

## *The Catcher in the Rye*—Chapter Questions

### Ch. 1

1. What does Holden mean when he says that his brother D.B. is out in Hollywood "being a prostitute" ?
2. Where is Holden as the story begins?
3. What is Pencey Prep, and why does Holden dislike it?
4. How did Holden let the fencing team down?
5. Why was Holden being kicked out of Pencey Prep?
6. What kind of health does Holden appear to be in?

### Ch. 2

1. Who is Mr. Spencer and why does Holden visit him?
2. What does Spencer do that particularly annoyed Holden?
3. What can you infer about Holden's character through his note to Mr. Spencer?
4. What does Holden give us as the reason for "leaving" Elkton Hills?
5. What is he wondering about in terms of the ducks?
6. Describe Holden. How old is he?
7. What does Holden's encounter with Mr. Spencer tell us about him? Give at least three points. Is Mr. Spencer as sensitive to Holden as Holden is to Mr. Spencer?
8. What does Holden mean when he uses the word "phony"? Define it as he might. Find two examples of "phonies" in this chapter.
9. Holden is a paradoxical character: both mature and immature, both extremely aware of the realities around him and also caught in his own fantasy world, etc. Defend and develop this idea.

### Ch. 3

1. What does Holden mean when he says, "I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot?" Give examples of what he reads.
2. Who is Ackley? Describe him.
3. What does Ackley do that annoys Holden?
4. What is lying, according to Holden?
5. What is the purpose or function of the red hunting hat? (What does Holden say it is?)
6. What is Holden's attitude toward religion?
7. Name at least four reasons Ackley irritates Holden.
8. Why does Holden call Stradlater a "secret slob"?
9. Holden is very quick to recognize irony. Find one example.
10. What does Jane Gallagher mean to Holden? What does she symbolize?
11. Why is Holden nervous at the end of this chapter?

### Chapter 5

1. Who is Allie, and why is his baseball mitt so special to Holden?
2. Why did Holden's parents want to have him psychoanalyzed?
3. Of what significance is it that Holden doesn't want to throw a snowball at a car while he's waiting for Ackley?
4. What effect did Allie's death have on Holden, and what is the quality of the composition Holden writes for Stradlater?
5. What do we learn in this chapter about Holden's precarious emotional state?

### Chapter 6

1. What does Stradlater criticize Holden for?
2. Why is Holden so concerned about what happened with Jane Gallagher and Stradlater? What does this possibly reveal about Holden?
3. What do Holden and Stradlater fight over?

4. What does Holden put on after the fight? Have we seen him put this on before ?
5. What is significant about Jane's keeping "all her kings in the back row"?
6. Holden often generalizes about people. Cite two examples.
7. What does the fight between Holden and Stradlater tell us about Holden? About Stradlater?
8. What does Holden reach for after his fight with Stradlater? What might this object symbolize?

### Chapter 7

1. Holden decides to go visit Ackley. How is he received by Ackley?
2. What is he thinking about while lying in bed?
3. Why doesn't Holden want to stay at Pencey any more?
4. Where does Holden then decide to go?
5. What is his final good-bye to Pencey Prep?
6. Why do you think Holden was crying as he left?
7. Why is Holden thinking of joining a monastery?
8. Explain Holden's reaction to packing the ice skates.
9. Holden makes frequent references to his emotional state in this chapter. Find at least five examples of what he feels.
10. "To give a girl the time" is an example of euphemism. What does its use indicate about Holden's attitudes toward sex? Toward Jane?

### Chapter 8

1. What does Holden think of Mrs. Morrow?
2. What are some of the lies Holden tells Mrs. Morrow?
3. Why do you think he tells her these things?
4. "But I wouldn't visit...Morrow if for all the dough in the world, even if I was desperate". Desperate for what? Is Holden desperate?
5. What emotional response does Holden want to get from Mrs. Morrow by calling himself Rudolf Schmidt? By telling her he has a brain tumor? By praising her son Ernest?
6. What is humorous about this chapter?
7. What are Holden's feelings toward money?

### Chapter 9

1. Sally Hayes' mother says that Holden "was wild and that [he] had no direction in life" . Would you agree? Why?
2. The cab driver thinks Holden is kind of crazy for asking him a certain question. What is this question? Is it a question that he has been concerned with before?
3. What's so terrible about the bellboy? What does this reveal about Holden's character?
4. What kind of person is Faith Cavendish?
5. Holden calls other people phony. Does he count as one sometimes as well?
6. What Holden sees the couple at the Edmont Hotel squirting water at each other, what does he think?
7. Holden is very aware of the way he acts and of his own identity. Cite two examples of explanations he gives for his behavior.
8. What does Holden have against bald men?
9. Why does Holden want to give Faith Cavendish a phony name over the phone?

