

Catcher Chapter notes: these are overviews of what we discussed in class.

1-8 (boarding schools: Whooton School; Elkton Hills; Pencey Prep)

Holden leaves Spenser on the premise of a lie. Keep that inherent irony in mind; that everyone is a phony and he is the most terrific liar you will ever meet.

We then meet Stradlater and Ackley (connotations associated with each name).

We learn from Ackley's questions the outcome of the trip to NYC:

Foils left on subway because Holden was constantly checking the map

Holden made a purchase of a red hunter's hat

Stradlater makes two requests of Holden: to borrow his houndstooth jacket and to have Holden write a descriptive essay for him (with spelling mistakes) Stradlater asks him to describe a room or something but Holden writes about Allie's baseball glove (meant to???)

He's going on a date with Holden's childhood friend, Jane Gallagher. She represents the past, the time of innocence, of playing checkers but never moving her kings...lots of interpret from little details like that.

Holden doesn't want Jane to know he's been kicked out of Pencey

Early night: 930 sign in for Jane (a lot takes place in the first 36 hours or so of this book)

Goes to a movie with a friend Mel Brossard but invites Ackley along too. What does this say about Holden? They actually don't see the movie, but it's some time off campus. He's back early and he starts wondering what is happening on the date (worried about Stradlater giving Jane 'the time.')

He writes about the mitt (p. 38) Left fielder (out in left field) offbeat; unusual and eccentric. He changes the names so it is Stradlater's brother not his. Changing names is a way to distance ourselves from the story.

The essay is rejected by Stradlater. Holden takes this personally. He reacts by tearing it up and lighting a cigarette in the room. And provoking Stradlater to answer questions about his date, questions that become increasingly personal: "Boy, was I getting nervous. I just had a *feeling* something had gone funny." (42) Talks about giving her the time. He takes a swing at Stradlater, with his right hand, which doesn't work well on account of the injury I told you about.

Stradlater, stronger, more athletic, retaliates and pins him down, asking what the hell is wrong with Holden. This kind of questioning happens throughout the novel, that and Holden calling people 'moron.' Holden will provoke people until they strike at him. Why?

Stradlater has drawn blood and the image of Holden's bloody face under his hunter's hat fascinates him. He likes to think he is tougher than he is. "I'd only been in about two fights in my life, and I lost *both* of them." (45)

Holden goes into Ackley's room. Ackley wants to know what the fight is about, but rather than get into it Holden notes that he all of a sudden feels lonesome. "I almost wished I was dead." (48) He talks of jumping out a window; he cannot stop imagining what happened in the backseat of the coach's car (49). He wakes the now sleeping Ackley to ask what is the drill on joining the monastery. The idea of isolating himself from society is a motif throughout the novel.

"All of a sudden, I changed my mind." He now wants out. Immediately, with no real plan in place other than to go to NYC but not go home. Staying around makes him too sad and lonesome: Wait until Wednesday to go home, wait until his mother's nerves settled. Besides, as he says of himself: "I needed a little vacation. My nerves were shot." (51)

"Every time someone gave me a present it made me feel sad." He refers to the ice skates his mother brought him (skating on thin ice; where do the ducks go when the water freezes?) that he packs in one of his two suitcases. He has lots of money...calls his grandmother lavish. Still, he sells his typewriter and when he leaves, he is sort of crying for no reason he can identify. Why is he crying? He dons the hunter's hat and yells "sleep tight ya morons."

Train to NYC has him sharing a car with the mother of a fellow Pencey student, Ernest Morrow. Holden calls himself Rudolf Schmidt. Another phony in Holden's eyes, yet look what he does: makes up an entire story about students wanting Morrow to run for student council. He offers her a drink and tries to act older than he is although he is often accused of acting immaturely. He embellishes the story all the while running Ernest down in his mind. And then when confronted as to why is he travelling late Saturday night, he lies again, making up the story about an operation for a little brain tumor.

