**The Catcher in the Rye**

Chapter One:

The Catcher in the Rye begins with the statement by the narrator, Holden Caulfield, that he will not tell about his "lousy" childhood and "all that David Copperfield kind of crap" because such details bore him. He describes his parents as nice, but "touchy as hell." Instead, Holden vows to tell about what happened to him around last Christmas, before he had to take it easy. He also mentions his brother, D.B., who is nearby in Hollywood "being a prostitute." Holden was a student at Pencey Prep in Agerstown, Pennsylvania, and he mocks their advertisements, which claim to have been molding boys into clear-thinking young men since 1888. Holden begins his story during the Saturday of the football game with Saxon Hall, which was supposed to be a very big deal at Pencey. Selma Thurmer, the daughter of the headmaster, is at the game. Although she is unattractive and a bit pathetic, to Holden she seems nice enough, for she does not lavish praise upon her father. Holden, the manager of the fencing team, had just returned from New York with the team. Although they were supposed to have a meet with the McBurney School, Holden left the foils on the subway. The fencing team was angry at Holden, but he thought the entire event was funny in a way. Holden does not attend the football game, instead choosing to say goodbye to Spencer, his history teacher, who knew that Holden was not coming back to Pencey. Holden had recently been expelled for failing four classes.

Chapter Two:

Holden finds the Spencer's house somewhat depressing, smelling of Vicks Nose Drops and clearly indicating the old age of its inhabitants. Mr. Spencer sits in a ratty old bathrobe, and asks Holden to sit down. Holden tells him how Dr. Thurmer told him about how "life is a game" and you should "play it according to the rules" when he expelled him. Mr. Spencer tells him that Dr. Thurmer was correct, and Holden agrees with him, but thinks instead that life is only a game if you are on the right side. Holden tells Mr. Spencer that his parents will be upset, for this is his fourth private school so far. Holden tells that, at sixteen, he is over six feet tall and has some gray hair, but still acts like a child, as others often tell him. Spencer says that he met with Holden's parents, who are "grand" people, but Holden dismisses that word as "phony." Spencer then tells Holden that he failed him in History because he knew nothing, and even reads his exam essay about the Egyptians to him. At the end of the exam, Holden left a note for Mr. Spencer, admitting that he is not interested in the Egyptians, despite Spencer's interesting lectures, and that he will accept if Mr. Spencer fails him. As Holden and Mr. Spencer continue to talk, Holden's mind wanders; he thinks about ice skating in Central Park. When Mr. Spencer asks why Holden quit Elkton Hills, he tells Mr. Spencer that it is a long story, but explains in narration that the people there were phonies. He mentions the particular quality of the headmaster, Mr. Haas, who would be charming toward everyone but the "funny-looking parents." Holden claims he has little interest in the future, and assures Mr. Spencer that he is just going through a phase. As Holden leaves, he hears Mr. Spencer say "good luck," a phrase that he particularly loathes.

Chapter Three:

Holden claims that he is the most terrific liar one could meet. He admits that he lied to Spencer by telling him that he had to go to the gym. At Pencey, Holden lives in the Ossenburger Memorial Wing of the new dorms. Ossenburger is a wealthy undertaker who graduated from the school; Holden tells how false Ossenburger seemed when he gave a speech exalting faith in Jesus and how another student farted during the ceremony. Holden returns to his room, where he puts on a red hunting hat they he bought in New York. Holden discusses the books that he likes to read: he prefers Ring Lardner, but is now reading Dinesen's Out of Africa. Ackley, a student whose room is connected to Holden's, barges in on Holden. Holden describes Ackley as having a terrible personality and an even worse complexion. Holden tries to ignore him, then pretends that he is blind to annoy Ackley. Ackley cuts his nails right in front of Holden, and asks about Ward Stradlater, Holden's roommate. Ackley claims that he hates Stradlater, that "goddamn sonuvabitch," but Holden tells Ackley that he hates Stradlater for the simple reason that Stradlater told him that he should actually brush his teeth. Holden defends Stradlater, claiming that he is conceited, but still generous. Stradlater arrives, and is friendly to Holden (in a phony sort of way), and asks to borrow a jacket from Holden. Stradlater walks around shirtless to show off his build.