### Chapter 10

1. Who is Phoebe, and what is Holden's opinion of her?
2. What evidence is there that shows us that Holden probably doesn't look as old as he says he looks?
3. What characteristics make Phoebe so important to Holden?
4. What is the impression Holden wants to make on the three girls in the cocktail lounge by saying he's Jim Steele? What do Rudolph Schmidt and Jim Steele have in common?

5. What do girls need to do (or be) in order to appeal to Holden?
6. Why does Holden regret having lied to Marty about seeing Gary Cooper?

### Chapter 11

1. What is he worried about in terms of Jane and Stradlater? Why? What does this reveal about his Holden's character?
2. Why is Jane so special to Holden? Describe their past relationship.
3. Explain Holden's relationship with Jane. In his description of Jane, what characteristics does Holden point out about Jane that are also true of Phoebe?

### Chapter 12

1. What do Holden and the cab driver talk about
2. Why does Holden leave Ernie's?
3. Again, what does the duck question (asked of Horowitz, the cab driver) show about Holden's character?
4. "People always clap for the wrong things," according to Holden. Cite three examples of this.
5. Find two examples of ironies Holden is aware of in this chapter.
6. Why do people have to say stuff like "glad to've met you" in order to stay alive? What does Holden mean?

### Chapter 13

1. Describe how Holden would deal with the "glove thief."
2. Previously, Holden stated he was a "pacifist." Does his description of how he would deal with the "glove thief" support this, or is he just "yellow"?
3. Why does Holden stop when girls tell him to?
4. Why do you think he doesn't have sex with the prostitute?
5. Explain Holden's confusion about his own assertiveness.
6. Why does Holden allow Maurice to send the prostitute to his room? How does Holden excuse his agreeing to meet a prostitute?
7. Explain what happens between Holden and the prostitute. What does this scene tell us about Holden?
8. What does Holden's pseudonym indicate about his insecurities?
9. What comment shows Holden's sensitivity to language?

### Chapter 14

1. Does Holden have any guilty feelings about Allie? Do you feel this is abnormal in any way, or normal?
2. What made Holden cry?
3. What evidence shows us that Holden might have made a good actor?
4. Is Holden religious? Supply proof for your answer.
5. Holden says, "I thought I was dying." In Chapter 1 Holden says, "...I felt like I was sort of disappearing." Find two statements he makes in this chapter to indicate his mental state.

### Chapter 15

1. What is the point that Holden tries to make about people when he elaborates about the suitcases of the nuns and of his former roommate?
2. How does Holden treat the nuns?
3. Why does Holden think it spoils a conversation if someone asks what religion he is?
4. Name five things Holden finds irritating about Sally Hayes.
5. What do suitcases symbolize for Holden? Why do they disturb him?
6. What is disturbing to Holden about a nun teaching English? What depresses him about them?

7. Why does Holden like Mercutio (from *Romeo and Juliet*) so much? What does this reveal about Holden? What other character in the novel is somewhat like Mercutio?

### Chapter 16

1. Who does Holden make a date with? Why does he call her up if he thinks she's a phony?
2. How does Holden treat little kids? Give an example.
3. Does Holden know his way around the city? What does this tell us about him?
4. What is the importance of "Little Shirley Beans"?
5. How does Holden react to children?
6. How does Holden remember his own childhood?
7. Holden changes the wording of the song from "If a body meet a body coming through the rye..." to "If a body catch a body coming through the rye..." What characteristics does Holden find desirable in the child singing?

### Chapter 17

1. How do Holden's feelings for women compare to his feelings for men?
2. How does Holden feel about actors? The Lunts?
3. What is Holden's point about the difference between men owning a car and men owning a horse?
4. How does Holden describe a boy's school when talking to Sally?
5. Why does Holden want to take off with Sally now instead of after college? What is the difference in his eyes?
6. Why is Holden's date with Sally such a disaster?
7. Give several examples of Holden using poor judgment in this chapter.
8. Find an example of Holden's sensitivity to language.
9. From page 130-134, Holden outlines almost all his anxieties about life. Make a list of his criticisms.
- 10.

### Chapter 18

1. What is Holden's opinion of the Christmas show at Radio City?
2. Why did Holden think the woman who cried through the movie was a phony?
3. On page 137, what objection does Holden think Jesus would have had to the Radio City program he saw? Is he right or wrong? Defend your answer.
4. Holden says he is an atheist? Is he? Defend your answer.

### Chapter 19

1. "Luc" is the Latin word root meaning light. Of what significance is it that Salinger names Holden's older friend Carl Luce?
2. Who was Luce to Holden?
3. What does Holden confide in Carl Luce that shows how conservative and traditional his attitudes are?
4. What are some negative qualities we see in Holden in this chapter?
5. Make a list of the names of those who have rejected Holden in one way or another beginning with Chapter 1 and ending with Chapter 19. Why do you think Holden alienates so many people?
6. Why did Holden get mad at Luce for calling his (Luce's) old girlfriend the "Whore of New Hampshire"?

