

The Catcher in the Rye

A Ten-Day Plan for Studying *The Catcher in the Rye*

Created by: Jill D. Mountain
for EGL 440

The Catcher in the Rye

Why *Catcher in the Rye*

Certainly this is one of the most frequently studied novels in American classrooms, and, certainly, a plethora of teaching tools and lesson plans already exist to help teachers teach the novel and explore relevant “coming of age” themes. Why then, does the world need yet another *Catcher in the Rye* lesson plan?

I hope that this is a fresh approach to teaching *Catcher in the Rye*. The unifying theme of this lesson plan is Holden’s simultaneous struggles: He wants to conform to social standards which will grant him entry into the world around him, thereby alleviating his loneliness, but he is also horrified by the insincerity of socially acceptable behavior.

These lessons look closely at different interactions between Holden and other people, as well as his interactions with himself, and his struggles to stay on track, when he longs to speak his mind. Performance exercises are the key to unlocking the Holden Caulfield puzzle. By performing and watching different interactions, students are better able to understand the underlying struggles that so impact the narrator.

I don’t believe this novel is meant to reflect the happy 1950’s we remember from episodes of *Happy Days* or from the movie, *Grease*. Nor is it the same bold, insistent sort of rebellion expressed in the classic *Rebel Without a Cause*. Holden is not necessarily a rebel. He wishes the world were a more sincere place, but he isn’t out to change it. He’s out to change himself. I hope that the lessons in this plan will lead students to seeing this as an individual’s journey to identity.

This unit plan is a wonderful introduction to the work of Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation. While some Beat writers went on to be the driving forces behind the literature of 1960’s rebellion, in the 1950’s they were struggling with exactly the same issues that haunt Holden: Who am I? Who must I be if I am to be a good person? These questions assumed that society knew what was best. By the 1960’s, society and the standards of social normalcy were no longer credible authorities, but in 1951, there were community standards of normalcy and decency which were not to be violated.

So, yes, I believe there is room in the world for one more *Catcher in the Rye* lesson plan. The book may have remained unchanged for fifty years, but the students who study it do not, therefore, a fresh approach is always appropriate.

This lesson plan is appropriate for grades eleven and twelve. Since students will discuss prostitution, sex, marriage, and religion, I believe this lesson is appropriate for more mature students, and should not be used in middle school classrooms.

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Two week unit plan

Lesson 1: Introduction conformist vs phony and Social Engineering film.	Lesson 2: Chapter 2 Holden meets with Mr. Spencer. Performing and judging.	Lesson 3: Chapter 6 Subtext and inflection. Per- forming between the lines.	Lesson 4: Chapters 1-9 Motifs and themes. Close reading exercise.	Lesson 5: Chapter 12 Tableau Vivant Quiz Essay Assignment
Lesson 6: Chapters 13-15 Using Venn Diagrams to find similarities.	Lesson 7: Chapter 16 Editing a chapter Webquest	Lesson 8: Chapter 18 Using poetry as a critical lens. Found poetry.	Lesson 9: Chapter 22 Using perfor- mance to "read between the lines"	Lesson 10: Conclusion Unanswered questions. Exam for next class session.

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Grading Rubric for this unit

Assignment:	Possible Points
Lesson 3: Letter to a fictional friend	5
Quiz	15
Lesson 6: Venn diagrams/worksheets	5
Lesson 7: Paragraphs	5
Lesson 8: Found poetry	5
Unit Exam	25
Motif Tracing Essay	25
Webquest	10

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Lesson 1: *The Cause of this Rebellion*

Sections covered in this lesson:

This lesson is an introduction to issues of conformity and rebellion in post WWII America.