(9-14)

Arriving at Penn Station, he wants to call someone (predominantly Jane Gallagher) then Sally Hayes, then Carl Luce, (Whooton School) but he hesitates (too much risk...getting caught, waking people late at night. At first he calls no one, hailing a cab and directing it to his home (there are no accidents).

Here is mention of the ducks in Central Park; where do they go when the water freezes.

Directs cab to the Edmont Hotel where he observes the 'perverts and morons' in other rooms. Lots of judgment is evident on the part of Holden as he watches other people living their lives.

Then he says of himself: "In my mind, I'm probably the biggest sex maniac you ever saw." Keeping in mind his propensity to lie, what does this say about him?

Still wants to call Jane and comes up with bizarre excuse to whoever answers the phone: "her aunt just got called in a car accident"

Winds up calling Faith Cavendish instead, claiming to be a friend of Eddie Birdsell from Princeton and plays upon her desire to be with 'somebody'.

Now he thinks about calling Phoebe. Look how the members of his family are introduced into the novel. Through reflection when he is alone. Notice, too, everyone in his family writes. He doesn't call, doesn't want his parents to find out just yet that he's been kicked out of Pencey, and goes downstairs into the Lavender Room (what time of night is it?!) Wants to drink (can't) Wants to dance (71) He gets called on his language (this happens from time to time, too). "Jim Steele" the name he gives the three girls. He makes up a story to Marty about seeing Gary Cooper in the room and plays upon the celebrity seeker. Talks about how depressed their plans for the next day made him; depressed is another word he repeats throughout this novel.

Back to Jane! Checkers, tennis: these are games played by two people. Thinks back to the past, when they were in their summer house when Jane was his next door neighbor. Teaches her golf.

"She was the only one, outside the family, that I ever showed Allie's baseball mitt to, with all the poems written on it. She'd never met Allie or anything, because that was her first summer in Maine—but I told her quite a lot about him. She was interested in that kind of stuff." (77)

He references the time they came close to kissing. He is protective of her, from 'wise guys' like her step-father. He has this need to protect people even though he cannot, consider this idea in context of the title and the reason why he wants to be the catcher in the rye.

Feels the need to move again; it was too depressing. He takes a cab to Greenwich Village to a night club. Talks about being alone, "New York's terrible when somebody laughs on the street very late at night. You can hear it for miles. It makes you feel very lonesome and depressed."

He asks the second cabby (Horwitz) about the ducks. Horwitz counters with talking about the fish and how it is tougher for them. But fish are in schools, and ducks travel one after the other.

Ernie's is crowded yet he feels more alone than ever. Again the judgment about other people is described. "I was surrounded by jerks." He comments on the conversations he overhears. Why can he? Because he has no conversation of his own.

He is noticed by Lillian Simons, an ex-girlfriend of D.B. now accompanied by a Naval officer, "Commander Blop". Look at how she treats him upon leaving: "Well, you little so-and-so. All right for you. Tell your big brother I hate him when you see him." (Good evidence of phony?)

