

## STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *The Catcher in the Rye*

### Chapters 1-4

#### 1. Who is Holden Caulfield?

- a. He is a writer for a New York newspaper.
- b. He is a sixteen-year old-student at a prep school in Pennsylvania.
- c. He is a psychiatrist at a well-known hospital in California.
- d. He is an up and coming movie star in Hollywood.

#### 2. Where is Holden as he narrates the story?

- a. He is at his parents' house in New York.
- b. He is on a plane flying to Europe.
- c. He is in the school library.
- d. He is at a rest home in California.

#### 3. Why wasn't Holden at the big football game?

- a. He couldn't afford the ticket.
- b. He was on academic probation and not allowed to attend any extra-curricular activities.
- c. He had just returned to school with the fencing team and had to see his history teacher.
- d. He had to finish a term paper that was due the next Monday.

#### 4. Why wouldn't Holden be back to Pencey after Christmas vacation?

- a. He had been expelled, because he failed four of five subjects.
- b. He had lost his athletic scholarship and could not afford the tuition.
- c. He had been given an early acceptance to college and was starting the next semester.
- d. His father was sick, and he had to go to work to help support the family.

#### 5. What "dirty trick" did Mr. Spencer pull on Holden?

- a. He orally read back Holden's exam answer and the note Holden had written.
- b. He had a surprise going away party, even though Holden had said he didn't want a party.
- c. He pretended to be dead to scare Holden.
- d. He called Holden's parents while Holden was present and discussed his (Holden's) situation with them.

#### 6. What does Spencer yell at Holden as he leaves? Why does this bother Holden so much? Would it bother you? Use what he tells you and your own inference to answer this question. Be sure to explain yourself-why yes or why no.

#### 7. Who was Robert Ackley?

- a. He was tall and athletic with a good sense of humor.
- b. He was fair-skinned and had a large birthmark on his right cheek. He was intelligent and friendly.
- c. He was short and heavy with a mean disposition.
- d. He had a pimply face. He was a nuisance and rather nasty.

#### 8. Ackley does several obnoxious things while he subjects Holden to his presence. List two of them and tell how and why it bothers Holden.

#### 9. Who was Stradlater?

- a. He was Holden's English professor. He tried to encourage Holden to stay in school.
- b. He was the coach of the fencing team. He wanted Holden to pay for the lost equipment.
- c. He was Holden's good-looking, but conceited roommate.
- d. He was a shy boy who lived down the hall from Holden.

**10. Identify Jane Gallagher.**

- a. She was the sister of a boy on the fencing team. She usually attended the games, hoping to attract Holden's attention.
- b. She had lived next door to Holden before he came to Pencey. They played checkers and became good friends.
- c. She was the headmaster's daughter. Holden dated her until her father made them stop seeing each other.
- d. She was the daughter of his mother's best friend. Holden introduced her to Stradlater, because he didn't want to date her himself.

**11. Why doesn't Holden go down to see Jane?**

- a. He wasn't in the mood.
  - b. Stradlater threatened to punch him if he did.
  - c. He didn't think she would remember him.
  - d. He didn't want to get stuck taking her out.
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**Chapters 5-9**

**1. About what did Holden write Stradlater's composition?**

- a. It was about his bedroom when he was a little boy.
- b. It was about the inside of a New York subway car.
- c. It was about the shower stall between his room and the adjoining one.
- d. It was about Allie's baseball glove.

**2. Holden is obviously upset, but since he is the one telling his story (unreliable narrator), he can't really explain why. Using your own inference skills, what is probably making him so restless?**

**3. What happened to the composition Holden wrote for Stradlater?**

- a. Stradlater turned it in and got an "A."
- b. Stradlater insulted Holden about the topic, and Holden ripped it up.
- c. The English teacher recognized Holden's style and failed Stradlater.
- d. Stradlater didn't use it, because Jane wrote one that he liked better.

**4. Why did Stradlater hit Holden?**

- a. Holden cursed at Stradlater for stretching out his jacket.
- b. Holden refused to turn the lights out and stop smoking.
- c. Holden called him a moron and then threw a punch at him.
- d. It was Stradlater's way of showing that he didn't want Holden to leave the school.