What's on for today and why:

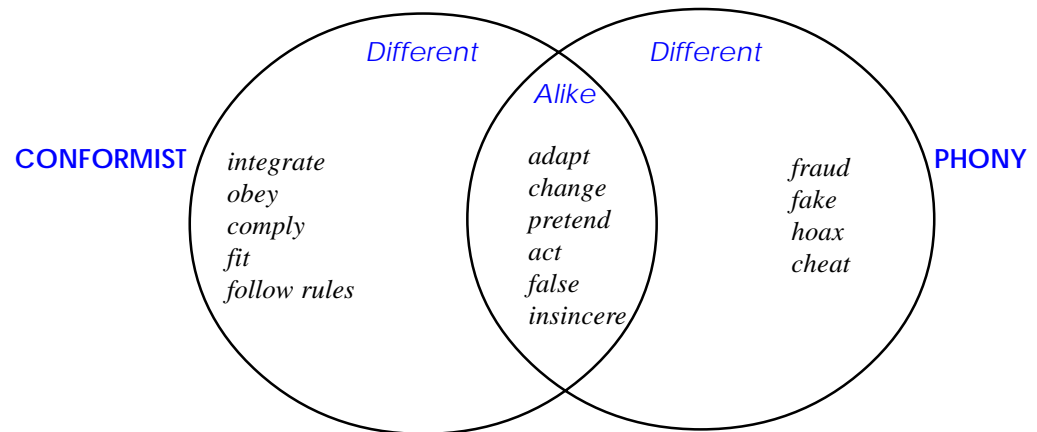
Today we'll take a look at post World War II culture and talk about ideas of conformity. In the process, we'll define one of Holden's favorite words, "phony," and explore meaning by looking for intersections between the words "conformist" and "phony."

We'll also watch part of a Social Engineering film which was produced in the late 1940s and shown to high school students well into the early 1960s. This film should occasion some interesting discussion about post WWII teenage culture, and prepare students to read the first three chapters of the novel.

What to do:

1. Venn Diagram*

Draw two large intersecting circles on the blackboard. Next to one, write the word CONFORMIST. Next to the other, write PHONY. In the open spaces of each circle write the word Different. Where the circles intersect, write Alike:



Ask students for their own (rather than dictionary) definitions of both words. Survey the class for synonyms for either word, and ask for consensus as to whether each synonym could be used with only one word (in which case it will go into the "different" part of the circle) or for both words (in which case it will go into the "alike" area).

Use these dictionary definitions for yourself, and to help keep students on track:
Conform: **a** : to be obedient or compliant — usually used with *to* **b** : to act in accordance with prevailing standards or customs.

Phony: one who is not genuine or real: (1) : intended to deceive or mislead (2) intended to defraud : probably dishonest, having no basis in fact (3) Fake/faluse

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What to do:

The following synonyms/definitions may be helpful in spurring class discussion:

Phony: impostor, fake, faker, fraud, humbug, cheat, counterfeit, fake, fraud, hoax, humbug, put-on, spoof, swindle, pretender

Impostor: one who passes himself off as someone/thing he is not

Fraud: a person who is not what he/she pretends to be

Conform: adapt, accommodate, adjust, fit, coordinate, integrate, obey, comply, follow, keep, mind, observe

Integrate: to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole

Comply: to conform or adapt one's actions to another's wishes, to a rule

Adapt: mean to bring one thing into correspondence with another, implies a modification according to changing circumstances

2. Social Engineering Film

Introduce the film. Produced in 1947, this film was shown to high school students all over the country. The purpose was to help students learn to conform, and therefore be popular. This is not a joke! Play the first five or six minutes of the film, "Shy Guy." (This film is available on CD: Social Engineering 101. www.fantoma.com). Stop the film after Dick York thinks to himself: "And tomorrow's not too soon to start." Use the following questions to spur discussion:

1. What does the narrator say is the young man's problem?
2. What is the problem with the young man's record player?
3. What happens when the young man asks his father how he (the father) fit in at the office. (Dad says: what works for one, doesn't necessarily work for another).
4. Is it okay to be different? Is it *really* okay to be different?
5. What advice does Dad give the young man about fitting in?
6. Consider the paradox: what does Dad say to do? What does he say about his own experience?
7. Go back to the discussion of conformist versus phony. Does the class have anything to say about that?

