

Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

**The Catcher in the Rye**

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# The Catcher in the Rye

## Objectives

*Note to Teacher:* The Catcher in the Rye contains obscene language, references to sexual activity, and some scenes depicting underage drinking. This novel may not be appropriate for some classes.

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. analyze how the narrative voice—conveyed through diction, syntax, intent, and meaning— aids character development.
2. explain the impact of a first person protagonist narrator on the story.
3. critically read a novel from a psychoanalytic perspective.
4. examine how dialogue and imagery help create a realistic scene.
5. observe how extended metaphor helps convey the theme of the work
6. trace the evolution of a symbol in the text
7. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
8. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
9. offer a close reading of *The Catcher in the Rye* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

# The Catcher in the Rye

## Lecture Notes

### I. Freud, Jung, and Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis, a treatment of neuroses, was developed by Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, in 1890. Freud, who was working at a hospital in Vienna, noticed that some of his patients exhibited symptoms of illness without having any abnormal physical conditions to cause them. He believed that the cause of the symptoms was repressed desires and traumatic incidents from the individuals' childhoods.

According to Freud in his **Topographic theory**, each individual has a conscious, a preconscious, and an unconscious. The **conscious** contains thoughts and feelings of which an individual is presently aware. The conscious includes not only sensory perceptions, but thoughts and feelings as well. (Ex: I hear my dog barking. I think there is someone at the door.) The **preconscious** includes memories and thoughts of which an individual is not presently aware, but which can be recalled. (Ex: We keep the coffee mugs in the second cabinet from the right.) The **unconscious** is the sum of the individual's repressed desires, fears, and traumas that, while an individual is never fully conscious of them, can be revealed through dreams, free association, or **Freudian slips**—mistakes in speech that reveal subconscious thoughts. (Ex: A man with an addiction to blackjack is counting items in his shopping cart, saying, "...eight, nine, ten, *jack, queen, king...*") Freud believed that individuals with neuroses could be cured if they could uncover and accept the ideas they had repressed.

This theory evolved into Freud's **Structural Theory**, which is more widely known. The Structural Theory states that every individual has a **psychic apparatus**, and this apparatus consists of three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. Almost all of the psychic apparatus is in the unconscious. The **id** is a person's instinctual desires. These vary from the need to eat and sleep to the need to satisfy sexual appetites. The id demands immediate gratification at any cost.

The **superego** serves as a counterbalance to the id. It consists of social conventions as well as an individual's beliefs, values, and ideals. It reminds a person, both consciously and unconsciously, what actions are acceptable in society and which of the id's demands are appropriate to meet.

The **ego** is a person's reason and the part of the psychic apparatus that balances the id with the superego. The ego creates feelings of guilt and shame when one of the desires in a person's id is in opposition to the superego and the cultural norm. If the feelings of guilt and shame become too intense and painful, the ego may create a **defense mechanism** in the form of denial, passive aggression, delusion, hypochondria, projection, and, in more severe cases, repression. Repressed desires of the id may also express themselves in symbols, dream images, and Freudian slips. If they remain hidden and unexposed, they can develop into neuroses.

Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and one-time protégé of Freud, also believed that there

# The Catcher in the Rye

## Chapter 1

1. What does the introduction tell the reader about the narrator with regard to fulfilling the reader's expectations for an autobiography?

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2. How does the opening line "If you really want to hear about it..." intentionally lower the reader's expectations of the novel?

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3. How does the allusion to *David Copperfield* characterize the narrator?

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4. The narrator describes the ads for Pencey Prep and says that they always show "some hot shot guy on a horse jumping over a fence." What values does this image represent, and what does the image say about the school?

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5. Why does the narrator say he has a difficult time saying goodbye?

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6. What memory leads the narrator to say, "If I get a chance to remember that kind of stuff, I can get a good-by when I need one—at least most of the time I can"?

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## Chapter 5

1. What does Holden say and do that reveals he pities Ackley?

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2. How does Holden's diction in the passage about Allie denote grief?

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### Chapter 10

1. From reading the paragraph about Allie and Phoebe, starting with “You should see her,” what does the content say about Holden’s relationship with his sister?

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2. In the same passage, how does Holden demonstrate nostalgia?

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3. What are some things that Holden experiences in the Lavender Room which may contribute to his feelings of isolation?

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### Chapter 15

1. Why does Holden call Sally Hayes a phony?

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2. How did Holden's suitcases prevent him from forming a friendship with Dick Slagle?

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3. Why does Holden believe it could be awkward for a nun to teach English?

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4. How is Catholicism "just like those suitcases"?

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### Chapter 20

1. How do Holden's actions and behavior illustrate his intoxication?

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2. How does Holden's syntax and diction illustrate his intoxication?

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3. What is the big catastrophe that happens to Holden when he is in the park?

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4. Explain in detail what repressed anxiety emerges as Holden sits alone in the park?

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5. How does the passage beginning with, "Finally I sat down on this bench..." and ending with, "...the sun only comes out when it feels like coming out" illustrate projection?

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### Chapter 25

1. How and for what reason does Holden attempt to excuse Mr. Antolini's actions?

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2. How are Holden's symptoms psychosomatic?

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3. What are other ways Holden's actions convey elements of insanity?

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4. What does Holden plan to do when he goes out west?

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5. How does Holden connect verbal communication with belonging to a community?

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6. What do the obscenities on the wall—first at the school and later in the Egyptian tomb—signify to Holden?

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7. How is the innocence of the boy in the museum portrayed in his dialogue with Holden?

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