**5. Where did Holden decide to go?**

- a. He thought he would go to California to see his brother.
- b. He decided to visit Jane Gallagher.
- c. He thought it best to go directly to his parents' house.
- d. He decided to leave Pencey early and stay in a hotel in New York for a few days.

**6. Why does Holden assume people will think he looks older than he is?**

**7. Whom did Holden meet on his train ride? Infer why he lied to her?**

- a. He met a friend of his mother's. He lied because he was afraid she would tell his mother she saw him.
- b. He met the mother of a school-mate. He lied, because he wanted the mother to feel proud of her son and he wanted to tell her what she wanted to hear.
- c. He met a friend who had graduated from Pencey the previous year. He lied because he was embarrassed to admit that he had flunked out.
- e. He met one of his teachers from elementary school. He lied, because she had always had a good opinion of him and he didn't want to change that.

**8. What was the actual truth about her son?**

**9. Talk about how Holden feels about the woman. Is she attractive? Nice, mean, et cetera... What does this tell us about Holden himself?**

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**Chapters 10-13**

**1. Who is Phoebe?**

- a. She is Holden's little sister, who he likes a lot.
- b. She is an old friend of Holden's brother.
- c. She is Holden's aunt, in whom he confides.
- d. She is a playmate from his early childhood.

**2. Identify Bernice, Marty and Laverne.**

- a. They are three chambermaids in the hotel where Holden stays.
- b. They are characters in a short story Holden is writing.
- c. They are three women whom Holden met and danced with in the Lavender Room.
- d. They are Jane Gallagher's school friends. Holden met them in the hotel dining room.

**3. What does Holden find amazingly depressing about the women from WA? Based upon your knowledge of his character and tourists (we do live in CO), why do you think this is? Give a specific example, using your experience with CO tourists.**

**4. Describe Holden's relationship with Jane Gallagher.**

- a. They have been romantically involved for over a year, although they are currently having a disagreement because Jane wants to date others and Holden doesn't.
- b. They seem to be good friends, playing checkers, going to movies, and talking, but there was no advanced romantic involvement between them.
- c. They used to be romantically involved, but now they can't stand each other.
- d. They have only spoken a few times, but Holden would like to get to know her better.

**5. Why did Holden have to leave Ernie's?**

- a. They evicted him because he was underage.
- b. He ran out of money.
- c. He was drunk and felt like he was going to get sick.
- d. He didn't want to sit with his brother's friend and her date.

**6. What do we learn about Holden from his diversion about his gloves being stolen at Pencey?**

- a. He calls himself a coward, but he is really too humane to hurt anyone.
- b. He is very selfish and materialistic.
- c. He will jump at any chance to fight.
- d. Possessions don't mean a lot to him.

**7. List two or three crazy things Holden sees from his window at the hotel.**

**8. What was the "big mess" Holden got into when he got back to the hotel after being at Ernie's?**

- a. He was drunk and lost his temper. He started destroying the furniture and punching holes in the walls in his room. The hotel security came to subdue him.

- b. He was being chased by a group of young boys. He ran into the hotel for safety, and they followed him in. The management came to his rescue.
- c. He didn't have enough money to pay his cab fare. The cab driver followed him into the hotel and up to his room, complaining loudly that Holden had not paid.
- d. The elevator operator set him up with a prostitute and told him the fee was \$5.00. When she arrived, he decided he didn't want her services, and paid her the \$5.00. She said it was \$10.00, but Holden refused to pay the extra \$5.00.

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## **Chapters 14-17**

### **1. Why did Maurice hit Holden?**

- a. Maurice was roughing Holden up to make him pay Sunny the extra fee. Holden called Maurice a dirty moron, so Maurice hit him in the stomach.
- b. Holden had made insulting remarks about the caliber of the hotel, the prostitute, and Maurice's job. Maurice didn't want to hear it from a teenager, so he hit Holden to shut him up.
- c. Sunny had lied and told Maurice that Holden had hit her. Maurice believed he was defending Sunny.
- d. Maurice was just a bully. He enjoyed roughing up the young rich boys.