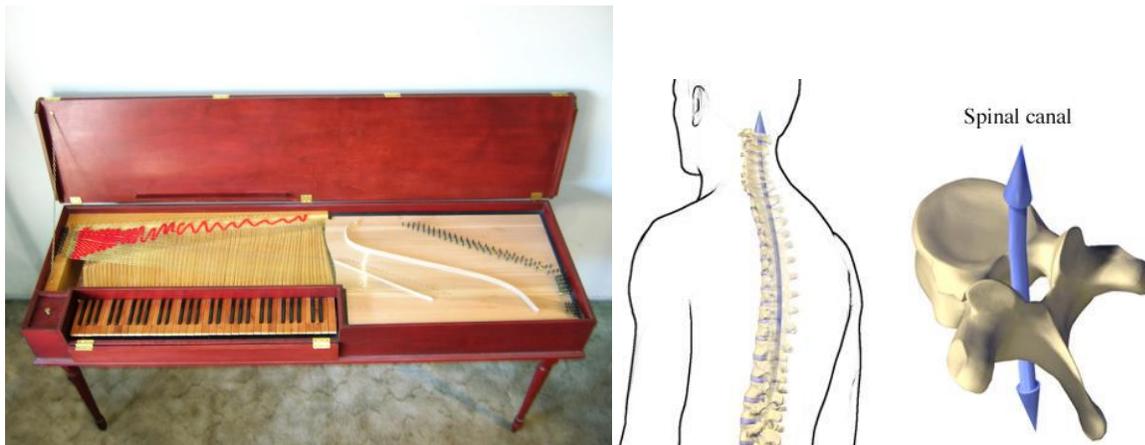
He returns to the Edmont; talks about the cold; talks about being a coward.

Talks turns to losing things. Listen to what he says: "One of my troubles is, I never care too much when I lose something—it used to drive my mother crazy when I was a kid. Some guys spend *days* looking for something they lost. I never seem to have anything that if I lost it I'd care too much." (89)

Holden is approached by Maurice, the elevator guy. Holden, who now tells the reader he is a virgin, hires Sunny the prostitute for a "throw". Talks about why he never went all the way. That when a girl says stop, he stops. What does this say about him?

Holden adopts the name Jim Steele again. Her business-like approach throws him off: he feels nervous again and depressed. He doesn't want sex; he wants someone to talk to. The act of hanging up her dress makes him sad. "I felt more depressed than sexy if you want to know the truth." (96)

So he makes up an excuse about his clavichord and his spinal canal:



No way he is going through with it, but look at what he does. Rather than pay the extra 5 dollars in the shake down, he refuses and gives Sunny only 5 and this sets up a lot of trouble to someone who earlier said he was yellow and a coward and unlikely to confront people.

Daylight, Sunday morning. No sleep. He begins talking aloud to Allie and a time he wouldn't let Allie come with him. He tries to rewrite that in his head.

He talks about Jesus and how the Disciples let him down in life. What does it mean that Holden has no time for the Disciples (followers of, appointed by). He is confronted by Sunny and Maurice. He argues with Maurice over five lousy dollars. Why does he do this? Sunny spots the wallet, takes the money. He starts to cry. Maurice snaps him and Holden talks back and gets punched in the stomach for his effort. Again, ask yourself why did he do it? Not unlike the scene with Stradlater. He then pretends that this punch is a gunshot wound. That he has been mortally wounded and that he will "plug" Maurice with an automatic pistol and be nursed back to health by Jane: "The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding."



"What I really felt like though was committing suicide. I felt like jumping out the window. I probably would've done it, too, if I'd been sure somebody'd cover me up as soon as I landed." (104)

15-20:

He calls Sally Hayes and invites her to a show even though he constantly refers to her as a phony. He checks out of the Edmont (avoiding Maurice) and goes to Grand Central Station where he checks his bags and goes to the diner where he encounters two nuns. Could be considered a somewhat comic scene in that he is afraid to talk books with them because of the 'sexy' bits, but also take note of two things: he echoes the notion of always losing things and he says of his mother: "she hasn't been too healthy since Allie died. She's very nervous." (107)

Holden notices the nuns in part because of their crappy suitcases which leads him to reflect on a past roommate whose suitcases were lousy. Rather than show him up, Holden put his own away, but the roommate (Dick Slagle; he was at Elkton Hills) then switched out his suitcases for Holden's. Again an image of projecting something we are not and the notion of phoniness.

He gives the nuns ten dollars even though his funds are running low (he later regrets this, only because he will need it for his date with Sally). "Goddam money. It always makes you as blue as hell."