3. Homework

Distribute copies of *Catcher in the Rye*. Ask the students to read chapters one through three (inclusive), and think about ideas of conformity, and Holden's definition of "phonies," as they read.

How did it go?

If students made the connection between the word diagram in the beginning of the class and the topic of the film at the end of the class, the lesson was successful. It is very important to stress that the film covered what was considered an important topic. Students should have, in class discussion, brought up ideas about individuality, and referred back to the word exercise at the beginning of class, using synonyms like fraud, fake, pretend, etc.

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Lesson 2: *I'm the most terrific liar...*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapter 2: Holden's meeting with Mr. Spencer

What's on for today and why:

Yesterday, we concentrated on defining the words conformist and phony. Today we'll apply our knowledge of those terms (and the challenge of defining the intersection of the definitions) to a reading of Holden Caulfield.

We'll use performance to look more closely at Holden's meeting with Mr. Spencer. In groups of three, students will perform very short skits, each a part of the meeting. At the end of each skit, the class will reach a consensus: Was Holden a phony, or a conformist?

What to do:

1. Warm Up

Write the following question on the board: **What is the difference between conforming and being a "phony?"** As students walk into class, ask them to take out a piece of paper and write on this topic for five minutes. After the class is organized, ask one or two students to read what they've written. This will serve as a review of yesterday's lesson.

2. What was Holden thinking? In Groups

Break the class into groups of three. Distribute the attached handout, an annotated excerpt from the novel, to the students. Ask the students to spend no more than 10-15 minutes in group. They are to assign three character roles: Holden, Mr. Spencer, and Holden's thoughts. They are to rewrite applicable non-dialogue portions of their excerpt so that it can be used as their script. They should discuss how they will stage their mini-performances.

3. What was Holden thinking? Performance

Draw a chart like this on the board:

Group	Conforming?	Phony?
1		
2		
3		
4		
...		

After each group presents their skit, and before proceeding to the next skit, ask the class to raise their hands to vote on whether they considered Holden to be "conforming to social norms" or acting like the dreaded "phony" in the skit. Indicate with a checkmark in the appropriate box what the class decided.

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4. What was Holden thinking? Wrap up.

If there is time - there should be, since each skit was very brief. Ask students what they saw as the difference between being a phony and being a conformist. How did they identify the differences?

5. Homework

Ask students to read chapters 4, 5, and 6 and to write down the name of a character whom Holden would identify as a fraud, liar, or phony, or someone who is true and/or sincere, and one or two sentences explaining why they believe the character deserves that distinction.

How did it go?

Each and every student should have had the opportunity to perform in front of the class. If the class was able to make distinctions and label Holden's behavior based on their own understandings of the terms, they are well on their way to understanding one of the underlying themes of the book. Holden is hardly a *Rebel Without a Cause*, but it takes a lot of work to tease his *cause* out of the text. The performance exercise and the homework assignment both give students the opportunity to make judgments about the characters for themselves. If you see that students are willing to voice their opinions and make judgments, the lesson is successful.

Be sure to keep a record of how the students voted about each of the skits.

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Excerpts from the text

Group 1:

[Mr. Spencer:] “What’d he say to you?”

“Oh...well, about Life being a game and all. And how you should play it according to the rules. He was pretty nice about. I mean he didn’t hit the ceiling or anything. He just kept talking about Life being a game and all. You know.”

“Life *is* a game, boy. Life *is* a game that one plays according to the rules.”

“Yes sir, I know it is. I know it.”

Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it’s a game, all right - I’ll admit that. But if you on the *other* side, where there aren’t any hot-shots, then what’s the game about it? Nothing. No game.

Group 2:

Then he said, “I had the privilege of meeting your mother and dad when they had their little chat with Dr. Thurmer some weeks ago. They’re grand people.”

“Yes, the are. They’re very nice.”

Grand. There’s a word I really hate. It’s a phony. I could puke every time I hear it.

Group 3:

“I flunked you in history because you knew absolutely nothing.”

“I know that, sir. Boy, I know it. You couldn’t help it.”

