (171) and wants desperately to get away. He asks Sally to go to New England to live in the woods with him, but she refuses, saying they will have "oodles of time" to go to "oodles of marvelous places" later (172). Holden argues that nothing will be the same later and calls her "a pain in the ass" (173). He apologizes but cannot resist laughing. Furious and hurt, Sally leaves.

CHAPTER 18: After leaving the skating rink, Holden buys a sandwich and calls Jane again, thinking he might take her dancing, but there is no answer. He recalls thinking a boy Jane once dated was a show-off because he wore revealing Lastex swimming trunks and “did the same lousy old half gainer all day long,” (175) but Jane had disagreed, saying the boy had an “inferiority complex.” The trouble with girls, he concludes, is that “if they like a boy, no matter how big a bastard he is” (176), they will defend him and say he has an inferiority complex. Holden calls an old classmate from the Whooton School, Carl Luce, who agrees to meet him at the Wicker Bar in the Seton Hotel at ten o’clock. Because it is early, Holden goes to a show at the Radio City Music Hall. He watches the stage show, a “Christmas thing” with angels and “thousands” of actors “carrying crucifixes” and singing “Come All Ye Faithful” (178). Holden believes that Jesus would not have liked the show but would have liked the kettledrum player because he “does it so nice and sweet” (179). Holden then watches an English movie with an extremely convoluted plot, so bad that he thought he “might puke” (180). He is upset that a woman watching the movie weeps but refuses to permit the little child with her to go to the bathroom. Walking to the bar later, he thinks about how much he hates war and remembers that he did not like Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), recommended to him by D. B.; Holden prefers F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

CHAPTER 19: Holden does not like the Wicker Bar, where Luce meets him. It, too, is full of phonies; the audience applauds two “French babes” who play piano and sing and are “strictly lousy” (184). The bar is also “full of flits [male homosexuals]” (185). Older than Holden, Luce was his student adviser at Whooton and knows much about sex and “every flit and Lesbian” in the country. Holden “used to think” that Luce was “sort of flitty” himself (186). Luce’s new girlfriend is Chinese, and he likes her because he prefers “Eastern philosophy” to Western (190). Remembering that Luce always wanted to hear others talk about their sex lives but did not want to speak about his own, Holden taunts him. Luce becomes irritated by Holden’s “inane” (190) remarks and advises him that he might benefit from psychoanalysis. Luce admits that his father, a psychoanalyst, has helped him to “adjust.” Holden is lonely and would like the conversation to continue, but Luce has to “tear” (192).

CHAPTER 20: After Luce leaves, Holden remains in the Wicker Bar and becomes drunk. He calls Sally and tells her that he will accept her previous invitation to decorate her Christmas tree. Before he leaves the bar, he wets his head to sober up, sits on a radiator in the rest room, and cries. “Depressed and lonesome” (198), Holden leaves the bar and

goes to Central Park, thinking that he will see what the ducks are doing. He drops and breaks Phoebe’s record. When he finds no ducks, he sits on a bench. His hair frozen, he thinks about pneumonia, death, and Allie’s funeral. (Holden, who was hospitalized after injuring his hand by breaking windows upon learning of his younger brother’s death, was not at the funeral but learned about it from D. B.) Holden is disturbed by thoughts of Allie’s being in the cemetery during rain. It does not bother him to think of Allie there when the sun is shining, but “the sun only comes out when it feels like coming out” (202). Holden speculates about how his own death would affect Phoebe and decides to go home to see her. He is neither tired nor drunk any longer.