### **2. Holden said he felt like committing suicide. Why didn't he?**

- a. He wanted to write a letter to Phoebe first, but didn't have paper or a pencil, so he decided to wait.
- b. He was afraid he might not succeed, and then he would have to face his parents.
- c. He didn't want a bunch of "stupid rubbernecks" looking at him all gory.
- d. He was going to jump out the window, but he couldn't get it open. He got tired of trying, and fell asleep.

### **3. Identify Sally Hayes.**

- a. She was the girl his roommate, Stradlater, often dated. Holden was mad at him for going out with Jane, so he decided to get even by taking Sally out.
- b. She was the receptionist at the hotel. She saw that Holden was having some difficulties and offered to call a doctor or one of his friends to help him.
- c. She was another girl who worked with Maurice. She tried to seduce Holden, but he wisely refused this time.
- d. She was a girl Holden sometimes dated. He didn't like her too much, but he thought she was good looking.

### **4. Why did Holden check out of the hotel, and where did he go?**

- a. He was out of money, so he went to sit in the subway station.
- b. He didn't want to meet Maurice again, so he went to Grand Central Station and checked his bags in a locker there.
- c. Sally had invited him to spend the rest of the weekend at her parents' house.
- d. The heat broke down in the hotel, so he went to a YMCA and got a room there instead.

### **5. Whom did Holden meet at the sandwich bar? What did they talk about?**

- a. He met Sunny. They talked about what had happened the night before.
- b. He met two nuns. They talked about literature and Holden's views on Romeo and Juliet.
- c. He met Stradlater. They talked about school and Holden's personal problems.
- d. He met Ernie, the piano player. They talked about Holden's brother.

### **6. What purchase lifted Holden's spirits? Why?**

### **7. Besides his purchase, what made Holden "not so depressed anymore" on his way to the record store? What about the individual is uplifting? (Inference)**

### **8. What was Holden's opinion of actors?**

- a. He said they were all snobs.
- b. He said they were morons who couldn't get decent jobs.

- c. He said they were jerks who only thought about money.
- d. He said they were the biggest phonies of all.

**9. What did Holden like best about the museum?**

- a. It was free on Sundays.
- b. Everything always stayed where it was.
- c. It reminded him of fun times with his parents and brothers when he was young.
- d. It was warm and cheerful, and no one bothered him.

**10. What did Holden think of "George something--"?**

- a. He thought George was nice guy, and he was glad to be rescued from Sally for a while.
- b. He thought George was better than him, and he was afraid he would lose Sally.
- c. He thought George was snobby, phony and resented him butting in on his date.
- d. He thought he and George would have a lot in common and wanted to get to know him better.

**11. Holden rides an emotional rollercoaster in terms of how he feels during his date with Sally. Please list all zeniths and valleys of this date.**

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Chapters 18-21

**1. What did Holden think of the show at Radio City?**

- a. He said it was the best show he had ever seen.
- b. It was supposed to be religious, but he didn't think it was.
- c. It was phony and stupid.
- d. It was a comedy of errors.

**2. Why did Holden call Carl Luce even though he didn't like him much?**

- a. Holden was desperate for companionship and thought Luce was intellectual and could help him.
- b. He wanted to borrow money. He knew Luce was rich, and was a sucker for a sob story.
- c. Luce has his own apartment, and Holden figured Luce would let him stay with him until Wednesday.
- d. Holden knew Luce was an A student and wanted tutoring.

**3. What did Holden and Luce discuss?**

- a. They discussed Holden's career possibilities.
- b. They discussed Luce's romantic life and Holden's lack of one.
- c. They discussed books they had both read recently.
- d. Holden told Luce all about the adventures he'd had the last few days.

**4. Luce suggests Holden is in dire need of something. Besides telling him to "grow-up," what does Luce suggest Holden do? Do you agree? In specific detail, defend your position of why Holden needs (or doesn't need) what Luce suggests.**

**5. Why did Holden go home so early (before Wednesday)?**

- a. He decided the most noble thing to do was go ahead and face his parents.
- b. He was feeling very ill and afraid he would get worse if he didn't take care of himself. He knew his mother would care for him, even if she were angry with him.
- c. He wanted to see Phoebe.
- d. He knew they were out. He wanted to get food and cigarettes while they were gone.