Increasingly sad, heading towards Broadway, he happens upon the scene from which the novel gets its title (115) of a boy and his parents walking back from church. He goes to a record store to find an album "Little Shirley Beans" for Phoebe. He pays five bucks for it. Calls Jane's house but gets her mother.

Has a bit of a rant now about actors. What is the sign of a good actor? How does that tie into the notion of being someone we are not? Is it phony? He heads to Central Park. He is mixing up time now; thinks he will run into Phoebe but it's now Sunday, not Saturday but look how Holden interacts with the little girl putting on her skates. (119) They figure Phoebe is at the museum (significant) and even when he realizes she isn't, Holden heads there: the Museum of Natural History. He thinks back to field trips and one teacher in particular Miss Aigletinger and he talks about walking through the various exhibits and the stone floor, and marbles, and the smell of rain (120) and the museum as warm and cozy. Why this particular museum? What does it represent?

(121): "The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody'd move....Nobody's be different. The only thing that would be different would be *you*. Not that you'd be so much older or anything. It wouldn't be that exactly. You'd just be different, that's all."

And yet, when he reaches the steps, nothing can compel him to go in. why?

Waiting for Sally, he makes further judgment on guys: those girls think are insecure (who are not in his opinion) and guys who are insecure whom girls deem cocky. He talks about boring guys and perhaps not feeling too sorry for them, because after all, everyone has talent even if it is just whistling.

Along comes Sally. Watch how his views on her vacillate. He tells her he loves her; she irritates the hell out of him Talks about the plot of the play...makes observations about the acting being too good that it is unnatural, talks about all the phonies in the audience, talks about the phony talking Sally up. Again, as outsider, he feels compelled to crap on anyone who is engaged in something.

From there, and at Sally's suggestion, they go to Radio City to go ice skating (more about appearances than anything else on her part, but that would be according to Holden). Sally asks him about trimming the Christmas tree and they wind up in a scrap, with Holden's voice modulating irregularly. At several points he will be asked to stop shouting; other times, he mumbles so that no one can hear him. He impulsively asks Sally if she will run away with him now, head up north to a cabin, and drop out of society's expectations for them. Sally dismisses it as a sweet but foolish plan and then, just as quickly. Holden turns on her: "You give me a royal pain in the ass, if you want to know the truth." Then he makes matters worse by laughing (134). The way he laughs is indicative of lack of control. And once he starts, he has a hard time stopping. He doesn't know why he asked her in the first place; he really doesn't have any plan in place: "The terrible part, though, is that I meant it when I asked her. That's the terrible part. I swear to God I'm a madman."

Alone again, he tries calling Jane again (no answer). He flips through his address book to see who else he can call: refers to Mr. Antolini, a teacher from Elkton Hills, winds up calling Carl Luce. He is going to meet him at 10 so he kills time by going to a movie that has a plot so contrived (in his mind) that it makes him want to puke. About amnesia and forgetting the past and starting an entirely new life but the past comes back and then everything works out for everyone. No wonder he hates it.

He talks about D.B. and Hollywood and D.B.'s time in the army and the idea of having to kill someone and chapter ends with the rather bleak statement: "anyway, I'm sort of glad they've got the atomic bomb invented. If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it. I'll volunteer for it, I swear to God, I will."

Meets Carl Luce (classmate from Whooton) after making a number of disparaging observations about him and talk of sex and of flits, but when they do meet, it is Luce who asks when Holden is ever going to grow up. "Is this going to be a typical Caulfield conversation?" (145). Like Sally, Luce tells him to keep his voice down. Even Holden acknowledges he is getting a little too excited. Exhaustion, alcohol, nervousness, sorrow...but the question he really wants to ask Luce (and likely the reason he called Luce in the first place) is about his father who is a psychoanalyst. Luce has recommended counseling to Holden before, to help him recognize the patterns of his mind. As Luce gets up to leave, look how desperate Holden is to keep him there, this former classmate whom he just called a friendly bastard. (149)

Holden winds up getting loaded. He starts fantasizing again about being shot in the stomach. Really wants to call Jane but knows he is too drunk so calls Sally instead, waking her household and insisting on talking to her, apologizing and promising to show up to trim the damn tree.

