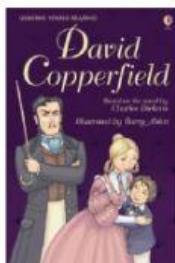


The catcher in the rye

07/09/20



Charles Dicken's novel about a child who suffers oppression from abusive step-father and sister.

BEFORE READING

1. Do you feel identified with any book or movie about childhood? Why?

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

by J.D. Salinger

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If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, an what my **lousy** childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield *kind of crap*¹, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages **apiece** if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all--I'm not saying that--but they're also **touchy** as hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty **run-down** and had to come out here and take it easy. I mean that's all I told D.B. about, and he's my brother and all. He's in Hollywood. That isn't too far from this crumby place, and he comes over and visits me practically every week end. He's going to drive me home when I go home next month maybe. He just got a Jaguar. One of those little English **jobs** that can do around two hundred miles an hour. It cost him damn near four thousand bucks. He's got a lot of **dough**, now. He didn't use to. He used to be just a regular writer, when he was home. He wrote this terrific book of short stories, *The Secret Goldfish*, in case you never heard of him. The best one in it was "The Secret Goldfish." It was about this little kid that wouldn't let anybody look at his goldfish because he'd bought it with his own money. *It killed me*². Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me.

Where I want to start telling is the day I left Pencey Prep. Pencey Prep is this school that's in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. You probably heard of it. You've probably seen the ads, anyway. They advertise in about a thousand magazines, always showing some **hotshot** guy

on a horse jumping over a fence. Like as if all you ever did at Pencey was play polo all the time. I never even once saw a horse anywhere near the place. And underneath the guy on the horse's picture, it always says: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men." *Strictly for the birds*³. They don't do any damn more molding at Pencey than they do at any other school. And I didn't know anybody there that was splendid and clear-thinking and all. Maybe two guys. If that many. And they probably came to Pencey that way.

Anyway, it was the Saturday of the football game with Saxon Hall. The game with Saxon Hall was supposed to be a very big deal around Pencey. It was the last game of the year, and you were supposed to commit suicide or something if old Pencey didn't win.

Answer True or False. Correct false statements.

1. The guy enjoys talking about his childhood.
2. He doesn't like the book David Copperfield very much.
3. He had some hard experiences around Christmas.
4. He hates his brother's book "The secret goldfish".
5. Pencey Prep is a school for Polo players.
6. The game between Saxon Hall and Pencey was pretty important at school.

Infer the meaning of the colored words in the text from the context. Choose the correct option.

Lousy: a. really bad b. excellent

Apiece: a. portion of something b. both of them

Touchy: a. who likes touching b. easily offended

Run-down: a. deteriorated b. slow

Job: a. work b. car

Dough: a. thick mixture of flour and liquid b. money

Hotshot: a. hot drink b. an important person

Can you explain the meaning of these expressions (in italics in the text)?

kind of crap:

It killed me:

Strictly for the birds:

Pay attention to the following clues and answer the questions.

“I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography” (line 8)

“had to come out here and take it easy” (line 10)

“That isn't too far from this crumby place” (line 11)

“when I go home next month maybe” (line 12)

Where do you think the guy is? Who is he talking to?