

The Catcher in the Rye: Reading and Study Guide

Directions: Use this guide while reading the novel. Read over the vocabulary before reading the chapter. Answer the questions during or immediately after reading the chapter. Use complete sentences when answering the questions.

Chapter 1:

Vocabulary:

prostitute: *One who sells one's abilities, talent, or name for an unworthy purpose*

foil: *A fencing sword having a usually circular guard and a thin, flexible four-sided blade with a button on the tip to prevent injury.*

1. What do we learn about the protagonist/narrator's brother D.B.?
2. Twice in this chapter the narrator tells us he stands next to a "crazy cannon" while watching a football game. How might this prove to be important? What does this say about the narrator?
3. Why was the protagonist/narrator back at Pencey at 2:30 instead of around dinnertime? What does this say about his character's opinion about competition?
4. Why is the protagonist/narrator not going to return to Pencey after Christmas break?

Chapter 2:

Vocabulary:

grippe: *influenza or the flu*

chiffonnier: *a high chest of drawers or bureau, often having a mirror on top*

qualm: *disturbing feeling of uneasiness and self-doubt*

5. What reasons does Holden give for being "sort of sorry" for visiting Mr. Spencer?
6. According to Holden, Mr. Thurmer said life is a _____. What is Holden's reaction to this outlook on life?
7. What is Holden's age? _____ What does he say is ironic about his age and appearance?
8. While Holden talks to Mr. Spencer, he claims to be thinking about something else. What does he think about? Why is it important that he has this thought while talking to Mr. Spencer?
9. Holden says that he didn't fail out of Elkton Hills but rather he "sort of" quit. What bothers Holden about Elkton Hills? Give an example.

Chapter 3

Vocabulary

sadist: *someone who obtains pleasure from inflicting pain or others*

falsetto: *an unnaturally or artificially high-pitched voice, esp. in a man*

10. Holden declares himself to be the most terrific _____. Since he is our narrator, why might this be a problem for us readers?

11. When Mr. Ossenburger is talking about praying to Jesus, even while driving, Holden tells us, “I can just see the big phony bastard shifting into first gear and asking Jesus to send him a few more stiff’s.” Explain this quotation as if you were talking to someone who had not read the chapter. In addition, explain Holden’s tone.

12. What does Holden buy in New York after losing the foils? How might this item be symbolic?

13. Explain Holden’s opinion of literature.

14. What does Holden pretend to be when he “horses” around with Ackley?

15. When Ackley says the hat is a “deer shooting” hat, what is Holden’s response?

16. When Holden is retrieving scissors from his closet, what happens to him?

Chapter 4

exhibitionist: *someone who deliberately behaves in such a way as to attract attention*

17. According to Holden, how is Stradlater a “secret slob”?

18. After Stradlater asks Holden to write his essay, Holden says, “[Stradlater] wanted you to think that the only reason he was lousy at writing compositions was because he stuck all the commas in the wrong place.” Then Holden says about an experience with Ackley at a basketball game, “Ackley kept saying . . . that Coyle had a perfect build for basketball. God, how I hate that stuff.” Why does Holden hate this “stuff”? How does this relate to Holden’s disgust with phoniness?

19. What is unique about the way Jane Gallagher used to play chess?

Chapter 5

galosh: *A waterproof overshoe*

halitosis: *condition of having offensive-smelling breath; bad breath*

20. What does Holden think is the reason the school feeds them steaks on Saturday night? How does his analysis fit with his character?

21. Why doesn't Holden throw the snowball?

22. Describe Allie's mitt.

23. Describe Holden's reaction to Allie's death.

Chapter 6

unscrupulous: *no regard for what is right or honorable*

24. Holden says the following: "[A]ll the athletic bastards stuck together"? What is this in response to? And how does this observation help to further develop Holden's character?

25. What does Stradlater say to cause Holden to start a fight with him? Why does this anger Holden?

Chapter 7

monastery: *community of persons, especially monks, bound by vows to a religious life and often living in partial or complete seclusion.*

monk: *a man who has withdrawn from the world for religious reasons*

gladstone: *suitcase*

26. What makes Holden feel so "lonesome"?

27. Where does Holden get his money?

Chapter 8

Vocabulary:

lousy: *Abundantly supplied, or oversupplied. Example: lousy with rocks. (Covered with diamonds).*

28. What name does Holden give to Mrs. Morrow?

29. What is Holden's opinion of Ernest Morrow and how does it differ from what Ernest's mother's opinion is?
30. What lies does Holden tell Mrs. Morrow? How does Holden's lying prove to be hypocritical on Holden's part?

Chapter 9

incognito: *with one's identity disguised or concealed*

31. Who are all the people Holden wants to call? Why doesn't he make the calls?
32. What question does Holden ask the Taxi Driver and how does this question fit his character traits?
33. What is ironic about Holden not wanting to look like a "screwball"?
34. Once in the hotel, what does Holden see when he looks out his window?
35. Who does Holden call up and invite? For what reasons does he call her up?