### Chapter 20

1. What does Holden pretend happens to him at the Wicker Bar?
2. What happens to Phoebe's record? How does he feel at this point?
3. Where does Holden go after he leaves the bar?
4. What information does Holden finally tell us about Allie's funeral?
5. What does Holden say about Allie that contradicts all his other statements about being an atheist?
6. After he leaves the park, where does Holden go?
7. What does Holden's wound symbolize on page 150?
8. What is significant about Holden's sitting on the radiator in the men's room?

9. Of what significance is it that Holden breaks the record he had bought for Phoebe?
10. Does Holden find the ducks in the park when he goes there? In what ways is his discovery symbolic?
11. Why is it particularly pathetic that there are hunks of ice in Holden's hat?
12. What does Holden find hypocritical about funerals?

### Chapter 21

1. What does Holden find so intriguing about Phoebe's notebook?
2. What is the one critique Holden has about Phoebe?
3. Why does Phoebe become so upset?
4. Characterize Phoebe.
5. In what ways does Phoebe seem older than Holden? Who is more in touch with reality, Holden or Phoebe? Defend your answer.

### Chapter 22

1. Why did it depress Holden when an "old guy" told him that his days at Pencey were the happiest days of his life?
2. What does it tell us about Holden when Phoebe states, "You don't like anything that's happening"?
3. Why does Holden think about James Castle when Phoebe asks him to name one thing that he likes a lot?
4. What does it tell us about Holden when he says, "Just because somebody's dead, you don't just stop liking them, for God's sake---especially if they were a thousand times nicer than the people you know that're alive and all"?
5. What does Holden tell Phoebe he'd like to be?
6. What new insight about Holden's school failure does Holden's explanation to Phoebe about his expulsion give the reader?
7. In what way is Phoebe's discussion with Holden (beginning on page 168) mature and adult-like?
8. How does Phoebe psychoanalyze Holden?
9. Who is more in touch with reality, Holden or Phoebe? Defend your view.
10. What disgusts Holden about his own vision of his future?
11. What is the significance of Holden's wanting to be the "catcher in the rye"? What things has he done, or tried to do, during the course of the novel to try to be the "catcher in the eye"?
12. How is the name Holden Caulfield an echo of the title, The Catcher in the Rye?

### Chapter 23

1. Who is Mr. Antolini?
2. How does Phoebe cover for Holden when their parents come home?
3. In talking with her parents how does Phoebe "sound" like Holden?
4. What does Phoebe do that makes Holden cry?
5. What does Holden give to Phoebe?
6. Why was James Castle important to Holden?
7. How does Holden regard Mr. Antolini?
8. How does Phoebe manipulate her mother?
9. What does Phoebe give Holden?

### Chapter 24

1. Why did Holden fail his speech class?
2. How does Holden feel physically while he talks to Mr. Antolini?
3. What does Holden say about him hating people, such as Ackley and Stradlater?
4. What does Antolini's quote mean: "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"?
5. How does Antolini upset and scare Holden? Can you relate this to Holden's previous digression about "flits"?
6. How is Holden deteriorating physically in this chapter?

7. Evaluate Mr. Antolini's advice.

### Chapter 25

1. Later, after he has had time to think about it, what does Holden think about Antolini?
2. Why does the article on hormones upset Holden?
3. What strange feeling does Holden start to have when he steps off of curbs?
4. Why does he keep repeating, "Allie, don't let me disappear"?
5. What does Holden decide he must do next? Where does he first go?
6. With all the bad language that Holden uses, why was he so upset that curse words were written on a school wall?
7. How does Holden treat the two small boys in the museum?
8. Why is it so important to Holden that Phoebe not be mad at him? Relate this to his past, and Allie.
9. What does Holden mean when he states, "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. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them"?
10. How is the carousel symbolic?
11. How is Holden's physical condition deteriorating in this chapter?
12. How is Holden's mental condition deteriorating in this chapter?
13. What indication is there that Holden may be starting to question his own generalizations?
14. Why does Holden want to be a deaf mute?
15. Relate the writing on the wall at Phoebe's school to Holden's wanting to be a "catcher in the rye."
16. How does Holden help the two kids at the museum? What is symbolic about the meeting? What is ironic?
17. Explain two examples of Holden's accepting reality in this chapter.
18. What does Phoebe wanting to go away with Holden do for him? How does Phoebe force Holden to accept responsibility?
19. What is symbolic and ironic about Phoebe's role in the school play?
20. What is the significance of Phoebe's riding the carousel and reaching for the gold ring?
21. How is Holden's hunting hat symbolic in this chapter?

### Chapter 26

1. What do we finally find out about where Holden is while he is telling the story?
2. Why shouldn't we ever tell anybody anything?
3. What does Holden conclude about his experiences at the very end of the novel?
4. What changes in Holden's attitude can you identify?
5. Why is it significant that Holden misses people?