

Discussion Questions for CATCHER IN THE RYE

DAY ONE:

**One thought to pursue today for
this opening round: impressions.
what did you think of the work and
why?**

**Were you troubled, entertained,
bored, put off, fascinated?**

**General discussion, please, of the
reaction you personally had to the
novel with reasons, explanations,
arguments to support that reaction.**

**I expect to hear from everyone in
order first and then we will open
the forum.**

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DAY TWO:

Motivation:

- 1. What is Holden's view of the world at the beginning of the novel? From what has this view been formed? What are the guiding influences on this character's life that have given him that view?**
- 2. How does this viewpoint change as the book moves along? What are the motivating factors that cause him to change that view?**
- 3. What is his original view of childhood innocence that forms his sense of "the catcher"?**
- 4. What, in essence is "the catcher"?**
- 5. What does it mean to Holden?**
- 6. Why does he want to be this person?**
- 7. What makes him decide ultimately that this idea is wrong?**
- 8. Can you identify the key scene and the key quote that show this attitudinal change? And, explain what it means?**

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DAY THREE:

The breakdown:

- 1. What are some of the constant indications in the story that there is a physical breakdown about to occur? We know it has taken place because we are told right at the start but as Holden retells his tale, what evidence do we see that it is coming?**
- 2. A number of influences push him over the edge. What is the influence of the cinema on Holden? Why?**
- 3. What is Holden's perception of evil in the world?**
- 4. How does he define his vision of good?**
- 5. Who are his heroes? They fall into three categories. Can you place people in each and explain why they belong there? Those categories are: PEOPLE WHO WERE HEROES BUT HAVE NOW FAILED HIM; PEOPLE HE DOES NOT KNOW PERSONALLY AND CAN NOT CONTACT; THE DEAD.**

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DAY FOUR:

Symbols and meanings:

- 1. The overriding symbol in this book is one of rebirth. First, Holden must die in order to be reborn. Chart his actions that make up his “slow suicide of the spirit”.**
- 2. Where does his symbolic “death” occur?**
- 3. Why is that place of “death” particularly appropriate to the story? What is the cyclical nature of the symbol represented by Holden’s place of “death”? Where has it come from? What lesson has he begun to learn as a result of it?**
- 4. Where is his “rebirth”?**
- 5. What are the indications in the novel that Holden is heading for this spiritual regeneration? What are the symbolic signals that we see throughout the story that are indications of this? Here’s a start: think of the journey into the city: How does it take place? What does the scene look like in descriptive terms? Whom does he meet and sit with? What is the representation of this inclusion?**
- 6. Ultimately, is this a story of hope or despair?**