CHAPTER 21: Holden goes to his parents’ apartment building, and he tells a new elevator boy that he is going to another apartment on the same floor because he does not want his parents to know he has been home. He sneaks into the apartment and goes into D. B.’s room, where Phoebe is sleeping. Adults “look lousy” sleeping, but kids “look all right,” and Holden feels “swell, for a change” (207). He reads one of Phoebe’s notebooks. He could read a “kid’s notebook . . . all night long” (209). When he wakes her, she is glad to see him. Phoebe tells Holden that she has a big role in her school play, “A Christmas Pageant for Americans” (210), in which she plays the part of Benedict Arnold. Holden assures her that he will come to see her in the pageant. Their father will not be able to attend, and it is uncertain whether D. B. will be home for Christmas. Holden tells Phoebe that he broke the record he bought for her, and she asks for the piece. Remembering that he was to come home on Wednesday, she is upset because she correctly guesses that he has been kicked out of school. Holden cannot convince her otherwise, and she keeps her head under her pillow while he goes to the living room for cigarettes.

CHAPTER 22: When Holden returns to the bedroom, Phoebe punctuates her sentences with “Daddy’ll kill you” (214) and begins “ostracizing the hell out of” him (216). He tells her that Pencey was full of “mean guys” who were always “locking” their doors and excluding people (217). Even Spencer, who was “pretty nice,” was sycophantic when the headmaster, Thurmer, was around (218). Phoebe says Holden does not like anything, challenging him to name “one thing” he likes; he recalls the nuns who took collections in “beat-up old straw baskets” (220) and a boy at Elkton Hills, James Castle, who jumped from a window and killed himself after a group of boys went into his room and humiliated him. Holden likes Allie, and he likes being with Phoebe. He struggles to respond to her challenge to tell her what he wants to “be”.



er at age thirty-one

(223). When she asks about his future, he cannot respond but asks whether she knows the song he heard a child singing in the street: "If a body catch a body coming through the rye" (224). Phoebe reminds him that the correct word in this line from the song is not "catch" but "meet." Prompted by the child's version of the line, Holden says that if he could do what he wanted, he would stand by a cliff at the edge of a rye field where "thousands of little kids" (224) are playing and catch any of them in danger of falling off the cliff. He telephones Antolini, his former English teacher at Elkton Hills.

CHAPTER 23: Holden tells Antolini that he has flunked out of Pencey, and the teacher says that he is welcome to come to his apartment. Holden returns to Phoebe, who is listening to music, and dances with her. After several dances, they sit down; Holden is winded. Phoebe tells him that her friend Alice Holmborg showed her how to increase her body temperature at will, and he feels her forehead. Their parents arrive, and Holden hides in the closet as their mother comes into the room. She smells cigarette smoke, but Phoebe tells her that she has been smoking, that she took "one puff" (230) because she could not

sleep. When their mother leaves, Holden asks Phoebe whether she can lend him any money. He wants only \$2.00, but she gives him "eight dollars and . . . sixty-five cents" (233), her Christmas money. Deeply moved by his sister's generosity, Holden cries. He gives her his hunting cap and leaves for Antolini's apartment.)

CHAPTER 24: Holden arrives at the Antolinis' swanky apartment. The couple has been entertaining earlier, and Mrs. Antolini, who is "lousy with dough" and much older than her husband, is making coffee. During a conversation with Mr. Antolini about his academic problems and an oral-expression class he failed, Holden defends digressions in speeches, especially if someone wants to tell about family members. Antolini, drinking heavily, fears that Holden is heading "for some kind of a terrible, terrible, fall" (242). The teacher writes down a quote from a

psychoanalyst and reads it to Holden. It states that only an immature person would "die nobly for a cause," while the mature person would "live nobly for one" (244). Antolini adds that Holden is not the only person to be disgusted by human conduct and that if he is educated as well as creative, he can contribute to the world. Holden listens politely but cannot resist yawning. Antolini makes a bed for him on the couch, and Holden is soon asleep. He awakes suddenly, however, feeling a hand "sort of petting or patting" (249) him on the head. He jumps up, and despite Antolini's protestation that he is "simply . . . admiring," Holden leaves immediately, using as an excuse his concern about money he left in a locker at the bus station. Although he tells Antolini he will return, outside the building he thinks about how he "can't stand it" when "something pervery like that" happens to him (251).