“Absolutely nothing,” he said over again. That’s something that drives me crazy. When people say something twice that way, after you *admit* it the first time. Then he said it *three* times. “But absolutely nothing. I doubt very much if you opened your text book even once the whole term. Did you? Tell the truth, boy.”

“Well, I sort of glanced through it a couple of times,” I told him. I didn’t want to hurt his feelings. He was mad about history.

Group 4:

“Do you blame me for flunking you, boy?” He said.

“No, sir! I certainly don’t,” I said. I wished to hell he’d stop calling me “boy all the time. [...]

“What would you have done in my place?” He said. “Tell the truth, boy.”

[...] I shot the bull for a while. I told him I was a real moron, and all that stuff. I told him how I would’ve done exactly the same thing if I’d been in his place, and how most people didn’t appreciate how tough it is being a teacher.[...]

The funny thing is, though, I was sort of thinking about something else while I shot the bull. I live in New York and was thinking about the lagoon in Central Park, down near Central Park South. I was wondering if it would be frozen over when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go? I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away.

Group 5:

I’m lucky though. I mean I could shoot the old bull to old Spencer and think about those ducks at the same time. It’s funny. You don’t have to think too hard when you talk to a teacher. All of a sudden, though, he interrupted me while I was shooting the bull. He was always interrupting me.

“How do you *feel* about all this, boy? I’d be very interested to know. Very interested.”

“You mean about my flunking out of Pencey and all?” I said. I sort of wished he’d cover up his bumpy chest. It wasn’t such a beautiful view.

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Group 6:

“I didn’t have too much difficulty at Elkton Hills,” I told him. “I didn’t exactly flunk out or anything. I just quit, sort of.”

“Why, may I ask?”

“Why? Oh, well it’s a long story, sir. I mean it’s pretty complicated.” I didn’t feel like going into the whole thing with him. He wouldn’t have understood it anyway. It wasn’t up his alley at all. One of the biggest reasons I left Elkton Hills was because I was surrounded by phonies. That’s all. They were coming in the goddam window.

Group 7:

“Do you feel absolutely no concern for your future, boy?”

“Oh, I feel some concern for my future, all right. Sure. Sure, I do.” I thought about it for a minute. “But not too much, I guess. Not too much, I guess.”

“You *will*,” old Spencer said. “You will, boy. You will when it’s too late.”

I didn’t like hearing him say that. It made me sound dead or something. It was very depressing. “I guess I will,” I said.

Group 8:

“I’d like to put some sense in that head of yours, boy. I’m trying to help you. I’m trying to *help* you, if I can.”

He really was, too. You could see that. But it was just that we were too much on opposite sides of the pole, that’s all. “I know you are sir,” I said. “Thanks a lot. No kidding. I appreciate it. I really do.” I got up from the bed then. Boy, I couldn’t’ve sat there another ten minutes to save my life. [...] But I just couldn’t hang around there any longer, the way we were on opposite sides of the pole, and the way he kept missing the bed whenever he chucked something at it, and his sad old bathrobe with his chest showing and that grippy smell of Vicks Nose Drops all over the place.

Group 9:

“Wouldn’t you like a cup of hot chocolate before you go? Mrs. Spencer would be-”

“I would, I really would, but the thing is, I have to get going. I have to go right to the gym. Thanks, though. Thanks a lot, sir.”

Then we shook hands. And all that crap. It made me feel sad as hell though.

“I’ll drop you a line, sir. Take care of that gripe, now.”

“Good-by, boy.”

After I shut the door and started back to the living room, he yelled something at me, but I couldn’t exactly hear him. I’m pretty sure he yelled “Good luck!” at me. I hope not. I hope to hell not. I’d never yell “Good luck!” at anybody. It sounds terrible, when you think about it.

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Lesson 3: *Some things are hard to remember.*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapter 6: Holden's fight with Stradlater

What's on for today and why:

We're going to look at Holden's fight with Stradlater, and at the conversation leading up to the fight. Pairs of students will perform parts from the fight scene, using the narrative from the novel as their cues to inflection, movement, etc. As the rest of us watch, we'll get a sense of Holden's mood, and get a closer look at Stradlater. Is he a bully? Does he even know what they're fighting about? How does Stradlater feel about Jane Gallagher? How does Holden feel about her? By performing and watching the fight scene, students will understand that this is not a macho competition.

