

Teacher Guide

Grades 9–12

The Catcher in the Rye

J. D. Salinger

NOVEL UNITS[®]



NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING



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THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

by
J. D. Salinger

Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Chapters 4-7, pp. 26-52

Vocabulary Words:

ironical (28)

caddy (32)

pacifist (46)

exhibitionist (29)

psychoanalyzed (39)

lavish (52)

half-brother (29)

paranoia (39)

liberate (30)

unscrupulous (40)

Discussion Questions:

1. On page 27, Holden says, “I don’t take a very handsome guy, and they’re always asking you to do them a big favor.” According to him, why is this so? Do you agree? (They assume that you like them as much as they do—that you are “dying to do them a favor.”)
What is the favor Stradlater asks? Why do you think Holden agrees to grant the favor? (Write a descriptive composition for his English class)
2. What is Holden’s opinion of his own skill at writing? Do you think his self-estimate is accurate? What does he mean about being annoyed when you’re good at writing compositions and somebody starts talking about them as if? What is a “good writer”? (Holden knows that he is a good writer—he comes up with interesting ideas and has the ability to communicate them—and resents the implication that his ability is a matter of merely following rules of mechanics.)
3. Why does Holden nearly “die” when he learns that Stradlater is going out with Jane Gallagher? (Holden never loved her well two summers ago.)
4. What kind of relationship did Holden have with Jane? What do you suppose they are out of touch with each other now? (They were close friends—played checkers, talked.)
5. What does Holden decide to do with Sal on Saturday night? Why do they invite Sal Ackley? What does that show you about Holden? (go to Agerstown for a burger and a movie; Holden feels sorry for Ackley, who never goes out on Saturday night.)
6. What mental image of Allie do you have? How do you learn about Allie? When did he die? (As Holden writes the composition, he remembers his brother—two years younger, red-haired, bright, kind, liked by teachers, never got mad, liked to laugh; he died about three years earlier, at age 11 or so.)
7. Why does Holden tear up the composition? What sort of grade do you suppose it would have gotten? (Stradlater tells him he is on the wrong topic; if the teacher were a good one, the composition would probably have gotten a good grade; it was a

“descriptive” piece, although not in the clichéd sense that Stradlater assumed the teacher meant.)

9. Why does Holden fight Stradlater? Do you think Holden is overreacting? (Holden can't stand the thought of what Stradlater might have done with Jane; also, Stradlater has just rejected a composition about Jane, whose memory means a lot to Holden.)
10. Why doesn't Holden sleep on Ely's bed in Ackley's room instead of leaving in the middle of the night? (Although Holden has been relatively kind to Ackley, Ackley doesn't reciprocate: Ackley makes Holden feel unwelcome by telling him he can't give him permission to sleep on Ely's bed.)

PREDICTION Where will Holden go now? Will he stay in contact with anyone from Pencey?

Writing Activity: On page 52, Holden mentions that the skates Holden's mother gave him make him sad. "Almost every time somebody gives me a present, it ends up making me sad." Describe a time when a present made you sad, or invent a situation that would cause you to feel this way about a gift.

Chapters 9-11, pp. 53-80

Vocabulary Words:

- conscientious (55) inimitable (60) suave (69) verification (69)
- conversationalist (72) jitterbugging (72) in matters (72)

Discussion Questions:

1. Who sits down next to Holden on the train? Why does he lie to him? Have you ever done anything like that (to the mother of a schoolmate; Although Holden cannot stand the boy, he fabricates stories of the boy's success to make his mother feel good.)
2. In what sort of hotel does Holden stay? What "perverts" are there? Why doesn't he just go home? (The hotel is pretty seedy, with prostitutes, exhibitionists, and cross-dressers in full evidence; he doesn't want to deal with his parents' distress about his flunking out right away.)

Reading Assignment: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

LITERARY ENHANCER: Guides discussion of author's technique/purpose

Section	Reason (1-5)	Plan for Sharing-Reading

Choices could include:

1. Dialogue between characters
2. Vivid description
3. Setting a mood
4. Example of author's craft: (a) simile/metaphor; (b) foreshadowing; (c) flash back
5. Other: _____

Reading Assignment: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

VOCABULARY ENRICHER: Clarifies word meanings and word associations.

Page	Word	Description	Plan

Presentation plan possibilities:

1. Have group find the word and use context clues.
2. Use dictionary. Choose the correct meaning.
3. Use thesaurus. Substitute a synonym in a sentence.
4. Create analogies using the word.
5. Other: _____