

Study Questions for *The Catcher in the Rye*

Answer these questions in complete sentences and paragraphs. Explain your answers using examples and details from the book.

- Will Holden Caulfield go on to a successful life in a worthy career? Or will he continue to fail?
- Will Phoebe grow up like Holden, isolated and lonely, or will she continue to be a good student who looks forward to a promising career? When preparing an answer to this question, consider the following information that Holden discloses about Phoebe: (1) She writes books (the girl detective stories) but never finishes them. (2) She is very emotional. (3) She impulsively decides to run away with Holden.
- Why do Holden's parents keep sending him away to boarding schools?
- Using passages from the novel—and your interpretations of these passages—write a profile of the Caulfield family as it was when Holden was growing up with Allie and Phoebe. Among the questions you might address in your response are the following: Was the Caulfield home a happy one? Did Mr. and Mrs. Caulfield devote enough attention to their children? Did they attempt to instill in their children strong moral values?
- To what extent did Holden's New York environment shape his character when he was a child? Keep in mind that his home was an apartment on the 12th floor of a building in New York City. Keep in mind, too, the kinds of material advantages (or disadvantages) to which he had access. The novel is full of clues about the financial status of Holden's parents. An example of a clue is this sentence: "The week before that, somebody'd stolen my camel's-hair coat right out of my room, with my fur-lined gloves right in the pocket and all." Holden also points out that his father is a corporation lawyer.
- *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in the middle of the 20th Century. Is the novel still relevant today? Do some teenagers continue to face the kinds of problems Holden faces?