

Discussion Points

Chapters 1-7 - Pencey

- Who is the narrator talking to?
- What is the effect of the direct, informal style of narration?
- Why can't Holden talk about anything but the 'madman stuff'? He doesn't mention much about the present or future - why? What does this tell you about him?
- What is it about the movies that Holden hates?
- Discuss Holden's conflicting feelings about D.B.
- Why is Holden such an outsider at school?
- How does Holden feel when the fencing team ostracizes him?
- It is three pages before Holden mentions that he has been expelled. Why?
- What are your first impressions of Holden?
- Why does Mr Spencer's bare chest disturb Holden?
- What is the significance of the ducks in Central Park? Do they simply divert Holden's mind from what Mr Spencer is saying or is his question more important than that?
- How does the conversation between Holden and Mr Spencer demonstrate the term 'generation gap'?
- Discuss what Holden means by 'phoniness'.
- How does Holden relate to his peers?
- How does Holden relate to adults?
- Discuss Holden's red hunting cap. What does it tell us about the sort of person he is?
- Why doesn't Holden go to speak to Jane Gallagher, considering she is obviously important to him?
- Discuss Holden's attitude to girls and dating.
- Why do you think Holden is good at English, yet failing in every other subject?
- Why does Holden want to include Ackley in the trip to town? What does this tell you about Holden's character?
- Why does Ackley's monologue about girls annoy Holden?
- Discuss the similarities and differences between Holden and Ackley.
- What does Holden think of Stradlater? Are there any contradictions here?
- Why do you think Holden chooses to write about Allie's glove?
- How does Holden describe Allie?
- What effect has Allie's death had on Holden?
- How does Holden react to Stradlater when he comes back from his date with Jane? Why? Is he being reasonable?
- How does Holden treat Ackley after the fight? Is he being fair?
- Discuss Holden's decision to run away. Is it understandable? What does it tell us about him?
- How does the reader find out that Holden feels alienated and isolated?
- Discuss Holden's likes and dislikes. What do you learn about him from these?