Chapter 10

sterling: *thoroughly excellent*

36. Who does Holden want to call at the beginning of the chapter? Why does he want to call her? Why doesn't he call her?
37. Explain Holden's experiences at the Lavender.
38. What does Laverne keep asking Holden? He keeps sarcastically saying that this makes her witty.

Chapter 11

39. While Holden sits in the "vomity-looking chair," what does he think about?
40. What causes Holden to almost "neck" with Jane?

Chapter 12

41. Describe the conversation that Holden has with the taxi cab driver.

42. Holden thinks Ernie is a good piano player, but he blames the people for ruining his playing. Explain Holden's reason.

43. Why does Holden leave Ernie's?

Chapter 13

nonchalant: *coolly unconcerned, indifferent, or unexcited*

frock: *a gown or dress worn by a girl or woman*

44. When Holden is walking back to the hotel, he wishes he had his gloves. He says he wishes he knew who stole these gloves. What does Holden reveal about himself in this part?

45. Holden claims that he is different from other men when it comes to woman. Explain in what way he is different. Also, how does this add to his characterization?

46. What does Holden do with the girl that Maurice sends over? Why?

Chapter 14

atheist: *a person who denies or disbelieves the existence of a supreme being or beings*

47. What does Holden do sometimes when he is depressed?

48. Who are Holden's two favorite characters from the Bible? What does he think about the Disciples?

49. What does Maurice do to Holden?

50. What is Holden's reaction to what happens to him?

Chapter 15

spendthrift: *One who spends money recklessly or wastefully*

bourgeois: *Of, relating to, or typical of the middle class*

51. Who does Holden make a date with? What does he think of her?

52. What does Holden's father do for work? What does he invest his money in?

53. Explain why Holden hates it when somebody has cheap suitcases. Include what happened to Holden to make him come to hate people with inferior suitcases.

54. Which character from *Romeo and Juliet* does Holden feel most sorry for? Although he doesn't explain why, why do you think he feels much sorrier for this person than any other major character from the play?

Chapter 16

55. What song lyrics does Holden overhear a child singing? How does this make him feel? Why?

56. When talking about Hamlet, what does Holden say about actors?

57. What does Holden say is the best thing about the museum?

Chapter 17

blasé: *uninterested because of frequent exposure or indulgence*

rubbering (Holden's version of Rubbernecking): *To look about or survey with unsophisticated wonderment or curiosity*

clique: *a small exclusive group of friends or associates*

58. What does Holden find interesting about his old roommate Harris Macklin?

59. What does Holden think about the show he and Sally go to see? What theory does Holden put forth about when an artist gets too good?

60. Why does Sally want to go ice skating?

61. Summarize what Holden says about school.

62. What does Holden propose he and Sally do? After this bit of conversation, what makes Sally mad?

Chapter 18

furlough: *leave of absence or vacation*

63. What does Holden say the trouble with girls is?
64. What does Holden say about most people who cry at phony movies?
65. According to Holden, what would be the worst part of being in a war? What does he say he will do if there is another war?

Chapter 19

swanky: *stylish or elegant*

flit: *(Slang: Disparaging and Offensive) male homosexual*

inane: *lacking sense, significance, or ideas; silly*

66. In order to make sure that the people at the bar didn't think Holden was a minor, what did he do when he ordered drinks?
67. Who does Holden meet at the Wicker Bar? What does Holden remember about this guy?
68. How does Holden act when talking to Luce?
69. What suggestion does Luce give to Holden?

Chapter 20

70. Who does Holden call? How does he act on the phone?
71. What happens to the record Holden bought for Phoebe?
72. Where does Holden go after the bar? Why?
73. What does Holden imagine happening to him?

Chapter 21

74. What method does Holden use to sneak into his parents' apartment?

75. What does Holden do in D.B.'s room before waking up Phoebe?
76. What do you think Holden's relationship with his father is? Use textual evidence to support your answer.

Chapter 22

ostracize: *to exclude, by general consent, from society, friendship, conversation, privileges*

77. What does Holden remember about James Castle?
78. What does Holden say he would like to be if he had a choice?
79. What did Holden have wrong with the song lyric? Why is this significant?

Chapter 23

80. What word does Mrs. Caulfield tell Phoebe she isn't supposed to be using? Why is this important?
81. What does Phoebe lend to Holden?
82. What was Holden's reaction to Phoebe's generosity?
83. What does Holden give to Phoebe? Why is this significant?

Chapter 24

pedagogical: *educational*

fiend: devil

84. What bothers Holden about the speech class?
85. What does Mr. Antolini tell Holden he can see him doing some day?
86. What causes Holden to wake up and run out of Antolini's apartment?

Chapter 25 & 26

87. Where does Holden end up sleeping?
88. What does Holden imagine every time he gets to the end of a street?
89. What does Holden see on the wall that makes him very depressed? Why?
90. What do the children do while riding the carousel? What is Holden's reaction to this?
91. How does Holden get all wet? Why might it be important that this happens to Holden?
92. Where is Holden telling this story from?