CHAPTER 25: Holden goes to Grand Central Station and sleeps on a bench. The next morning he wonders whether he misinterpreted Antolini's actions. In order to divert his thoughts, Holden reads articles from a magazine someone has left, and he becomes convinced that he has symptoms of the hormone problems and cancer mentioned in the article. Unable to eat breakfast because cold symptoms prevent him from swallowing, he walks to Fifth Avenue, watches a "million little kids," and remembers his Christmas shopping trip there with Phoebe. Obviously physically ill, Holden feels as if he is going "down, down, down" (256) at each curb as he crosses streets. He asks Allie not to let him "disappear" (257). Having decided to leave New York right away for the West, where he will pretend to be deaf and dumb so that he will no longer have to talk to people, Holden drops off a note at Phoebe's school asking her to meet him at an art museum during lunch period. He erases an obscene piece of graffiti from a school wall but sees so many other obscenities that he concludes it would be impossible to erase all of them.

Holden visits the mummy room at the museum and later passes out briefly as he leaves a rest room. Phoebe arrives, carrying a suitcase and wearing his hunting hat, and she says she is going away with him. Stunned and angry enough to "hit her" (267) because he "almost hated her" (268), Holden yells at her, prompting her to throw his hunting hat at him. He tells her he has decided not to go away. When Phoebe refuses to return to school, Holden asks her to walk to the Central Park Zoo with him. Reluctantly, she goes, but she walks on the other side of the street until they arrive at the zoo. After watching sea lions and bears, they go to the carousel, where, Holden says, they "always play the same songs" (272). Phoebe's anger lessens, and she agrees to ride the carousel. Before a second ride she puts Holden's hat on his head. Her anger is

gone. It rains hard, but Holden does not seek shelter, as others do. He prefers to sit on a bench in the rain, "damn near bawling" because he "felt so damn happy" watching Phoebe "going around and around" (275).

CHAPTER 26: Holden is in the psychiatric institution in which he began his story. He will say nothing about what he did after he went back home after his trip to the zoo or about his future plans for school. He dislikes questions. He does not know what he thinks about what he has told, only that he misses the people in his story, even Stradlater, Ackley, and "that goddam Maurice." Holden finally observes, "Don't ever tell/ anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody" (277).

PEOPLE OF *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*

Robert Ackley. Holden's pimply-faced, physically repulsive next-door neighbor in the dormitory at Pencey Prep. He is a frequent and unwelcome guest who interrupts Holden's reading and generally imposes upon his time. Ackley participates in few, if any, school activities and apparently has no close friends.

Miss Aigletinger. Holden's elementary-school teacher at the school Phoebe now attends. He recalls that she took his class to the Museum of Natural History nearly every Saturday, a place he loved because everything stayed the same there. Holden remembers Miss Aigletinger as always pleasant.

Mr. Antolini. Holden's former English teacher at Elkton Hills. Although Antolini now teaches English at New York University, he has maintained his friendship with Holden and the Caulfield family. Holden visits Antolini and his wife late Sunday night after leaving Pencey the previous day. Antolini advises Holden about his future, saying that he respects his writing talent but fears that he is headed for a fall. Antolini makes homosexual advances on the sleeping Holden, who bolts from the apartment and spends the night in Grand Central Station.

Selma Atterbury. A friend and classmate of Phoebe, who tells Holden that she and Selma once put ink on the windbreaker of Curtis Weintraub, another classmate.

Ed Banky. The basketball coach at Pencey. He lends his car to Stradlater, Holden's roommate, who has a date with Jane Gallagher. Holden says that although students were not permitted to borrow faculty members' cars, the athletes were always an exception to the rule. Imagining Stradlater parked with Jane in Banky's car, Holden is apprehensive.

Bernice, Marty, and Laverne. Three women who have come from Seattle to visit New York. They sit next to Holden in the Lavender Room of the Edmont Hotel and dance with him. Because of their fascination with movie stars, he defines them as morons. That they would get up early to see the first show at Radio City Music Hall causes Holden to be depressed.

Eddie Birdsell. The Princeton student who gave Holden the address of Faith Cavendish, a young woman apparently receptive to sexual advances. Holden calls her from the Edmont Hotel and asks her to have a drink with him, but she declines.

