

# The Catcher in the Rye

*By J.D. Salinger*

Literature Guide Developed by Ani Govjian  
for *Secondary Solutions*®

**ISBN-10: 0-9789204-6-5**  
**ISBN-13: 978-0-9789204-6-3**

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# The Catcher in the Rye

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### Chapters One—Three

#### **Standards Focus: Note-Taking and Summarizing**

Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** As you read each chapter of *The Catcher in the Rye*, use the chart on page 23, “Standards Focus—Note-Taking and Summarizing” to help you complete the chart below. Fill in one sheet per chapter. **BE SURE to write the number of each chapter on the line above.**

Summarization	
Conflict	
Holden’s Response	
Themes	
Symbols	

## Chapters One—Three

### ***Comprehension Check***

**Directions:** On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions in complete sentences to help you better understand the events that occur in ***The Catcher in the Rye***.

1. Who is D.B.?
2. Why is Holden leaving Pencey?
3. What day of the week is it?
4. Why is Holden being “ostracized?”
5. Where is Holden standing and what is he looking at?
6. How does Holden say “good-bye” to Pencey?
7. Why does Holden have difficulty breathing after only a short run to the main gate?
8. How does Holden describe Mr. and Mrs. Spencer?
9. Which subject is Holden passing? What is the significance of this?
10. Why does Holden regret visiting Mr. Spencer?
11. What did Dr. Thurmer say and why does it upset Holden?
12. On what night of the week is Holden supposed to go home?
13. What does Mr. Spencer read out loud? What effect does this have on Holden?
14. How does Mr. Haas, the headmaster at Elkton Hills, anger Holden?
15. What does Mr. Spencer yell out as Holden exits? How does this make Holden feel?
16. What does Holden say about being a “terrific liar?”
17. What did Holden buy that day in New York?
18. What does Holden do when he returns to his room?
19. How does Holden describe Ackley?
20. Why do you think Ackley’s behavior annoys Holden so much?
21. How does Holden describe Stradlater? How do you think Holden feels about him?
22. What can you tell about Holden, based on what he admires about Stradlater?

**Chapters One—Three*****Standards Focus: Diction and Syntax Part One***

**Diction** is simply the selection of words or phrases an author has made. The words an author selects may both provide the literal definition and add an implied meaning that together best serve the author's goal. The sound, number of syllables, and visual experience of the word on the page may all factor into the author's choice of words.

**Syntax** is the organization of words and their relationship to each other. It is how the words are arranged on the page. The structure that the words make up in a text can serve a specific function and create an impression on the reader. For example, a few short words spaced by gaps in dialogue may "sound" stunted and uncomfortable. The author may have chosen those words in order to display any discomfort the character speaking might feel. Another option would be if the author provided a fluid string of words to help carry the reader seamlessly through a passage.

How authors use **diction** and **syntax** enrich the story, convey subtle undertones, and, by shifting style, impart information about the characters. Salinger's use of word choice and order moves the reader through the inner workings of Holden Caulfield's mind which is further complicated by dialogue, flashback, fantasies, and Holden's observations.

**Directions:** Below are several quotations that demonstrate different ways Salinger shifts **syntax** or uses specific **diction** to convey a particular image, idea, or impression. Using complete sentences, answer the questions that accompany each quotation.

For example:

(9) "Grand. There's a word I really hate. It's a phony."

a. Explain the significance/purpose of the line to story:

*This is the first time Holden uses the word "phony" in the story but it recurs several times afterwards. Hypocrisy is one of the greatest faults that he finds with the adult world. While he usually has no problem chastising people as being "phony," he does not use it directly on Mr. Spencer. He has a connection with his teacher so instead he attacks the word Mr. Spencer uses. He treats the word like a person by calling it a "phony" instead of saying that someone who uses that word is acting "phony." This reveals Holden's willingness to forgive or overlook the faults that he despises in others.*

b. What is important about how the words are arranged?

*The arrangement of these short sentences reinforces the feelings that the words convey. The word "grand" is said first and separated from the rest of the thought by a period. This distinction shines a spotlight on the word so that the reader will focus on it. It is followed by a short sentence that reveals Holden's opinion. By ending the sentence with the word "hate" the reader's eye lingers on it. The emphasis is placed on that emotion. Another short sentence follows that explains why he hates that word. Again, the word that comes last is emphasized. Therefore, the structure of the sentence highlights the three most important words: grand, hate, and phony.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

1. (4) *“What I was really hanging around for, I was trying to feel some kind of good-by.”*

a. Explain the significance/purpose of the line to the story: \_\_\_\_\_

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b. What is important about how the words are arranged? What does it reveal to you about how Holden is feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

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c. What is your own response to this line? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. (9) *“I shook my head. I shake my head quite a lot. ‘Boy!’ I said. I say ‘Boy!’ quite a lot...and I have gray hair. I really do...Sometimes I act a lot older than I am—I really do...”*

a. Explain the significance/purpose of the line to the story: \_\_\_\_\_

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b. What is important about how the words “boy!” and “I really do” are repeated? What does it reveal to you about how Holden is feeling? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

c. What else does Holden repeat? Why do you think he does this? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. (18) *"I thought it was going to stink, but it didn't. It was a very good book. I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot."*

a. Explain the significance/purpose of the line to the story: \_\_\_\_\_

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b. What does Holden mean when he uses the word "illiterate?" How can he be "illiterate, but...read a lot?" What does this reveal about Holden? \_\_\_\_\_

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c. What is your own response to this line? \_\_\_\_\_

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