

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Catcher in the Rye

by J.D. Salinger

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Item No. 200530

The Catcher in the Rye

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss why this book uses interior monologue and comment on how the style of this book reflects the mind and speech of a sixteen-year-old youth.
2. arrive at a conclusion as to what type of personality Holden has and support this conclusion with references to the text.
3. state why this novel is, or is not, a good example of a “rite of passage” novel.
4. identify and discuss the qualities in this novel that have made it so popular with readers for almost forty years.
5. define and give examples from the novel of the following literary terms.
 - synecdoche
 - metonymy
 - verisimilitude
 - simile
 - irony
 - flashback
 - foil
 - hyperbole
 - digression
6. formulate at least one statement of theme that takes into account the title of the novel, the incidents the title refers to, and the actions of Holden throughout the story.

Note: All references come from the Little, Brown edition of *The Catcher In The Rye*, copyright 1951. Throughout the novel, Salinger has Holden Caulfield speaking to the reader in an informal, adolescent tone. As a result, there is frequent profanity. In addition, near the middle of the book a scene with a prostitute is described, but no sex occurs. The denigrating euphemism for homosexual, “flit,” is also used on various occasions.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. At the conclusion of this novel, do you think Holden's emotional condition has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same?
2. Since its publication as a novel in 1951, this book has been very popular with high school students. Identify three or four elements in this book that account for its popularity.
3. This novel has as its protagonist a young boy who goes to private schools in the 1940's. Is this novel relevant to the youth of today, or has it outlived its period and has little to say to today's adolescents? Adopt a point of view in response to this idea, and support your answer.
4. To what extent is the novel a good example of a "rite of passage" novel?
5. Holden Caulfield is an alienated youth. Identify who it is that he is alienated from, and discuss why he is alienated.
6. What gives this novel its distinctive style? Comment on how the style of this novel is different from the style of other novels.
7. A major theme in this novel is "loss of innocence." Cite those incidents in the novel that support this point; also cite the significance of the title and show how it relates to the theme.
8. Pick any two strangers Holden meets throughout the book. Describe how he deals with them. Compare and contrast his treatment of them with the way he treats people he actually knows.

Additional Exercise:

Keep a journal that covers a three-day period in some depth. While the experiences reported on should be yours, the style of reporting should be that of Holden Caulfield; that is, you should try to write your journal the way Holden might have written. You should consider both style and observations.

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Chapter 1

Vocabulary

grippe – flu-like disease
hemorrhage – uncontrolled bleeding
ostracized – separated; excluded from society

1. Who is the narrator in this story, at what point in time is he telling the story, and where is he when he is telling the story?

2. What kind of tone is established in the first paragraph, and how is it done?

3. What is it that Holden does not like about the Pencey Prep advertisement and about the headmaster, Thurmer?

4. In the second full paragraph of Chapter 1, why is Holden hanging around the cannon, freezing? What does this say about his personality?

5. Find an example in Chapter 1 of the narrator making a statement that is obviously false, which he expects the reader to believe. What do these repeated false statements tell you about Holden?

Chapter 4

1. Do the characters Mr. Spencer, Ackley, and Stradlater strike you as believable people? Do Holden's observations of them seem accurate or inaccurate? What method does Salinger use for Holden's description of people?

2. Holden is sometimes accused of being too critical of people. Can you point to times when he is positive?

3. Find two examples of Caulfield repeating himself excessively. What might this repetition contribute to the book?

Chapter 10

Vocabulary

immaterial – not important
jitterbug – a dance style
putrid – rotten

1. How does Holden feel about his sister Phoebe?

2. Why does Holden think the girls in the bar are “morons”?

3. What does the blonde’s language reveal, and how does she behave on the dance floor?

Chapter 19

Vocabulary

aristocratic – noble, fancy

psychoanalyze – to understand and treat the subconscious mind

1. Contrast Luce and Holden.

2. With all of the things he perceives as Luce's faults, Holden still hates to see him go. Why?
