

Jerome David Salinger: *The Catcher in the Rye*

Summary

Holden Caulfield is a sixteen-year-old American boy, cynical and rebellious sensitive. He is expelled from Pencey Prep, the exclusive school to which his parents have sent him, for his failure to work. One Saturday he returns early from an abortive fencing match (he managed to lose all team's equipment on the underground), and stands in the school trying to inculcate a sense of sadness about leaving. He then goes to say goodbye to his history teacher, Mr. Spencer, who is ill at home. The interview is embarrassing, for Mr. Spencer is to justify himself for failing Holden in his history exams, he insists on rehearsing the boy's mistakes. He gets increasingly annoyed and takes advantage to the earliest opportunity to leave.

He goes to his room and reads until he is interrupted by Ackley, an insensitive youth who lives in the same building. They are joined by Stradlater, Holden's handsome and good-natured room-mate. Stradlater is going out on a date that evening and wants Holden to write an English composition. He finds himself thinking of Allie, his young brother who died several years before. When Stradlater comes back his jealousy about Jane Gallagher returns: he provokes a fight which he loses badly.

On impulse he decided to run away from school without waiting for the end of term. He takes the train to New York, travelling part of the way with the mother of one of his classmates; he tells her extravagant and untrue stories about how popular her son is. On arrival in New York he checks in at a hotel rather than going to parents' flat to tell them about his expulsion. He is annoyed that is too late at night to phone his younger sister Phoebe. He spends a restless night. In the bar he is refused alcohol because of his age and flirts unsuccessfully with group of girls out of town. In his room he finds himself thinking about Jane Gallagher again and resolves to go accosted by the liftman, who offers to send a prostitute to his room. Holden accepts but when the girl, Sunny, arrives he does not feel like sleeping with her. She is puzzled and angered, even though he insists on paying. Left alone, he sits in bed smoking and brooding until the liftman and Sunny return to extort more money from him. Holden objects but the man hits him and rifles his wallet. He goes to bed miserably. In the morning he phones to make a date with Sally Hayes: he does not like the girl much, but he is lonely and desperate for company. He breakfasts near Grand Central station. During the meal he falls into the conversation with two nuns and on a sudden impulse insists on giving them a charitable donation from his own dwindling reserve of money. he goes to Broadway to buy theatre tickets for his date with Sally and a record for his sister Phoebe. He wanders around Central Park on the off-chance of meeting his sister, but is unlucky.

Despite his mixed feelings about Sally, he is pleased to see her at the theatre that afternoon. During the interval, however, she is joined by a sophisticated young college boy and Holden gets increasingly annoyed at their affectedly intellectual conversation. When the play is over he takes Sally skating. As they drink coffee afterwards he launches into an inarticulate tirade against conventional people. He ends up proposing that she run away and live with him in the country. When she will not take his suggestion seriously, they quarrel and part in anger. Holden goes to a bar to meet an old school friend, Carl Luce, an intelligent and but supercilious and starts another quarrel. He sits in a bar alone getting drunk, before making an incoherent apologetic phone call to Sally. Wandering around Central Park he drops the record that he had bought for Phoebe.

Anxious to see his sister, Holden takes the risk of creeping into his parents' flat. Phoebe is awake and tells him that his parents are out for the evening. They chat together, and Holden feels relaxed and cheered by her company. He phones to Mr. Antolini, a former English

teacher, and makes arrangements to stay the night at his house. Holden's parents return unexpectedly but he is able to sneak out of the flat unseen. Antolini and his wife greet him sympathetically but the teacher warns Holden that he is dangerously confused young boy. In the middle of the night he wakes to find Antolini stroking his hair. Assuming the man to be making a homosexual advance, he storms out of the house angrily and spends the rest of the night in the waiting room of Grand Central station.

The next morning he walks through the city feeling tired, hung-over and nervous. At last he resolves and seek some rural hideaway where he can live in peace and quiet. But before departing he wants to say goodbye to Phoebe, so he leaves a note in her school asking her to lunch with him. When she hears of his plan she is desperately insist on being allowed to come as well. To placate her Holden takes Phoebe to the Zoo: for all his confusion and anxiety he still finds a strange pleasure in her company.

In brief concluding chapter Holden gives a summary account of the end to his weekend as a runaway. He finally goes back to his parents and is sent to a psychiatric hospital. There he is visited by his elder brother, D.B., once a promising novelist but now a Hollywood scriptwriter.

50 unknown words

1. lobby (n) - the (large) room into which the main entrance door opens in a hotel or other large building

I'll meet you in the hotel lobby in ten minutes.

