

English 212

Study Questions: *The Catcher in the Rye*, Chapters 20-26

Chapter 20

1. At one point Holden is pretending again that he has been shot in the gut, and he says, "I was concealing the fact that I was a wounded sonuvabitch." In what way is there truth in this statement?
2. Once again, both Jane Gallagher and Sally Hayes play a role. What does each girl seem to represent for Holden?
3. What figure of speech is used in the following quotation: "It's not too bad when the sun's out, but the sun only comes out when it feels like coming out"?

Chapter 21

1. Explain why you think Phoebe puts the pillow over her head.

Chapter 22

1. Does Holden offer a valid reason for hating Pencey Prep?
2. Is his disillusionment with Mr. Spencer understandable?

3. It may be clear why Holden gets depressed by his schoolmates and even Mr. Spencer, but why does the graduate looking for his initials depress him?
4. When Phoebe says, “You don’t like anything that’s happening,” she is suggesting that Holden, and not the school, may be the problem. To what extent do you agree with her? Why?
5. Given the context that has been developing, state what is represented by Holden’s desire to catch kids so as to prevent them from falling off a cliff while playing in a field of rye. What does Holden seem to mean?

Chapter 23

1. Explain the significance of Holden’s crying?

Chapter 24

1. When we first meet Mr. Antolini, we might expect him to speak for the author and to have some special insight into Holden and his problems because of the respect Holden has for him. How much of the following quote by Mr. Antolini, accurately describes Holden, and how much of it seems to be inaccurate?

“Among other things you’ll find that you’re not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior. You’re by no means alone on that score, you’ll be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now.” (189)

2. A point that is much debated in this story is the significance of Mr. Antolini’s action as he sits on the floor. What point do you suppose is debated?

3. What is the significance of the final scene at Mr. Antolini's?

Chapter 25

1. What do you believe Holden fails to understand about his nausea?
2. As Holden walks up Fifth Avenue, what "spooky" thing begins to happen to him, and what does this signify? How does he try to prevent these feelings from turning into reality?
3. What does he envision as a solution to the problem he has with life and society? Significance?
4. Analyze the importance of the obscenities on the wall, first at the school and later in the tomb, for Holden Holden?
5. "All the kids kept trying to grab for the gold ring, and so was old Phoebe, and I was sort of afraid she'd fall off the goddam horse, but I didn't say anything or do anything. the thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. They fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them."

Explain the meaning of the quotation above.

6. The critical point seems to come for Holden when Phoebe arrives with her suitcase. after they argue, she cries and ignores Holden; he then says he is not going to leave. At what point do we see him go from depression to happiness? What brings it on, and how do you account for this change?

Chapter 26

1. This chapter is, in a manner of speaking, an epilogue. It brings us back to present time and resolves all the questions—or does it? Has Holden recovered from his nervous breakdown? When he starts his new school, will he do better? Has he learned anything? Do the last two lines have any significance?