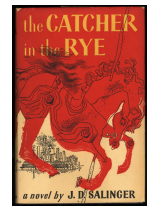


# The Catcher in the Rye

Salinger in the 1950s. →

<b>Born:</b>	January 1, 1919 (age 87) Manhattan, New York
<b>Occupation(s):</b>	Novelist and Writer
<b>Influenced:</b>	English Classes worldwide



## Author:

**Jerome David Salinger** (b. January 1, 1919) is an American author best known for *The Catcher in the Rye*, a classic novel that has enjoyed enduring popularity since its publication in 1951. A major theme in Salinger's work is the strong yet delicate mind of "disturbed" adolescents, and the redemptive capacity of children in the lives of such young men. Salinger is also known for his reclusive nature; he has not given an interview since 1974, and has not made a public appearance, nor published any new work, since 1965. In the mid 1990s, there was a flurry of excitement when a small publisher announced a deal with Salinger to bring out the first book version of his final published story, "Hapworth 16, 1924," but amid the ensuing publicity, Salinger quickly withdrew from the arrangement. **The Catcher in the Rye** has remained a novel taught in classrooms across the country and abroad despite its distinction of being one of the most censored books of the last fifty years.

## Historical Context:

*The Catcher in the Rye* is a novel by J. D. Salinger. First published in the United States in 1951, the novel remains controversial to this day due to its liberal profanity and portrayal of sexuality and teenage anxiety; it was the thirteenth most frequently challenged book of the 1990s, according to the *American Library Association*. Despite this censorship, or perhaps because of it, the novel has become one of the most famous literary works of the 20th century, and a common part of *high-school curricula* in many Western, English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, Great Britain and Australia.

The book's protagonist, *Holden Caulfield*, has become an icon for teenage alienation and fear. Written in the first person, *The Catcher in the Rye* relates Holden's experiences in New York City in the days following his expulsion from a University-preparatory school Pencey Prep.

## Also in the 50's in the US:

America (the USA) had just begun her recovery from World War II, when suddenly the Korean Conflict developed. The USSR became a major enemy in the Cold War. Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed to know that Communists had infiltrated the United States government at the highest levels. Americans were feeling a sense of national anxiety. Was America the greatest country in the world? Was life in America the best it had ever been? As the decade passed, literature reflected the conflict of self-satisfaction with 50's Happy Days and cultural self-doubt about conformity and the true worth of American values.



## Postwar Prosperity

The events in *The Catcher in the Rye* take place in 1946, only a year after the end of World War II. Adults at this time had survived the Great Depression and the multiple horrors of the war. Paradoxically, the war that wounded and killed so many people was the same instrument that launched the nation into an era of seemingly unbounded prosperity. During the postwar years, the gross national product rose to \$500 billion, compared with \$200 billion in prewar 1940. In unprecedented numbers, people bought houses, television sets, second cars, washing machines and other consumer goods. No wonder the nation wanted to forget the past and to celebrate its new beginnings. The celebration took the form of a new materialism and extreme conservatism. Traditional values were the norm. People did not want to hear from the Holden Caulfields and J. D. Salingers of the era. They were in a state of blissful denial.

## Trivia → Other important details on the book ☺

- The character Phoebe in the popular American sitcom *Friends* was inspired by the character Phoebe Caulfield.
- An *urban legend* states that the name "Holden Caulfield" first came to Salinger when he saw a movie theater's marquee advertising the 1947 film *Dear Ruth*, which starred *William Holden* and *Joan Caulfield*. However, Holden first appeared in the short story "I'm Crazy," published in *Collier's* on December 22, 1945, a year and a half before *Dear Ruth*.
- The word "fuck" appears in the book only six times and was sometimes given as reason for it being banned. (In some publications, the word was replaced with a "-"). However, in context Holden is trying to remove the word from the walls of a school and the Museum of Natural History to preserve the children's "innocence."
- The word "goddamn" appears in the book 252 times.
- Approximately 250,000 copies of *The Catcher in the Rye* are sold each year, with total sales at about ten million copies.
- While the novel would seem a natural for the big screen, Salinger has refused to license the film rights to any producer or director. Salinger said that the reason for his refusal to allow a film version of the novel is "I would like to see it done, but Holden wouldn't approve"--a reference to Holden's disdain for Hollywood and the entire motion picture industry as being "phony."