The Catcher in the Rye



Reader’s Response Journal

Entry #1

Chapters 1 - 3

**Directions:**

• Respond to 10 questions for this entry. Each response should be accompanied with at least 3-5 sentences of commentary and placed in your Readers Response Journal. Please follow the suggested format.

1. As we already know, The Catcher in the Rye was banned for years from several public schools. Based on the opening lines, consider why this is the case.
2. Regarding Holden’s reference to “all that David Copperfield kind of crap,” what do we learn about his characterization from these sentiments?
3. Holden refers to the setting as “out here.” Where is this place with regards to the setting of the story?
4. Holden spends a significant amount of time discussing the seemingly trivial aspects of the Saxon Hall game. What does his depiction of this event reveal about him as a character?
5. Analyze and interpret Holden’s sentiment and what it reveals about his character – “what I was really hanging around for, I was trying to feel some kind of good-by …” (4).
6. Salinger, on occasion, references the setting sun (4-5). In this instance, how does the sun symbolically illustrate the theme of the novel?
7. The road is yet another symbol that Salinger employs. Within the context of page 5, what might the road symbolize and how does it correspond to the theme?
8. Throughout the novel, a binary conflict between old and young creates a palpable tension for Holden. Explore how this conflict unfolds on pages 6-7 as he interacts with Old Spencer.
9. On a few occasions throughout the novel, Holden draws into question the analogy that equates life to a game. Analyze and interpret his sentiments on pages 8-9 and what they reveal about him as a character.
10. The physical description of Holden on page 9 is quite significant. Analyze and interpret it.
11. Salinger employs several recurring motifs throughout the novel. On page 13 we are introduced to the ducks and frozen pond of Central Park. If we read these signs as symbols, how do they intersect with the theme of the story?
12. Holden divides the world along the lines of a strict binary: people are either phony or genuinely authentic. Examine how he categorizes people into this spectrum.
13. Adolescents and adults often clash with each other because adults forget what it was like to be a teenager. How does this idea operate on page 15 with regards to Holden’s understanding of the “phase” he’s going through?
14. Why does the “good luck” uttered by Old Spencer get Holden all “touchy?” Perform a tight diction analysis of the implications of this statement.
15. Holden opens Chapter III with a problematic admission – “I’m the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life. It’s awful” (16). What implications does this have as we continue to interact with Holden?
16. Analyze and interpret the implications and suggestive nature of the “chapel fart” scene on page 17.
17. On page 17, Salinger introduces Holden’s red hat for the first time. What symbolic qualities does this red hat have?
18. What does Holden’s interactions with Ackley suggest about him as a character?