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**American Studies English**

***The Catcher in the Rye* Guided Reading Questions**

**Chapter 1**

1. What is the narrator, Holden, going to tell about?
2. How does Holden feel about his brother D.B.’s having become a screenwriter?
3. What is the subject of D.B.’s short story “The Secret Goldfish”?
4. Close-read the opening paragraph. What is Holden’s tone? What words and phrases develop his tone?
5. How does Holden describe Pencey Prep?
6. How is Selma Thurman described? What does she look like? Who is she related to?
7. What event is going on at Pencey while Holden is on Thomsen Hill? What are the two reasons why is Holden missing the event?
8. Why is Holden leaving Pencey?
9. What is the explanation Holden gives for why he “came out here for all these goddam checkups and stuff” (5)?
10. What feeling does Holden describe having as he runs across the highway? What might this suggest?
11. When Holden arrives at Mr. Spencer’s house, he notes, “They didn’t have a maid or anything, and they always opened the door themselves. They didn’t have too much dough” (5). What does this suggest about Holden’s socioeconomic status?

**Chapter 2**

1. Based on how he describes “old Spencer,” how do you think Holden feels about elderly people and aging?
2. What metaphor is used by both Dr. Thurmer and Mr. Spencer in order to try to convince Holden that he needs to change his outlook on school and life in general? How does Holden react to this metaphor?
3. How does Holden describe himself? What does he say is ironic about his age and his appearance?
4. What is Holden thinking about while he is “shooting the bull” (13) with Mr. Spencer? Why do you think he is pondering it?
5. What does Holden reveal about his time at Elkton Hills?

**Chapter 3**

1. What does Holden reveal about lying?
2. Who is Ossenberger and what is his speech about?
3. How does Holden react to Ossenberger’s message?
4. What does Holden buy in New York after losing the foils?
5. How does Holden wear his hat?
6. How does Holden feel about literature?
7. How is Robert Ackley described? What does he look like? Why does he ask so many questions? What is his relationship with Holden like?
8. What does Ackley say about Holden’s hat? How does Holden respond?
9. How do Ackley and Stradlater feel about one another? Are they friends? Why or why not?
10. Why does Stradlater want to borrow Holden’s jacket?

**Chapter 4**

1. How is Stradlater described? What does he look like? According to Holden, how is Stradlater a “secret slob”?
2. What is the favor Stradlater asks of Holden? What is ironic about this?
3. What does Holden mean when he states that Stradlater “was a little bit like Ackley” (28)? How are these two apparently very different characters similar? Is either Ackley or Stradlater also similar to Holden?
4. How does Holden know Stradlater’s date?
5. What details does Holden reveal about Jane Gallagher? Based on the way he describes her, how do you think Holden feels about her?
6. What is the reason Holden gives for not going downstairs and saying hello to Jane?

**Chapter 5**

1. According to Holden, why does the dining hall at Pencey serve steak on Saturday nights?
2. What does the fact that Holden invites Ackley to the movies reveal about Holden’s personality?
3. Why doesn’t Holden throw the snowball? What might this suggest about Holden?
4. Why do you think Holden writes the composition for Stradlater?
5. What does Holden choose to write about for Stradlater’s composition? Describe the subject.
6. What details does Holden reveal about Allie? What did he look like? What illness did he have?
7. What did Holden do the night Allie died?
8. Close-read the passage about Allie. What is Holden’s tone? What words and phrases develop his tone?

**Chapter 6**

1. How does Stradlater react to the composition Holden has written for him? Why?
2. What is the rule that Holden breaks to annoy Stradlater?
3. Why do you think is Holden so “nervous” when he asks Stradlater about the date with Jane?
4. What is the rule that Stradlater broke on his date with Jane?
5. Stradlater is upset that Holden breaks the school rules, but he has also broken a rule. Why do you think Stradlater doesn’t seem to feel regret for having broken a rule himself?
6. How does Holden react when Stradlater refuses to reveal details about the date with Jane?
7. What does Holden say to infuriate Stradlater? How does Stradlater react?

**Chapter 7**

1. Why does Holden wake up Ackley?
2. What does Holden say about Stradlater’s past?
3. Based on what he says to Ackley, how do you think Holden feels about religion?
4. What is ironic about Ackley’s comment just before Holden walks out of his room?
5. Why does Holden decide to leave Pencey?
6. Why can’t Holden go home immediately?
7. What does Holden reveal about the ice skates from his mother?
8. Where does Holden get twenty dollars?
9. What is Holden’s emotional state when he is about to leave Pencey.