Mal Brossard. A friend of Holden's, a member of the wrestling team at Pencey, and a bridge enthusiast. He accepts Holden's invitation to go to Agerstown with him and Ackley to see a movie on Saturday night after Holden learns that Stradlater has a date with Jane Gallagher. Because Brossard and Ackley already have seen the movie playing, the three eat hamburgers, play pinball, and soon return to Pencey.

James Castle. A classmate of Holden's at Elkton Hills. Telling Phoebe about the bad people at Pencey, Holden recalls that Phil Stabile, also a Pencey student, and six other bullies went into Castle's room. They did things to Castle "too repulsive" (221) to talk about in order to force him to retract a remark he had made about Stabile. Castle refuses their demand and leaps from his window to his death, wearing a turtleneck sweater Holden lent him. To Holden, Castle is an innocent destroyed.

Allie Caulfield. Holden's younger brother, who died of leukemia on 18 July 1946, when Holden was thirteen. He has never recovered from the loss of Allie, and his perspective and conduct are greatly influenced by his brother's death. Deeply hurt and angered at the time Allie died, Holden smashed out all the windows in the family garage. Because he

was hospitalized for his injuries, he was unable to attend the funeral. Allie represents lost goodness and innocence.

D. B. Caulfield. The oldest of the Caulfield children and a Hollywood screenwriter. According to Holden, D. B. was a "regular writer" (4) who prostituted himself by going to Hollywood. Although he was in the army for four years and participated in the D-Day landing, he hated the army and once told Allie and Holden that if he were required to shoot anyone, he would not know whom to shoot because there were nearly as many "bastards" (182) in the U.S. forces as among the enemy. D. B. visits Holden often in the sanatorium in which he is recuperating.

Holden Caulfield. The narrator of the novel. While recuperating in a psychiatric institution in California, he tells the story about three days he spent in New York during the Christmas season following his expulsion from Pencey, the third private school from which he has been expelled. Yet, to recover from the psychological trauma he experienced at the death of his brother Allie from leukemia, Holden wants to be the catcher in the rye, a savior of children, and to preserve innocence in a world he considers dangerous, corrupt, and phony. He is sensitive, perceptive, and forgiving.

Phoebe Caulfield. Holden's ten-year-old sister. To him, she is the embodiment of the innocence, freshness, and honesty that he must protect and save. At his physical and emotional ebb, Holden visits Phoebe secretly at their parents' apartment and is revitalized by being with her. Since Allie's death, Phoebe has become more and more important to Holden, compelling him to accept responsibility not only for her but also for himself. More than any other character in the novel, she directs Holden to the path of his own salvation.

Faith Cavendish. A young woman whom Holden calls from the Edmont Hotel at a late hour and asks to have a drink with him. A Princeton student, Eddie Birdsell, has given him her address and phone number. Holden recalls that Faith was "a burlesque stripper or something" (83) and that, although she is not a prostitute, she would probably respond favorably to his sexual advances. She does not, however, accept his invitation.

Arthur Childs. A Quaker classmate of Holden's at the Whooton School with whom Holden once had a conversation about Jesus' disciples. Childs, Holden recalls, told him that he could not like Jesus if he did not like the disciples. Holden disagreed, arguing that Jesus chose the disciples at random, that they failed to support him, and that the disciples would have condemned his betrayer, Judas, to hell. Holden is convinced that Jesus would have shown Judas mercy.

Howie Coyle. A star basketball player at Pencey. Holden recalls watching Coyle play during a game he attended with Ackley. Instead of noting Coyle's ability to make shots from the middle of the floor, Ackley commented throughout the game that Coyle had a "perfect build" (38) to be a basketball player.

Mr. Cudahy. Jane Gallagher's stepfather, whom Holden calls a "booze hound" (102). He wears shorts constantly and, from Holden's perspective, might be a threat to Jane's purity. When Cudahy once interrupted a checker game Jane and Holden were playing to ask where he could find cigarettes, Jane did not answer. Holden regards Cudahy as a source of much discomfort to her, although he never learns the specific cause of that unease.