Chapter Four:

Since he has nothing else to do, Holden goes down to the bathroom to chat with Stradlater as he shaves. Stradlater, in comparison to Ackley, is a "secret" slob, who would always shave with a rusty razor that he would never clean. Stradlater is a "Yearbook" kind of handsome guy. He asks Holden to write a composition for him for English. Holden realizes the irony that he is flunking out of Pencey, yet is still asked to do work for others. Stradlater insists, however, that Holden not write it too well, for Hartzell knows that Holden is a hot-shot in English. On an impulse, Holden gives Stradlater a half nelson, which greatly annoys Stradlater. Stradlater talks about his date that night with Jane Gallagher. Although he cannot even get her name correct, Holden knows her well, for she lived next door to him several summers ago and they would play checkers together. Stradlater barely listens as he fixes his hair with Holden's gel. Holden asks Stradlater not to tell Jane that he got kicked out. He then borrows Holden's hound's-tooth jacket and leaves. Ackley returns, and Holden is actually glad to see him, for he takes his mind off of other matters.

Chapter Five:

On Saturday nights at Pencey the students are served steak; Holden believes this occurs because parents visit on Sunday and students can thus tell them that they had steak for dinner the previous night, as if it were a common occurrence. Holden goes with Ackley and Mal Brossard into New York City to see a movie, but since Ackley and Brossard had both seen that particular Cary Grant comedy, they play pinball and get hamburgers instead. When they return, Ackley remains in Holden's room, telling about a girl he had sex with, but Holden knows that he is lying, for whenever he tells that same story, the details always change. Holden tells him to leave so that he can write Stradlater's composition. He writes about his brother Allie's baseball mitt. Allie, born two years after Holden, died of leukemia in 1946. The night that Allie died, Holden broke all of the windows in his garage with his fist.

Chapter Six:

Stradlater returned late that night, thanked Holden for the jacket and asked if he did the composition for him. When Stradlater reads it, he gets upset at Holden, for it is simply about a baseball glove. Since Stradlater is upset, Holden tears up the composition. Holden starts smoking, just to annoy Stradlater. Holden asks about the date, but Stradlater doesn't give very much information, only that they spent most of the time in Ed Banky's car. Finally he asks if Stradlater "gave her the time" there. Stradlater says that the answer is a "professional secret," and Holden responds by trying to punch Stradlater. Stradlater pushes him down and sits with his knees on Holden's chest. He only lets Holden go when he agrees to say nothing more about Stradlater's date. When he calls Stradlater a moron, he knocks Holden out. Holden then goes to the bathroom to wash the blood off his face. Even though he claims to be a pacifist, Holden enjoys the look of blood on his face.

Chapter Seven:

Ackley, who was awakened by the fight, comes in Holden's room to ask what happened. He tells Holden that he is still bleeding and should put something on his wounds. Holden asks if he can sleep in Ackley's room that night, since his roommate is away for the weekend, but Ackley says that he can't give him permission. Holden feels so lonesome that he wishes he were dead. Holden worries that Stradlater had sex with Jane during their date, because he knew that Stradlater was capable of seducing girls quickly. Holden asks Ackley whether or not one has to be Catholic to join a monastery. He then decides to leave Pencey immediately. He decides to take a room in a hotel in New York and take it easy until Wednesday. He packs ice skates that his mother had just sent him. The skates make him sad, because they are not the kind that he wanted. According to Holden, his mother has a way of making him sad whenever he receives a present. Holden wakes up Woodruff, a wealthy student, and sells him his typewriter for twenty bucks. Before he leaves, he yells "Sleep tight, ya morons."