What to do:

1. Subtext and inflection

Write the following sentence on the board:

"I don't know where I left my keys."

Ask different students to say the line, in the following contexts:

- | | | |
|---------|------------|-----------------|
| - anger | - panic | - frustration |
| - humor | - sadness | - anxiety |
| - fear | - patience | - embarrassment |

2. Deriving subtext from narrative - distributing cards

Ask for twelve volunteers to perform the fight scene from chapter 6. This group should split off into six pairs. Give one of the excerpts to each of the pairs. Allow them a few minutes to discuss how they'll act out their scene. While the pairs are, preferably, out of the room rehearsing their scenes, ask the rest of the class to review chapter six and consider Stradlater's point of view. Why does he think he and Holden are fighting?

3. The performances

Before the performances begin, ask everyone not "on stage" to pay attention to the emotions expressed by the actors. What are they feeling? How are they expressing themselves? For each performance, the audience should try to assign an adjective to each of the characters. For example, in the first scene, they might note that Stradlater is angry, and that Holden seems detached, or unmoved.

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What to do:

4. Tying it all together

Ask students to open their books to chapter six. Discuss each of the performances, and compare them to the text. Survey the class, asking students to share what adjectives they assigned to each character in each scene. Make a list of these on the board, under each character's name. Use the following questions to spur discussion:

1. Why is Holden angry?
2. Why is Stradlater angry?
3. What kind of fight is this? Why emotions drove this?
4. Do Stradlater's actions fit Holden's opinion of him? That is, what does Holden have to say about Stradlater, and how does that jive with Stradlater's behavior?
5. How does Stradlater feel about Jane Gallagher?
6. Does Stradlater understand how Holden feels about her? Why or why not?
7. Did we see any difference between what Holden *thought* and what Holden *said aloud*? What happened when he tried to express his thoughts? What does this say about rules of conformity?

5. Homework

Ask students to write a letter to a fictional friend, describing the fight between Holden and Stradlater, as if they were witnesses. Students should include their own impressions of what went on. Ask students to read chapters 7, 8 and 9 for tomorrow.

How did it go?

The point of this exercise was to illustrate how Holden's inability to communicate and his overwhelming confusion led him to violence. Words failed him. He was incapable of understanding or expressing his feelings for Jane, so he, literally, struck out. By performing the fight scene, we were able to study it more closely, and understand that neither Holden nor Stradlater were "looking for a fight." This altercation was marked by fear and anxiety. If students questioned Holden's opinion of Stradlater, and saw him (Holden) as somewhat pathetic, we were successful. Despite his rough language and negative point of view, Holden is actually very frightened and confused - his behavior is childish. Hopefully at least one student chose "childish" as an adjective for Holden. We'll continue to explore the paradox between Holden's childish behavior and his efforts to fit into an "adult" role in future lessons. Students should have identified Holden's failed efforts to "reach out" to Stradlater, that is, to have an intellectual conversation with him. As you review the letters you assigned for homework, consider how students tied what they watched today into what we've discussed.

STRADLATER: All of a sudden, he said, "For Chrissake, Holden. This is about a goddam *baseball glove*."

HOLDEN: "So what?" I said. Cold as hell.

STRADLATER: He was sore as hell. He was really furious. "No wonder you're flunking the hell out of here You don't do *one damn thing* the way you're supposed to."

HOLDEN: "All right, give it back to me then." I went over and pulled it right out of his goddam hand. Then I tore it up.

HOLDEN: "You're back pretty goddam late if she only signed out for nine-thirty. Did you make her be late signing in?" God. How I hated him.

STRADLATER: He was sitting on the edge of his bed, cutting his toenails. "Coupla minutes." He said. "Who the hell signs out for nine thirty on Saturday night?"