2. creep (v) - to move slowly, quietly and carefully, often with the body close to the ground, and usually in order to avoid being noticed

She crept through the long grass till she was in a position to fire.

3. qualm (n) - an uncomfortable feeling of doubt about whether you are doing the right thing

Most parents have occasional qualms about whether they're doing the best thing for their children.

4. sophisticated (adj.) - having a good understanding of the way people behave and/or a good knowledge of culture and fashion

Sophisticated readers understood the book's hidden meaning.

5. contribute (v) - to give (money, support, help or ideas) towards a particular aim or purpose

Between all of us at work, we're hoping to contribute £100 towards the new wing of the hospital

6. initial (n) - of or at the beginning

My initial surprise was soon replaced by delight.

7. convent (n) - a building in which nuns live

She entered a convent (= became a nun) at the age of 16.

8. kettledrum (n) - a very large drum with a round bottom which is played esp. in an orchestra

9. atheist (n) - someone who believes that God or gods do not exist

She has been a confirmed/proclaimed atheist for many years.

10. shove (v) - to push forcefully

She was jostled and shoved by an angry crowd as she left the court.

11. crumb (n) - a very small piece of bread, cake or biscuit

The floor was covered with crumbs after breakfast.

12. chisel (v) - to use very clever or dishonest methods to achieve something

I won't spend my life with someone who's always chiselling.

13. collar (v) - to catch and hold someone so that they can't escape

She was collared by the police at the airport.

14. lunatic (n) - extremely foolish and careless person

Watch what you're doing, you lunatic

15. high-pitched (adj.) - a roof that is high-pitched slopes steeply.

Many of the houses are two storeys tall with wooden frames and high-pitched gable roofs.

16. trickle (v) - to flow slowly and without force in a thin line

Blood trickled out of the corner of his mouth.

17. shaft (n) - a long, either vertical or sloping, passage through a building or through the ground

a (UK) lift/(US) elevator shaft

18. wipe (v) - to slide something, esp. a piece of cloth, over the surface of (something else), in order to remove (dirt, food or liquid)

Have you got a cloth that I can wipe the floor with?

19. buzz (v) - to make a continuous low sound such as the one a bee makes

The bee buzzed from flower to flower.

20. rubberneck (n) - a driver who drives more slowly to look at an accident, or a person who looks at something in a stupid way

Rubbernecks make an accident scene even more dangerous.

21. spendthrift (n) - informal disapproving, (of or like) a person who spends money in a wasteful way, or who spends more money than necessary

He accused the council of being spendthrift.

22. pearl (n) - (the substance which forms) a small round object, usually white, that forms around a grain of sand inside the shell of esp. an oyster (= a sea animal with a large flat shell), which is valuable because it is rare, and which is used to make jewellery
earrings of diamond and pearl

23. curb (n) - (to place) a control or limit esp. on something which is not desirable

The Government should act to curb tax evasion.

24. mob (n) - usually disapproving, a large angry crowd, esp. one which could easily become violent

The angry mob outside the jail was/were ready to riot.

25. terrific (adj.) - informal, very good or enjoyable

We had a terrific time at the zoo.

26. screech (n) - (to make) a long loud high noise, which is usually unpleasant to hear

She let out a loud screech.

27. mess (n) - a state of untidiness, dirtiness or lack of organisation

The sweets she had left in the back of the car had melted into a huge sticky mess.

28. highball (n) - an alcoholic drink made with whisky mixed with water or soda (= fizzy water) and ice, which is served in a tall glass

29. squirt (v) - (to force a liquid) to flow out through a narrow opening in a fast stream

He squirted some tomato sauce on his burger.

30. puke (v, slang) - to vomit

His baby puked all down my shirt.

31. ripple (n) - a small continuous movement, esp. on the surface of water

The stone she threw caused ripples to spread across the lake.

32. kneel (v) - to go down into, or stay in, a position where one or both knees are on the ground

She knelt (down) and tried to see under the door.

33. drip (n) - informal, a boring person without a strong character

He's pleasant enough, but he's such a drip!

34. shiver (v) - (of a person or animal) to shake slightly because of feeling cold, ill or frightened

He shivered with cold in his thin cotton shirt.

35. swanky (adj.) - very expensive and fashionable, in a way that is intended to attract people's attention and admiration.

They live in a swanky house, drive a swanky car, and their children go to a swanky school.

36. pneumonia (n) - a serious illness in which one or both lungs become red and swollen and filled with liquid

Double pneumonia is a case of the illness involving both your lungs.

37. superintendent (n) - a person who is in charge of work done in a particular department, office

We asked the superintendent (also US informal super) (= the person responsible for keeping a building in good condition) to have the broken window in our apartment repaired.