Chapter Eight:

Since it is too late to call a cab, Holden walks to the train station. On the train, a woman gets on at Trenton and sits right beside him, even though the train is nearly empty. She strikes up a conversation with him, noticing the Pencey sticker on his suitcase, and says that her son, Ernest Morrow, goes to Pencey as well. Holden remembers him as "the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey." Holden tells her that his name is Rudolf Schmidt, the name of the Pencey janitor. Holden lies to Mrs. Morrow, pretending that he likes Pencey and that he is good friends with Ernest. She thinks that her son is Њsensitive,' an idea that Holden finds laughable, but Holden continues to tell lies about Ernest, such as that he would have been elected class president, but he was too modest to accept the nomination. Holden asks if she would like to join him for a cocktail in the club car. Finally, he tells her that he is leaving Pencey early because he has to have an operation; he claims he has a tumor on his brain. When she invites Holden to visit during the summer, he says that he will be spending the summer in South America with his grandmother.

Chapter Nine:

When Holden reaches New York, he does not know whom to call. He considers calling his kid sister, Phoebe, but she would be asleep and his parents would overhear. He also considers calling Jane Gallagher or Sally Hayes, another friend, but finally does not call anybody. He gets into a cab and absentmindedly gives the driver his home address, but soon realizes that he does not want to get home. He goes to the Edmond Hotel instead, where he stays in a shabby room. He looks out of the window and could see the other side of the hotel. From this view he can see other rooms; in one of them, a man takes off his clothes and puts on ladies' clothing, while in another a man and a woman spit their drinks at one another. Holden thinks that he's the "biggest sex maniac you ever saw," but then claims that he does not understand sex at all. He then thinks of calling Jane Gallagher but again decides against it, and instead considers calling a woman named Faith Cavendish, who was formerly a burlesque stripper and is not quite a prostitute. When he calls her, he continues to ask whether or not they could get a drink together, but she turns him down at every opportunity.

Chapter Ten:

Holden describes more about his family in this chapter. His sister Phoebe is the smartest little kid that he has ever met, and Holden himself is the only dumb one. Phoebe reminds Holden of Allie in physical appearance, but she is very emotional. She writes books about Hazle Weatherfield, a girl detective. Holden goes down to the Lavender Room, a nightclub in the hotel. The band there is putrid and the people are mostly old. When he attempts to order a drink, the waiter asks for identification, but since he does not have proof of his age, he begs the waiter to put rum in his Coke. Holden "gives the eye" to three women at another table, in particular a blonde one. He asks the blonde one to dance, and Holden judges her to be an excellent dancer, but a moron. Holden is offended when the woman, Bernice Krebs, asks his age and when he uses profanity in front of her. He tells these women, who are visiting from Seattle, that his name is Jim Steele. Since they keep mentioning how they saw Peter Lorre that day, Holden claims that he just saw Gary Cooper, who just left the Lavender Room. Holden thinks that the women are sad for wanting to go to the first show at Radio City Music Hall.

Chapter Eleven:

Upon leaving the Lavender Room, Holden begins to think of Jane Gallagher and worries that Stradlater seduced her. Holden met Jane when his mother became irritated that the Gallagher's Doberman pinscher relieved itself on their lawn. Several days later, he introduced himself to her, but it took some time before he could convince her that he didn't care what their dog did. Holden reminisces about Jane's smile, and admits that she is the only person whom he showed Allie's baseball mitt. The one time that he and Jane did anything sexual together was after she had a fight with Mr. Cudahy, her father-in-law. Holden suspected that he had tried to "get wise with" Jane. Holden decides to go to Ernie's, a nightclub in Greenwich village that D.B. used to frequent before he went to Hollywood.

Chapter Twelve:

In the cab to Ernie's, Holden chats with Horwitz, the cab driver. He asks what happens to the ducks in Central Park during the winter, but the two get into an argument when Horwitz thinks that Holden's questions are stupid. Ernie's is filled with prep school and college jerks, as Holden calls them. Holden notices a Joe Yale-looking guy with a beautiful girl; he is telling the girl how a guy in his dorm nearly committed suicide. A former girlfriend of Holden's brother, D.B., recognizes him. The girl, Lillian Simmons, asks about D.B. and introduces Holden to a Navy commander she is dating. Holden notices how she blocks the aisle in the place as she drones on about how handsome Holden has become. Rather than spend time with Lillian Simmons, Holden leaves.