**6. What was Phoebe's reaction when she first saw Holden? What was her reaction when she found out that he had been expelled?**

- a. She was glad to see him and hugged him. Then she said their father would kill Holden when he found out he'd been expelled.
- b. At first she was scared, because she thought he was a thief. Then she worried about what would happen to him if her parents came home and found him there.

- c. She was angry that he woke her up and even angrier that he had been expelled.
- d. At first she was selfish and asked if he had brought her a present. Then she got sarcastic and said their father was used to Holden being expelled.

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Chapters 22-26

**1. What was Holden's reply when Phoebe asked him why he "got the ax again"?**

- a. He said the work was too hard, because he had not been adequately prepared at the last school.
- b. He said it was unfair. The teachers just didn't like him and were out to get him.
- c. He said it was because of a political disagreement between the school president of the school board. The president was expelling Holden to get even.
- d. He said it was one of the worst school he ever attended, full of phonies and mean guys.

**2. Who is James Castle? What was his horrific experience at Pencey? Describe how you think this affected Holden.**

**3. Where did Holden go and why?**

- a. He went to a nearby church. He thought it would help him to talk to a minister, regardless of their denomination.
- b. He went to a former teacher's (Mr. Antolini) house. It was his last resort, because he was out of money.
- c. He went to see Jane Gallagher and warn her about Stradlater.
- d. He went to the convent to see the two nuns he had met earlier. He wanted to talk to them some more about Shakespeare.

**4. What advice did Mr. Antolini give Holden?**

- a. "Only educated and scholarly men are able to contribute something valuable to this world."
- b. "Study Eastern philosophy; it's simply more interesting than Western."
- c. "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die only for a cause, while the mark of a mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one."
- d. "You're a real prince, a gentleman and a scholar."

**5. As Antolini is advising Holden, what impedes his ability to pay attention?**

**6. Holden leaves Antolini's in the middle of the night. Given your knowledge of this unreliable narrator and teenagers in general, what do you make of the situation? Was Holden right in leaving? Did he overreact? State your opinion using two or three *specific* examples from the story.**

**7. How did Phoebe surprise Holden? What was Holden's reaction?**

- a. She brought her mother along. Holden was secretly glad, although he did not tell her that.
- b. She had packed her bag to go with him. He told her she couldn't go, which made her angry. Then Holden told her he wasn't going, because he didn't want her to be angry.
- c. She packed a lunch for him and gave him the rest of her savings. He cried, because she was so trusting and good to him.
- d. She didn't show up at lunch time. Holden was upset that he wouldn't get to see her, but deep down he believed she made the wisest choice.

**8. It could be said, Holden says a lot of things he doesn't really mean in this exchange with Phoebe. Using your knowledge of both Holden and adolescents, explain in detail why you think this is.**

**9. What happens after Holden blows up at Phoebe; what does she do?**

**10. Why did Holden sit on the bench even though it was raining buckets?**

- a. He was enjoying watching Phoebe ride the carousel.
- b. He wanted to get sick enough to have to go into the hospital for a while.
- c. He was drunk and didn't realize what he was doing.
- d. He was punishing himself for behaving so badly.

**11. If Phoebe were a symbol, what would she symbolize for Holden? What bigger theme or idea does Phoebe represent? Explain yourself using two to three specific examples from the book.**

**12. How did Holden explain his catcher in the rye daydream?**

- a. He would be running through a field of rye, and farmers with pitchforks would be chasing him.
- b. Ready to catch anything that came his way, he would play baseball wearing his brother's glove and stand in the outfield.
- c. He would stand guard over all of the rye-whiskey in the world and make sure no one got drunk.
- d. He would stand in a field of rye, where his job would be to catch any children who started to go over the cliff.

**13. What do you make of Holden's last line? Does it suggest that he's going to surmount his teenage angst? Is he a round character or a flat character? Is the last line hopeful or simply anti-climatic? There's a lot to explain, so take your time and make sure you answer all parts of the question.**