HOLDEN: "If you didn't go to New York, where'd ya go with her?" I asked him, after a little while. I could hardly keep my voice from shaking all over the place. Boy, I was getting nervous. I just had a *feeling* something had gone funny.

STRADLATER: He started getting damn playful. "Nowhere. We just sat in the goddam car." He gave me one of those playful stupid little socks on the shoulder.

HOLDEN: "What'd you do? Give her the time in Ed Banky's goddam car?" My voice was shaking something awful.

STRADLATER: Stradlater kept taking these shadow punches down at my shoulder. He had his toothbrush in his hand and he put it in his mouth. "What a thing to say. Want me to wash your mouth out with soap?"

The next part I don't remember so hot. All I know is I got up from the bed [...] and then I tried to sock him, with all my might, right smack in the toothbrush, so I would split his goddam throat open. Only I missed. I didn't connect. All I did was sort of get him on the side of the head or something. It probably hurt him a little bit, but I did it with my right hand, I can't make a good fist with that hand. On account of the injury I told you about.

STRADLATER: The next thing I knew, I was on the goddam floor and he was sitting on my chest, with his face all red. He had hold of my wrists too, so I couldn't take another sock at him. "What the hell's the matter with you?" He kept saying.

HOLDEN: "Get your lousy *knees* off my *chest*." I was almost bawling, I really was. "Go on, get offa me, ya crumby bastard."

STRADLATER: He hated it when you called him a moron. All morons hate it when you call them a moron. "Shut up, now, Holden. Just shut up, now"

HOLDEN: He got up off me, and I got up, too. My chest hurt like hell from his dirty knees. "You're a dirty stupid moron"

STRADLATER: That got him really mad. He shook his big stupid finger in my face. "Holden, God damn it, I warning you, now. If you don't keep your yap shut, I'm gonna..."

HOLDEN: "Why should I?" I said - I was practically yelling. "That's just the trouble with all you morons. You never want to discuss anything. That's the way you can always tell a moron. They never want to discuss anything intelligent..."

STRADLATER: Then he really let one go at me, and the next thing I know I knew I was on the goddam floor. "Why the hell don'tcha shut *up* when I tellya to?" He sounded pretty nervous. He probably was scared he'd fractured my skull or something. "You asked for it." He looked scared.

HOLDEN: I didn't even bother to get up. I just lay there on the floor for a while and kept calling him a moron. I was so mad I was practically bawling.

STRADLATER: Boy, did he look worried. "Listen. Go wash your face," Stradlater said. "Ya hear me?"

HOLDEN: I told him to go wash his own moron face - which was a pretty childish thing to say, but I was mad as hell. I told him to stop off on the way to the can and give Mrs. Schmidt the time.

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Lesson 4: *My nerves were shot. They really were*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapters 1-9: Motifs and themes.

What's on for today and why:

No study of *The Catcher in the Rye* would be complete without the requisite discussion about the meaning of the red hunting cap, the ducks in central park, or the other commonly studied motifs: death, blood, cigarettes, madness, sex, moron, phony and games/sports. In this class students will break into pairs and work together to trace a single motif from the beginning of the book, up to chapter nine - when Holden finally arrives in New York. Each pair will select one motif, trace it through the novel, making note of the context of several references, then work together to write a paragraph summarizing their findings.

What to do:

1. Collect homework

Ask students to turn in the letters they wrote to their imaginary friends about yesterday's fight between Holden and Stradlater.

2. Write the following motifs on the blackboard

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| - the Red Hunting Cap | - ducks in Central Park |
| - death/kill/die | - blood |
| - cigarettes | - madness/madman/fiend |
| - sex | - moron |
| - phony/pervert/screwball | - games/sports |
| - money | |

3. Pairing off and choosing a motif

Ask students to pair-off and choose a motif from the list. No more than two pairs of students may select a single motif. Students should discuss briefly which topic they'd like, then raise their hands to request the topic. Write the students' names next to the topic they've selected. Distribute one copy of Worksheet 4 to each pair of students.