Chapter Thirteen:

Holden walks back to his hotel, although it is forty-one blocks away. He considers how he would confront a person who had stolen his gloves. Although he would not do so aggressively, he wishes that he could threaten the person who stole them. Holden finally concludes that he would yell at the thief but not have the courage to hit him. Holden reminisces about drinking with Raymond Goldfarb at Whooton. While back at the hotel, Maurice the elevator man asks Holden if he is interested in a little tail tonight. He offers a prostitute for five dollars. When she arrives, she does not believe that he is twenty-two, as he claims. Holden finally tells the prostitute, Sunny, that he just had an operation on his clavichord, as an excuse not to have sex. She is angry, but he still pays her, even though they argue over the price. He gives her five dollars, although she demands ten.

Chapter Fourteen:

After the prostitute leaves, Holden sits in a chair and talks aloud to his brother Allie, which he often does whenever he is depressed. Finally he gets in bed and feels like praying, although he is "sort of an atheist." He claims that he likes Jesus, but the Disciples annoy him. Other than Jesus, the Biblical character he likes best is the lunatic who lived in the tombs and cut himself with stones. Holden tells that his parents disagree on religion and none of his siblings attend church. Maurice and Sunny knock on the door, demanding more money. Holden argues with Maurice and threatens to call the cops, but Maurice says that his parents would find out that he spent the night with a whore. As Holden starts to cry, Sunny takes the money from his wallet. Maurice punches him in the stomach before leaving. After Maurice is gone, Holden imagines that he had taken a bullet and would shoot Maurice in the stomach. Holden feels like committing suicide by jumping out the window, but he wouldn't want people looking at his gory body on the sidewalk.

Chapter Fifteen:

Holden calls Sally Hayes, who goes to the Mary A. Woodruff School. According to Holden, Sally seems quite intelligent because she knows a good deal about the theater and literature, but is actually quite stupid. He makes a date to meet Sally for a matinee, but she continues to chat with Holden on the phone despite his lack of interest. Holden tells that his father is a wealthy corporation attorney and his mother has not been healthy since Allie died. At Grand Central Station, where Holden checks in his bags after leaving the hotel, he sees two nuns with cheap suitcases. Holden reminisces about his roommate at Elkton Hills, Dick Slagle who had cheap suitcases and would complain about how everything was bourgeois. He chats with the nuns and gives them a donation. He wonders what nuns think about sex when he discusses Romeo and Juliet with them.

Chapter Sixteen:

Before meeting Sally Hayes, Holden goes to find a record called "Little Shirley Beans" for Phoebe by Estelle Fletcher. As he walks through the city, he hears a poor kid playing with his parents, singing the song "If a body catch a body coming through the rye." Hearing the song makes Holden feel less depressed. Holden buys tickets for I Know My Love, a play starring the Lunts. He knew that Sally would enjoy it, for it was supposed to be very sophisticated. Holden goes to the Mall, where Phoebe usually plays when she is in the park, and sees a couple of kids playing there. He asks if any of them know Phoebe. They do, and claim that she is probably in the Museum of Natural History. He reminisces about going to the Museum when he was in grade school. He remembers how he would go there often with his class, but while the exhibits would be exactly the same, he would be different each time. Holden considers going to the museum to see Phoebe, but instead goes to the Biltmore for his date with Sally.

Chapter Seventeen:

Holden meets Sally at the Biltmore, and when he sees her he immediately feels like marrying her, even though he doesn't particularly like her. After the play, when Sally keeps mentioning that she thinks she knows people she sees, Holden replies "Why don't you go on over and give him a big soul kiss, if you know him? He'll enjoy it." Finally, Sally does go to talk to the boy she knows, George from Andover. Holden notes how phony the conversation between Sally and George is. Holden and Sally go ice skating at Radio City, then to eat. Sally asks Holden if he is coming over to help her trim the Christmas tree. Holden asks her if she ever gets fed up. He tells her that he hates everything: taxicabs, living in New York, phony guys who call the Lunts angels. Sally tells him not to shout. He tells her that she is the only reason that he is in New York right now. If not for her, he would be in the woods, he claims. He complains about the cliques at boarding schools, and tells her that he's in lousy shape. He suggests that they borrow a car from a friend in Greenwich Village and drive up to New England where they can stay in a cabin camp until their money runs out. They could get married and live in the woods. Sally tells him that the idea is foolish, for they are both practically children who would starve to death. She tells him that they will have a lot of time to do those things after college and marriage, but he claims that there wouldn't be "oodles" of places to go, for it would be entirely different. He calls her a "royal pain in the ass," and she starts to cry. Holden feels somewhat guilty, and realizes that he doesn't even know where he got the idea about going to New England.