38. chequered (adj.) - having a pattern of squares in two or more colours
The café had red and white chequered tablecloths and fresh flowers on every table.

39. gorgeous (adj.) - beautiful; attractive; pleasant; giving pleasure
The bride looked gorgeous.

40. nausea (n) - a feeling of illness in the stomach, often making you feel as if you are going to vomit
If I miss breakfast, I always suffer from nausea in the middle of the morning.

41. marvellous (adj.) - extremely good
This marvellous invention will help a great number of disabled people.

42. hesitate (v) - to pause before you do or say something, often because you are uncertain or nervous about it
When you reach the pool side, don't hesitate, just jump straight in.

43. homely (adj.) - plain or ordinary, but pleasant
The hotel was homely and comfortable.

44. swell (adj.) - very good or pleasant
That's a swell idea!

45. puddle (n) - a small pool of liquid on the ground, esp. water which is left in a hole after it has rained
He crashed into a tree after skidding on a puddle of oil in the middle of the road.

46. rim (n) - the outer, often curved or circular, edge of something
The rim of the cup was chipped and broken.

47. orphan (n) - a child whose parents are dead
The civil war is making orphans of many children.

48. braid (n) - a thin strip of cloth or twisted threads which is fixed onto clothes, uniform or other items made of cloth as decoration
The skirt had two rows of red braid round the hem.

49. mitt (n) - a special type of glove for protecting a person's hand from extreme conditions, a catcher's mitt

50. hip (adj.) - fashionable, or interested in and knowing a lot about the most modern fashions in things such as music and clothes
Flared jeans have become hip again this year.

Story line

WHAT	Holden loses all fencing team's equipment	Holden visits Mr. Spencer	Goes to his room and reads, interrupted by Ackley	Holden provokes fight with Stradlater	Goes to New York	Checks in at a hotel, bitten by a liftman	Phones to Sally to make a date	Buys tickets for theatre and record for Phoebe	Date with Sally
WHEN	Saturday, 2.30	Saturday	after the visit	after Stradlater returns	between Saturday and Sunday	(almost) in the morning	in the Sunday morning	Sunday morning	Sunday afternoon
WHERE	Subway	at Mr. Spencer's place	Holden's room	Holden's room	in New York	N.Y.	N.Y.	Broadway, N.Y.	Broadway
WHY	He had to watch the map	He wants to say goodbye to his history teacher	Wants to be alone, but he is interrupted by Ackley	Jealous of J. Gallagher, Stradlater's date	He decides in a sudden impulse	Liftman tries to extort more money from H. (prostitute)	He misses her, she was his girlfriend	He has date with Sally and they go to the theatre	He wants to see her after a long time

WHAT	Meets Carl Luce	Gets drunk, calls Sally to apologise to her, drops Phoebe's record	Goes home to see his sister	Phones to Mr. Antolini	Goes to Mr. Antolini's place, but he soon leaves	Meets Phoebe in a Zoo and because of her goes home	Parents send him to a psychiatric hospital
WHEN	Sunday afternoon	Sunday evening	Sunday evening	Sunday evening	Sunday evening	Monday	after he comes home
WHERE	at a bar	at a bar, in the Central park	Holden's home	Holden's home	Mr. Antolini's place	at Zoo	psychiatric hospital
WHY	He wants to meet him	He is drunk	Wants to see her and talk to her	In a sudden impulse he decides to call him	Mr. Antolini invited him	Phoebe wants so	?

Reading log & Personal opinion

- I kind of like Holden because of his attitude to life - he has concern about his future and I also like his sense of humour.
- I found it strange that Holden likes to read books but on the other hand he doesn't want to learn.
- He respects Stradlater a lot. He keeps saying how well built he is.
- He is a perfect liar. He can lie and at the same time he looks at you.
- Holden is very immature. He always looks for trouble and eventually he gets what he has been asking for (Stradlater and liftman hit him, etc.)
- In a fact Holden is very similar to Tartuffe. He keeps saying how he hates phoney but the phoney is himself.
- He has too high opinion of himself.
- He is only nice to people he likes, but rude to people he doesn't like.
- The only person that Holden respects is his sister Phoebe. And I think she respects him too and is very attached to him.
- One more thing I found it very strange: Holden keeps swearing but he hates the word "Fuck you."
- I certainly don't understand this: Why did his parents send him to psychiatric hospital? That was quite a shocking end. He could have become more mature, serious. He could have done

his life comfortable. Without "parents' help". But unfortunately, we don't know how the story continues...

- I like the book very much. That includes a very good vocabulary with a lot of slang American words which were new for me and an excellent built character of Holden Caulfield by J. D. Salinger.