**Chapter 8**

1. Why do you think Holden removes his hat on the train? Consider why he wore the hat at Pencey.
2. Why does Mrs. Morrow initiate a conversation with Holden?
3. What lies does Holden tell Mrs. Morrow?
4. What does Holden mean by his remark that “Mothers are all slightly insane” (55)? How does this comment apply specifically to Ernest Morrow and his mother?

**Chapter 9**

1. Whom does Holden consider calling from the payphone in Penn Station? Why doesn’t he call?
2. What do you think is the significance of the question Holden asks the taxi driver about the ducks? Why does Holden want to know?
3. What is ironic about Holden’s concern with his appearance when he enters the Edmont?
4. What are Holden’s rules about sex?
5. Where did Holden get Faith Cavendish’s number?
6. How does Holden break his own rule?

**Chapter 10**

1. Who is Phoebe? What does she look like? What details does Holden reveal about her?
2. What is the name of the main character in the books Phoebe writes?
3. Compare Phoebe with both Holden and Allie. How is she similar to or different from her brothers, according to Holden’s description of her?
4. How does Holden experience isolation at the Lavender Room?
5. Why is Holden sorry for having kidded “Old Marty”?
6. Why do you think Holden is so depressed by the fact that the three girls in the bar are going to see the first Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall the following morning?

**Chapter 11**

1. What details does Holden reveal about Jane? How did Holden meet Jane? What did he share with her? What is her family life like?
2. Holden mentions that he refused an offer to appear in a movie short. Why was he asked, and why did he refuse?
3. How did Holden feel when he used to hold hands with Jane?
4. What trait or quality about Ernie does Holden criticize?

**Chapter 12**

1. Why is Holden depressed by hearing the women “laughing like hyenas” on the street (81)?
2. What does Holden ask Horwitz, and how does Horwitz react? What do you think is the significance of the question Holden asks?
3. How does Holden describe Ernie at the piano?
4. What does Holden say about the people at the bar?
5. How does Lillian react to the news that D.B. is now living in Hollywood, and how does Holden feel about this reaction?
6. Why does Holden feel sorry for Lillian?
7. Why does Holden leave Ernie’s?

**Chapter 13**

1. What happened to Holden’s gloves?
2. What does Holden mean when he describes himself as “partly yellow” (89)?
3. What does the elevator operator offer Holden? How does Holden respond?
4. Who is Sunny? What does she look like? What is ironic about her name?
5. What makes Sunny seem like a “spooky kid” (98) to Holden?

**Chapter 14**

1. What emotion leads Holden to talk to Allie? What does this one-sided conversation show us about the relationship between Allie and Holden?
2. What happens when Holden tries to pray?
3. Why does Sunny return with Maurice?
4. What does Maurice do to Holden?
5. What does Holden pretend is happing to him?
6. What does Holden say prevents him from jumping out the window and committing suicide?

**Chapter 15**

1. Who is Sally Hayes? Why does Holden say she is a phony? What details does Holden reveal about her?
2. What does Holden’s father do for work? What does he invest his money in?
3. How are Holden and his mother similar in their reactions to Allie’s death?
4. Why did Holden’s suitcases become an issue between him and his old roommate Slagle? What statement about wealth and/or social class is Holden making by telling this story?
5. What does Holden give the nuns?
6. With which character in *Romeo and Juliet* does Holden identify? What reason does he give for liking and relating to this character?
7. Why does Holden compare people asking him if he is Catholic with “those suitcases” (113)? What parallel is he drawing?

**Chapter 16**

1. According to Holden, how are the nuns’ charitable works different than those of his aunt or Sally’s mother? Close-read the passage. What is Holden’s tone regarding their different attitudes? What words and phrases develop his tone?
2. Why does Holden want to find a record store?
3. Why does seeing the little boy walking with his family cheer Holden up?
4. What does Holden ask the girl he helps with her skates?
5. What does Holden say is the best thing about the Museum of Natural History?
6. Based on his description of the Museum of Natural History, how do you think Holden feels about change?

**Chapter 17**

1. Why is Holden sad when he watches the girls who are home for vacation?
2. How does the way Sally talks shed light on her personality?
3. What is similar about the performances by the Lunts and Ernie’s piano playing?
4. Why does Holden “sort of [hate] old Sally” (128) by the end of the show?
5. Why does Sally want to go ice skating?
6. What is Holden’s idea that Sally rejects?
7. Why does Holden feel that now is the time to travel, not later?
8. What does Holden say to Sally that makes her cry?

**Chapter 18**

1. What frustrates Holden about girls and the guys they date?
2. Who is Carl Luce? What is Carl like? Why is Carl surprised to hear from Holden?
3. Where does Holden go to pass the time before meeting Carl Luce for a drink? Why is it surprising that he goes there?
4. What is ironic about the behavior of the woman who sits next to Holden during the film? Is her behavior unusual or similar to that of other characters described by Holden?
5. Describe Holden’s and his brother D.B.’s attitudes toward war and the military.