Chapter Eighteen:

Holden once again considers giving Jane a call to invite her to go dancing. He remembers how she danced with Al Pike from Choate. Although Holden thought that he was "all muscles and no brains," Jane claimed that he had an inferiority complex and felt sorry for him. Holden thinks that girls divide guys into two types, no matter what their personality: a girl will justify bad behavior as part of an inferiority complex for those she likes, while claim those that she doesn't like are conceited. Holden calls Carl Luce, a friend from the Whooton School who goes to Columbia, and plans to meet him that night. He then goes to the movies and is annoyed when a woman beside him becomes too emotional. The movie is a war film, which makes Holden think about D.B.'s experience in the war. He hated the army, but had Holden read A Farewell to Arms, which in Holden's view celebrates soldiers. Holden thinks that if there is a war, he is glad that the atomic bomb has been invented, for he would volunteer to sit right on top of it.

Chapter Nineteen:

Holden meets Carl Luce at the Wicker Bar. Carl Luce used to gossip about people who were "flits" (homosexuals) and would tell which actors were actually gay. Holden claims that Carl was a bit "flitty" himself. When Carl arrives, he asks Holden when he is going to grow up, and is not amused by Holden's jokes. Carl is annoyed that he is having a "typical Caulfield conversation" about sex. Carl admits that he is seeing an older woman in the Village who is a sculptress from China. Holden asks questions that are too personal about Carl's sex life with his girlfriend until Carl insists that he drop the subject. Carl reminds him that the last time he saw Holden he told him to see his father, a psychiatrist.

Chapter Twenty:

Holden remains in the Wicker Bar getting drunk. He continues to pretend that he has been shot. Finally, he calls Sally, but her grandmother answers and asks why he is calling so late. Finally, Sally gets on the phone and realizes that Holden is drunk. In the restroom of the Wicker Bar, he talks to the "flitty-looking" guy, asking if he will see the "Valencia babe" who performs there, but he tells Holden to go home. Holden finally leaves. As he walks home, Holden drops Phoebe's record and nearly starts to cry. He goes to Central Park and sits down on a bench. He thinks that he will get pneumonia and imagines his funeral. He is reassured that his parents won't let Phoebe come to his funeral because he is too young. He thinks about what Phoebe would feel if he got pneumonia and died, and figures that he should sneak home and see her, in case he did die.

Chapter Twenty-One:

Holden returns home, where he is very quiet as not to awake his parents. Phoebe is asleep in D.B.'s room. He sits down at D.B.'s desk and looks at Phoebe's stuff, such as her math book, where she has the name "Phoebe Weatherfield Caulfield" written on the first page (her middle name is actually Josephine). He wakes up Phoebe and hugs her. She tells about how she is playing Benedict Arnold in her school play. She tells about how she saw a movie called The Doctor, and how their parents are out for the night. Holden shows Phoebe the broken record, and admits that he got kicked out. She tells him that "Daddy's going to kill you," but Holden says that he is going away to a ranch in Colorado. Phoebe places a pillow over her head and refuses to talk to Holden.

Chapter Twenty-Two:

Phoebe tells Holden that she thinks his scheme to go out to Colorado is foolish, and asks why he failed out of yet another school. He claims that Pencey is full of phonies. He tells her about how everyone excluded Robert Ackley as a sign of how phony the students are. Holden admits that there were a couple of nice teachers, including Mr. Spencer, but then complains about the Veterans' Day ceremonies. Phoebe tells Holden that he doesn't like anything that happens. She asks Holden for one thing that he likes a lot. He thinks of two things. The first is the nuns at Grand Central. The second is a boy at Elkton Hills named James Castle, who had a fight with a conceited guy named Phil Stabile. He threatened James, who responded by jumping out the window, killing himself. However, he tells Phoebe that he likes Allie, and he likes talking to Phoebe right now. Holden tells Phoebe that he would like to be a catcher in the rye: he pictures a lot of children playing in a big field of rye around the edge of a cliff. Holden imagines that he would catch them if they started to go over the cliff. Holden decides to call up Mr. Antolini, a former teacher at Elkton Hills who now teaches English at NYU.

