

Name: _____

Date: _____

American Studies English
The Catcher in the Rye

To enrich your understanding of *The Catcher in the Rye*, actively read the critical overview of the story, as well as the essays in your criticism packet by Robert Bennett, Susan K. Mitchell, and Jonathan Baumbach, and answer the discussion questions below.

Critical Overview

1. How was *The Catcher in the Rye* received by critics?
2. Why does the novel earn its place among literary classics?

Literary Criticism: Robert Bennett

1. According to Bennett, why do some critics, teachers, and parents dislike the novel?
2. What are some noteworthy similarities between *Huck Finn* and *Catcher*?
3. Cite two examples from the novel that Bennett uses to support his assertion about Holden's positive characteristics.
4. Which topics may be examined upon a psychoanalytic interpretation of the text?
5. Cite two examples from the novel that Bennett uses to support his assertion about Holden's psychological make-up.
6. Cite two examples from the novel that Bennett uses to support his assertion about Holden's critique of capitalism.

Literary Criticism: Susan K. Mitchell

1. What is the paradox in Holden's narration that Mitchell establishes in her piece of criticism?
2. What makes Holden an unreliable narrator?
3. Cite two examples from the novel that Mitchell uses to support her assertion about Holden's "simplistic mode of perception".
4. According to Mitchell, what does the characterization of D.B. represent? How does his name enforce this symbolism?

5. According to Mitchell, what does the characterization of Allie represent to Holden? What elements of the text enforce Holden's desire to ally with Allie?
6. Mitchell claims that "As pure as Holden makes Phoebe appear, she has a wisdom that belies her years". Cite two examples from the novel that Mitchell uses to support her claim about Phoebe.
7. What effect does the "endless freeplay of meaning" have on the novel as a whole?

Literary Criticism: Jonathan Baumbach

1. What are some of the faults with the novel that Baumbach establishes in the opening paragraph?
2. Baumbach states that Holden wants to be "...the protector and savior of innocence. But what he also wants, for he is one of the running children himself, is that someone prevent *his* fall". Explain the paradox that this scenario presents.
3. According to Baumbach, what is Holden's "real quest throughout the novel"?
4. Cite two examples from the novel that Baumbach uses to support his assertion about Holden's disillusioned search for good in the adult world.
5. What is Phoebe's role in the final scene at the carousel?