**Chapter 19**

1. How does Holden describe the Wicker Bar?
2. Holden claims to admire Carl’s intellectual ability, but does he engage him in an intellectual conversation? What kinds of questions does Holden ask Carl?
3. What does Holden see as the “trouble” (148) with his attitude toward sex? How does this alleged problem manifest itself in his relationships with Jane, Sally, and other female characters?
4. How does Carl respond to Holden’s requests for advice and companionship?

**Chapter 20**

1. What does Holden imagine happens to him at the bar? How might Holden’s fantasy reflect his emotional state?
2. Why do you think Holden calls Sally, rather than Jane, when he is drunk?
3. Why does Holden decide to walk to the park?
4. What “terrible” event happens in the park?
5. Why does Holden get upset when he thinks about the two rainy days at the cemetery?
6. What thought motivates Holden to go visit Phoebe?

**Chapter 21**

1. How does Holden get the elevator boy to take him up to his parents’ floor?
2. What observation does Holden make about how kids and adults look when they are sleeping? How does this comment reflect his attitudes toward childhood and adulthood?
3. What does Holden find in Phoebe’s notebook that suggests that Phoebe, like her brothers, has a lively imagination?
4. What comment does Phoebe make after listening to Holden’s complaints about Pencey? How does this comment demonstrate her understanding of Holden?

**Chapter 22**

1. Who was James Castle? Why do you think Holden considers James Castle when Phoebe asks Holden to name one thing he likes?
2. Why does Phoebe get angry with Holden when he names Allie and talking to her as things he likes?
3. How does Holden interpret the scene from the Robert Burns poem? What part of the poem did Holden misinterpret? Why is this significant?
4. What is Holden’s dream job? Why do you think this is?

**Chapter 23**

1. Who is Mr. Antolini? Why does Holden like him? What does Holden remember about him?
2. What word does Mrs. Caulfield tell Phoebe not to use? Why might this be significant?
3. What triggers Holden’s crying in Phoebe’s room?
4. What does Holden give to Phoebe?
5. Why does Holden wish his parents would catch him sneaking out of their apartment?

**Chapter 24**

1. How does Holden get to Mr. Antolini’s house? How is he feeling?
2. What is Holden’s attitude toward storytellers who digress? What is his attitude toward those who “stick too much to the point” (183)? How are these attitudes reflected in his own style of storytelling?
3. What does Holden’s sympathy for Richard Kinsella suggest about his personality? For what other misfits or unpopular people has Holden expressed compassion in the novel?
4. What does Holden mean when he says that Mr. Vinson “was very intelligent and all, but you could tell he didn’t have too much brains” (185)? What do you think is the difference between being intelligent and having brains?
5. What does Mr. Antolini worry about with regard to Holden’s future?
6. What does Mr. Antolini write down for Holden? What does it mean?
7. How is the advice Mr. Antolini gives Holden similar to or different from the advice he has gotten from other characters, such as Mr. Spencer, Carl Luce, and Phoebe?
8. What does Mr. Antolini think will be the key to Holden’s future happiness (or at least, to helping him become less depressed)?
9. What is Mr. Antolini doing when Holden wakes up?
10. How does Holden react?

**Chapter 25**

1. Where does Holden end up sleeping?
2. Why is Holden conflicted about his decision not to return to the Antolinis’ apartment?
3. When he is walking up Fifth Avenue, what pessimistic remark does Holden make? How is this comment similar to what Mr. Antonini had forebodingly predicted about Holden’s future?
4. What gets Holden across each street, despite his highly anxious and depressed state?
5. Where does Holden decide that he will go to get away from it all?
6. Why does Holden go to Phoebe’s school?
7. What does Holden’s note to Phoebe say?
8. Why is Holden so angry about the profane graffiti at Phoebe’s (and Holden’s own childhood) school? What do you think this graffiti might represent for Holden?
9. Which exhibit does Holden visit while he is in the museum?
10. What is Phoebe wearing when she arrives at the museum? What is she carrying?
11. What does Holden say to Phoebe that makes her cry?
12. Why do you think Holden watches Phoebe on the carousel, rather than riding the carousel himself?
13. Why do you think Holden lets Phoebe reach for the golden ring, even though it is dangerous?
14. How does Holden feel when Phoebe puts the hunting hat on his head?

**Chapter 26**

1. What are Holden’s plans for the future?
2. Why does telling his story make Holden miss everyone in it?