Chapter Twenty-Three:

Holden tells that Mr. Antolini was his English teacher at Elkton Hills and was the person who carried James Castle to the infirmary. Holden and Phoebe dance to the radio, but their parents come home and Holden hides in the closet. When he believes that it is safe, Holden asks Phoebe for money and she gives him eight dollars and change. He starts to cry as he prepares to leave, which frightens Phoebe. He gives Phoebe his hunting hat and tells her that he will give her a call.

Chapter Twenty-Four:

Mr. Antolini had married an older woman who shared similar intellectual interests. When he arrives at his apartment, Holden finds Mr. Antolini in a bathrobe and slippers, drinking a highball. Holden and Mr. Antolini discuss Pencey, and Holden tells how he failed Oral Expression (debate). He tells Holden how he had lunch with his father, who told him that Holden was cutting classes and generally unprepared. He warns Holden that he is riding for some kind of terrible fall. He says that it may be the kind where, at the age of thirty, he sits in some bar hating everyone who comes in looking as if he played football in college or hating people who use improper grammar. He tells Holden that the fall that he is riding for is a special and horrible kind, and that he can see Holden dying nobly for some highly unworthy cause. He gives Holden a quote from the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel: "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." He finally tells Holden that once he gets past the things that annoy him, he will be able to find the kind of information that will be dear to his heart. Holden goes to sleep, and wakes up to find Mr. Antolini's hand on his head. He tells Holden that he is "simply sitting here, admiring‹" but Holden interrupts him, gets dressed and leaves, claiming that he has to get his bags from Grand Central Station and he will be back soon.

Chapter Twenty-Five:

When Holden gets outside, it is getting light out. He walks over to Lexington to take the subway to Grand Central, where he slept that night. He thinks about how Mr. Antolini will explain Holden's departure to his wife. Holden feels some regret that he didn't come back to the Antolini's apartment. Holden starts reading a magazine at Grand Central; when he reads an article about hormones, he begins to worry about hormones, and worries about cancer when he reads about cancer. As Holden walks down Fifth Avenue, he feels that he will not get to the other side of the street each time he comes to the end of a block. He feels that he would just go down. He makes believe that he is with Allie every time he reaches a curb. Holden decides that he will go away, never go home again and never go to another prep school. He thinks he will pretend to be a deaf-mute so that he won't have to deal with stupid conversations. Holden goes to Phoebe's school to find her and say goodbye. At the school he sees "fuck you" written on the wall, and becomes enraged as he tries to scratch it off. He writes her a note asking her to meet him near the Museum of Art so that he can return her money. While waiting for Phoebe at the Museum, Holden chats with two brothers who talk about mummies. He sees another "fuck you" written on the wall, and is convinced that someone will write that below the name on his tombstone. Holden, suffering from diarrhea, goes to the bathroom, and as he exits the bathroom he passes out. When he regains consciousness, he feels better. Phoebe arrives, wearing Holden's hunting hat and dragging Holden's old suitcase. She tells him that she wants to come with him. She begs, but he refuses and causes her to start crying. She throws the red hunting hat back at Holden and starts to walk away. She follows Holden to the zoo, but refuses to talk to him or get near him. He buys Phoebe a ticket for the carousel there, and watches her go around on it as "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" plays. Afterwards, she takes back the red hunting hat and goes back on the carousel. As it starts to rain, Holden cries while watching Phoebe.

Chapter Twenty-Six:

Holden ends his story there. He refuses to tell what happened after he went home and how he got sick. He says that people are concerned about whether he will apply himself next year. He tells that D.B. visits often, and he often misses Stradlater, Ackley, and even Maurice. However, he advises not to tell anybody anything, because it is this that causes a person to start missing others.