Heads to the men's room where he douses his head in cold water. He is drunk and feeling so sad. "I don't know why, but I was. I guess it was because I was feeling so damn depressed and lonesome." Holden retrieves hat and record from the coat check. He cannot afford a cab anymore and buses are infrequent so he walks toward the park to the lagoon where the ducks would be (153). He drops the record; it breaks into about fifty pieces. What does he do with them? What does this signify?

He walks through the dark (the unknown) into the park where he finds the lagoon (partly frozen, partly open).

He is drunk, exhausted, soaked and cold. He starts thinking about getting sick, catching pneumonia. He starts imagining his own death and his funeral and what that will do to his mother. He starts comparing what he thinks will happen with what he heard happened at Allie's funeral which he missed because of his broken hand. He thinks how Phoebe will not be there, because she is too young.

He thinks about funeral rituals and flowers and the idea of being surrounded by all these dead guys. And then he reflects on visiting Allie's grave with his parents and the day it started to rain and how people ran for shelter and how Allie could not (why)? (155-56)

He has three dollars; 1.30 in change. He skims the change across the ice. He keeps shedding himself of the means by which he can take care of himself. And then he thinks about how Phoebe would feel if he died. And that thought in the late/early hours of Sunday/Monday is what compels him to sneak into the apartment in Manhattan.

21-end:

Holden lies his way onto the floor of his parents' apartment. He sneaks past their room to find Phoebe asleep in D.B.'s room. Phoebe—in my mind—is a pivotal character. She is the ultimate foil in this book! She is the one who challenges Holden to confront all that he has been holding inside. She accepts him at face value (taking the broken pieces of the record and putting them away) but confronts him about moving on with his life.

When Phoebe realizes he has been kicked out of school again, she says, "Daddy'll *kill* you!" (More than once she says this) and Holden's answer is to say he is moving away, to a ranch out west.

Phoebe challenges Holden about not making any attempt to succeed at Pencey (following past patterns). Holden talks about how marginalized Pencey was: if you're on the outside, like Ackley, you have no chance of ever being accepted whereas Holden who has money was "too yellow" *not* to join the fraternity. He talks about the phoniness of teachers and of alumni (168-69) but all he does is highlight everything that was wrong with Pencey which leads Phoebe to say: "You don't like *anything* that's happening."

Then she uses the imperative: "Name one thing."

But Holden cannot concentrate. He recalls Elkton Hills and a boy named James Castle who was bullied by a gang led by Phil Stabile and the subsequent outcome of this. Holden remembers lending James Castle his turtleneck sweater (because James asked and to which he almost said no because he didn't know him that well) which Castle was wearing when he jumped.

He cannot name one thing but when Phoebe persists, his answer is: "I like Allie." (171). Take note of the tense he uses. "Just because somebody's dead, you don't stop liking them, for God's sake—especially if there were about a thousand times nicer than the people you know that're *alive* and all."

She asks him what he wants to be, at times then repeating "Daddy's *going* to kill you." He cannot concentrate but suddenly says what it is he wants to be: the catcher in the rye. Thing is, though, he has the words wrong; it is meet, not catch. Consider the connotation of both those verbs and how they differ. (173). What does being Catcher mean to Holden, and what would it mean to the children he wants to protect?

He decides to call his teacher Antolini, the one who retrieved the body of James Castle.

Parents arrive home and he hides in the closet. Look how Phoebe covers for him (177). There is a scene now between Holden and Phoebe which takes place in the dark. She wants him to stay until their parents fall asleep but he is too antsy. He asks her for money. "It was pitch-black, it was so dark in the room." Consider the idea of darkness and blindness as symbols.

He starts to cry and he cannot stop. He gives Phoebe his red hunting hat.