Jeannette Cultz. Sally Hayes's friend. She told Sally about going ice skating at Rockefeller Center and renting one of "those darling little skating skirts" (167), giving Sally the idea of going skating with Holden at Rockefeller Center after she and Holden see a play starring the Lunts, a famous acting couple. Holden thinks Sally wants to go skating merely to see herself in one of the short skirts.

Ely. A roommate of Holden's next-door neighbor at Pencey, Ackley. After Holden fights with Stradlater, he asks Ackley if he may sleep in Ely's bed. When Ackley tells him that he does not know when Ely is returning, Holden lies on the bed anyway, but he does not sleep there.

HOLDEN ON READING

"What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though."

J. D. Salinger

The Catcher in the Rye (Boston: Little, Brown/Back Bay, 2001), p. 1.

Ernie. An African American piano player who has a nightclub, Ernie's, in Greenwich Village. Holden goes to Ernie's after he leaves the Lavender Room in the Edmont Hotel. Although Ernie plays well, Holden believes that the pianist has been harmed by the "dopes" (110) who have applauded him at the wrong times and regard his playing as "holy" (109). Ernie shows off, and Holden thinks he has become "a big snob" (110) and a phony.

Harry Fencer. Possibly a name concocted by Holden. He tells Ernest Morrow's mother that Fencer was elected student body president because Ernest refused to be nominated.

Fitzgerald. A girl Stradlater has dated while a student at Pencey. When he tells Holden that he has a date on Saturday night, Holden asks whether it is "Fitzgerald" (40). Stradlater speaks disparagingly of the girl and says he is finished with her.

Estelle Fletcher. An African American singer who recorded "Little Shirley Beans," a song about a child who was ashamed to go outside because she was missing her two front teeth. Holden buys the record for Phoebe, saying that Fletcher sings it perfectly, not making it "cute as hell" (149), as he believes a white girl would.

Herb Gale. Another roommate of Ackley's at Pencey. Holden says that nobody ever called Ackley by any name other than "Ackley" and that even Herb never called him "Bob" or "Ack."

Jane Gallagher. Holden's ideal girl. She lived near the Caulfields in Maine with her mother and heavy-drinking stepfather. Jane is an old friend with whom Holden has enjoyed many happy times and whose innocence he seeks to preserve.

George. A boy Sally knows "from somewhere" (165), whom she and Holden encounter in the theater lobby after the first act of the Lunts' play. He is an Andover student speaking in "one of those very tired, snobby voices." He refers to the Lunts as "angels" (166) during what Holden regards as the phoniest of conversations. Holden finds George sickening.

Raymond Goldfarb. A classmate of Holden's at the Whooton School. Holden once drank a pint of scotch with him in the Whooton chapel and says that while Goldfarb became visibly drunk, he himself did not show his drunkenness.

Mr. Haas. The headmaster at Elkton Hills, a preparatory school from which Holden was expelled prior to enrolling at Pencey. Haas was, in Holden's opinion, even more of a phony than Thurmer, the headmaster of Pencey. Holden found Haas sycophantic and charming to the parents who were smartly dressed and stylish but indifferent to parents who were "fat or corny-looking" (19).

Hartzell. An English teacher at Pencey who recognizes Holden's strengths as a writer. When Stradlater asks Holden to write a descriptive essay for him, he points out that Hartzell thinks Holden is a "hot-shot" (37). Hartzell knows that the two are roommates, however, and Stradlater says that in writing the essay Holden should not use commas correctly, so that Hartzell will believe that Stradlater wrote it.

Sally Hayes. A girlfriend of Holden's from New York and a student at the Mary A. Woodruff School. She and Holden attend the theater and go ice skating on the Sunday afternoon of his weekend in New York. She refuses his invitation to run away with him to the woods of Massachusetts or Vermont. Holden finds her phony and abruptly concludes his date with her, calling her "a royal pain in the ass" (173).

