

***The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger**



1. Describe Holden's relationships with his acquaintances at Pencey, particularly Ackley and Stradlater. Address elements of irony within these relationships in early chapters and towards the end of the novel. What greater understanding can we extract from these contradictions?
2. Based on evidence from the text, is Holden unintelligent or does he just not apply himself?
3. What's thematically significant about Stradlater's reaction to Holden's composition he wrote?
4. Describe Holden's level of self-confidence and self-assurance using specific examples from the book. What might the causes of this be?
5. What's the symbolic significance of Holden's graying hair?
6. Why does Holden have such a long conversation with Morrow's mother on the train in spite of the fact that he claims he hates Morrow so much?
7. Analyze the significance of the sixty-five year old bellboy at the Edmont Hotel (68-69) as well as Holden's observations/reactions to him.
8. After being rejected for trying to buy liquor, Holden remarks "I'm a goddam minor" (78). Based on your knowledge of the rest of the book, is this statement ironic?
9. In Holden's mind, what are the characteristics of a "phony"?
10. What characters are labeled phonies and for what reasons?
11. According to these characteristics, is Holden a phony himself? How?
12. Holden claims that his brother, D.B., is nothing more than a prostitute in Hollywood. What does he mean by this? What other forms of Holden's prostitution occur in the book?

13. Why is it ironic that Holden refers to Maurice as the bell boy? What does Holden learn from his encounters with Maurice?
14. Analyze the scene in which Holden encounters the nuns as well as the scene in which Holden criticizes the actors in the Christmas play. How do these scenes develop the religion and Jesus motifs?
15. Explain the metaphorical significance of the ducks. Find 1 quote to support your response.
16. Explain the metaphorical significance of mummies and the museum.
17. Allie's baseball glove is covered in poems written in green ink. How does this develop the symbolic meaning of the glove?
18. Read the Robert Burns poem "Comin Thro' the Rye" and analyze Holden's interpretation and take-aways from it. What does it mean to be "a catcher in the rye" according to Holden?
19. What lesson was Mr. Antolini trying to teach Holden when he give him the quote: "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one" (208)? Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not?
20. Analyze Holden's memories of and longing for Jane. Compare/contrast Jane with what we know about Sally. What does Jane ultimately represent in Holden's life?
21. What is the significance of the carousel scene toward the end of the novel?
22. Holden possesses a palpable fear of intimacy. Provide and explain two examples from the text that illustrate/support this. Why do you think Holden fears intimacy?
23. This novel is meant to be a coming-of-age story; does Holden actually grow up though? Provide two pieces of evidence to support your claim.
24. What might Salinger's purpose be with Holden's profanities? What is the impression that the profanities leave with the reader?
25. Why does Holden try to erase "F-You" graffiti? What's ironic about this?
26. Holden comments that "one nice thing about carousels [is] they always play the same songs" (231). Analyze why he says this and what the scene at carousel means overall.
27. What are Holden's comments regarding children grabbing for the gold ring on the carousel? Does this support or oppose his longing to be a catcher in the rye?
28. What's significant about Holden's reaction to the rain dumping upon him? Which other motifs does this scene support?
29. In the last chapter, we learn Holden is telling his story from a psychiatric facility. Does this situational irony add/modify the meaning of his story? How?
30. As we've discussed, Salinger wrote much of the book during and after his experiences in World War Two. What elements within the book do you suppose

were influenced by these experiences? Explain using evidence from the text.