"It was a helluva lot easier getting out of the house than it was getting in, for some reason. For one thing, I didn't give much of a damn any more if they caught me. I really didn't. I figured if they caught men, they caught men, I almost wished they did, in a way." (180)

His encounter with Antolini is significant for a couple of reasons. It begins with Antolini challenging Holden about failing Oral Expression because of the digression rule. Holden argues he prefers the digression to sticking to the point (and that is obvious throughout the whole book, 183). But Antolini wants Holden to consider that there is a time and place for everything. Holden constantly remarks to the reader how he is feeling (headache, cold, nauseous); he feels physically worse as the novel progresses.

Antolini tells Holden he had had lunch with Holden's father a couple of weeks before (expression of concern). Antolini follows with: "I have a feeling you're heading for some kind of a terrible, terrible fall. (186)" He talks about Holden's judgmental attitude which Holden counters by saying if he hates people, he doesn't hate them for very long.

"This fall I think you're riding for—it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave up before they ever really got started." (187)

Antolini feels Holden is too passionate about ideals and too detached from living life. He quotes psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel: "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." He tells Holden that what he is feeling is not unique, that many have been just as "troubled" but that many work their way, humbly,

methodically, through this (189). He tells him to look to the experiences of others before him to see how they expressed confronting what Jung called the Shadow Self. "For one thing, it may save you an extraordinary amount of time trying on ideas that don't suit you, aren't becoming to you. You'll be knowing your true measurements and dress your mind accordingly." (190)

Holden falls asleep on the couch but wakes up a short time later to the sensation of Antolini's hand on his head. What to make of this? Is Antolini a flit like Holden thinks (even if he is, look how Holden later tempers his view about this) or is it an act of compassion, affection, touch? Holden bolts before Antolini can explain anything and heads back to Grand Central to retrieve his bags.

He winds up sleeping on the seats in the train station. He is physically and mentally drained by this point. Consider how little sleep he has had since this book opened. He tries to take his mind off what happened with Antolini by looking at a magazine, but he just projects all that is negative in it (faulty hormones, signs of cancer onto himself).

Holden starts walking along Fifth Avenue. Look how he feels: (197): "Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddam curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. I thought I'd just go down, down, down, and nobody'd ever see me again." So, in order to get himself across the street, he begins talking to Allie, "Allie, don't let me disappear." And upon making it to the other side, he would *thank* Allie. What does this signify? The crossing over and making it?

He heads to Phoebe's school. He can't stand to stay in NYC anymore and is planning to take off (just deaf-mute-gas-station-attendant plan). Goes to the school that was just the same as it had always been except for...the F-you written in the stairwell (201). He wants to clean it up but is afraid of being blamed for it if he does. (He does, though).

Heads out of the school by way of a different stairwell, but comes across a second "fuck you." This one is carved into the wall; it cannot be erased.

Eventually, he goes to Museum of Art to wait for Phoebe. He comes across two little boys (two brothers...coincidence?) who are headed to view the mummies (again, think back to his essay he wrote for Spencer). Holden tells them about how the Egyptians buried their dead, the spooky way into the exhibit and how the two boys take off. He finds it quite peaceful, where he is, until he looks and sees a third fuck you written in red, beneath the glass of the exhibit (therefore unreachably). What does his sighting these three in such a short period of time mean? Lots of significance there.

Goes outside to wait for Phoebe, and when he sees her he sees she is hauling a suitcase with her. She plans to go with him. She pleads with him to go until he tells her to shut up. She starts to cry. She walks alongside but away from him. She throws his hat back at him. Holden can only convince her not to go away by saying he won't either. They head into the park, towards the zoo, walking parallel to each other but on opposite sides of the street.

Novel ends with the flashback completed; that's all he is going to tell us for now. He implies where he is and ends with the notion of missing people, even old Maurice: "Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody." (214)