Alice Holmborg. Phoebe Caulfield's classmate and best friend. Phoebe tells Holden during his secret visit to their parents' apartment that Alice's mother took her and Alice to an "excellent" (211) movie about a Kentucky doctor who mercifully killed a crippled child. Alice, Phoebe says, has also taught her to become feverish at will by crossing her legs, holding her breath, and thinking of something hot.

Horwitz. A New York cab driver who takes Holden from the Edmont Hotel to Ernie's. He is impatient and angry as he responds to Holden's question about what happens to the ducks when the lake in South Central Park freezes. Horwitz argues that Mother Nature will take care of the ducks, just as she takes care of the fish. He refuses Holden's

invitation to have a drink with him. Horwitz is "about the touchiest guy" (109) Holden has ever met.

Richard Kinsella. A nervous classmate of Holden's in an oral expression class at Pencey. He suffered painfully during a speech he gave before the class because the other students kept yelling "Digression!" (239). The subject of Kinsella's speech was his father's farm in Vermont, but he interjected a story about an uncle who contracted polio in middle age and did not want to be seen wearing a brace. Holden defends Kinsella's digressions to his former English teacher, Antolini. Holden is sympathetic to Kinsella because of the indignities he suffered.

Gertrude Levine. An elementary-school classmate whose hand Holden held during his much-loved Saturday class trips to the Museum of Natural History. He says that Gertrude's hand was always sticky or sweaty.

Carl Luce. A pretentious former classmate and student adviser of Holden's at the Whooton School. After Holden's parting with Sally, he and Luce have a drink at the Wicker Bar. He recalls that Luce, now a student at Columbia University, talked much about sex at Whooton and seemed to know every male homosexual and lesbian in the United States. When Holden complains about the quality of his own sex life, Luce recommends that he consider psychoanalysis. Luce's father, a psychoanalyst, has helped him "adjust" (192).

Harris Macklin. A former classmate of Holden's at Elkton Hills who roomed with Holden for a few months. Although he had a raspy voice and was an incessant talker who never said anything interesting, Holden found in him at least one redeeming feature: Macklin could whistle better than any other person Holden ever heard.

Edgar Marsalla. A Pencey student who, according to Holden, provided the highlight of a speech given in the chapel by Mr. Ossenburger, a successful undertaker and alumnus of the school. In the middle of Ossenburger's remarks, Marsella farts, and Thurmer, the headmaster, retaliates by confining the students to a study hall the next evening.

Thurmer tells the students that the person responsible for the chapel disturbance is not fit to attend Pencey.

Marco and Miranda. A professional dance team to whom Holden refers while dancing with Bernice, one of three young women he meets in the Lavender Room of the Edmont Hotel. Holden compliments Bernice on her dancing and tells her that she is a much better dancer than Miranda.

Maurice. An elevator operator in the Edmont Hotel, where Holden stays in New York. He offers to send a girl to Holden's room for \$5.00, or \$15.00 for the whole night. After Holden refuses to pay \$10.00 to the prostitute, Sunny, with whom he has only engaged in conversation, Maurice returns to the room with the girl, who takes an additional \$5.00 from Holden's wallet. Before leaving, Maurice slaps Holden and punches him hard in the stomach.

Ernest Morrow. The "biggest bastard" (71) who ever attended Pencey, according to Holden. Ernest would go down the hall of the dormitory snapping his wet towel at other students. Holden describes him to Ernest's mother, however, as a young man who adapts well and is one of the most popular boys in the school, saying that Ernest would have been class president had he been willing to be nominated.

Mrs. Morrow. Ernest's mother, who sits next to Holden on the train to New York and engages in conversation with him when she notices the Pencey sticker on his suitcase.

Nuns. Holden has breakfast with two nuns in Grand Central Station. They are from Chicago and have come to New York to teach in a convent school. One is an English teacher; the other teaches history and American government. Holden gives them a donation.

Ossenburger. A financially successful undertaker and alumnus of Pencey, where the Ossenburger Memorial Wing of Holden's dormitory is named for him. He visited the school for the first football game of the year, driving there in his Cadillac. He spoke to students in the school