4. Tracing motifs

Students should spend twenty minutes tracing their motifs through the novel, up to chapter nine. They should note page numbers, and context of the references, and should write a sentence about each reference, noting what it means, and how it ties into other references.

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What to do (continued):

5. Finding patterns

After the groups have worked for fifteen to twenty minutes at finding references to their motifs, ask them to stop searching. Each pair of students should work together to write a paragraph, or two, about any connections they found in the references. Distribute the guiding questions to each group, to help them frame their findings.

6. Sharing patterns

After the groups have worked on their paragraphs for fifteen to twenty minutes, ask for volunteers to read aloud what they've written. The reader should begin by telling the class what motif his or her pair selected, then read the paragraph.

Each pair of students should turn in their paragraphs, with their names written on the back of the paper. Let the students know that you will be copying and distributing some of the paragraphs to the class.

7. Homework

Ask students to read chapters 10, 11 and 12, and let them know that there will be a quiz during the first half of tomorrow's class. The quiz will cover class work, and may include questions designed to reward those who have kept up with the reading.

How did it go?

As you review the paragraphs the pairs of students wrote, you should see responses influenced by classwork. Students should notice that many of these motifs appear in context to Holden's shifting desires to alleviate his isolation and to be left alone. For example, he uses cigarettes as a way to draw attention to himself, and uses his red hat to isolate himself from those around him. Read through the paragraphs the students handed in. Make copies of every paragraph which fulfilled the assignment. You will distribute these tomorrow when you describe the essay assignment.

Worksheet 4b: Tracing Motifs - Guiding Questions

Motif: _____ Group Members: _____

As you investigate the significance of the motif you selected, use the following guiding questions to frame your research, and to help you form conclusions:

1. Is the motif a noun? verb? adjective?
2. How does it come up in the novel, and how does it impact what is going on? What happens immediately preceding or immediately following a mention or discussion of this motif?
3. What is the mood when this idea or thing is brought up? Would you associate this with times when Holden is content? frightened? frantic? confused? Is this mood consistent with every incidence of this motif?
4. Is Holden alone when this motif occurs? If not, with whom is he interacting? How would you characterize that interaction? Does this motif occur both when he is alone and when he is with other people? Is there a connection to be made?
5. What does this motif tell you about Holden, in a "big picture" way - Does this suggest anything about his personality? His weaknesses or strengths? His sense of himself?
6. Tie it all together: Did any pattern emerge? Pick out other words or ideas used in conjunction with this motif. Look back on your investigation and come up with a single sentence that sums up what you've discovered. Write three or four more sentences supporting your thesis sentence. Use references from the novel, and form an opinion of your own.

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Lesson 5: *I was surrounded by jerks.*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapter 12: Creating a Tableau Vivant of Holden's experience in the jazz club.

What's on for today and why:

After the quiz, we'll continue to watch Holden try to find a place for himself. The tableau vivant of him in the jazz club, surrounded by chattering, apparently happy young people, and cornered by Lillian Simmons will give us a new perspective of how he sees his place in the world. In the last ten minutes of the class you will distribute the packets of paragraphs from yesterday, and the essay assignment.

What to do:

1. Quiz

Distribute the attached quiz. Allow students fifteen to twenty minutes to complete the quiz.

2. What is a tableau vivant?

Explain that a tableau vivant is a living picture, which freezes a moment of the action in the novel for our closer study. Ask for ten volunteers to be part of the picture. Assign the following roles: Holden, Lillian Simmons, "Commander Blop", Old Ernie, The Yalie and his date, and the football fan and his date and a mingling, lingering couple.

3. Setting up

Ask the class to read the club scene carefully, and determine the mood and positioning of the different characters.

4. Arranging the players

Students direct each character to stand, sit, or otherwise pose in a certain position. You may need to get the ball rolling with questions (Where is Commander Blop in relation to Holden?). Students may touch the players to adjust them, or may call out suggestions from their seats. Put on a CD of contemporary Jazz music as the process is worked out (Thelonius Monk, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker are all interesting choices).

5. Is it art, yet?

At some point, as in art, the painting is complete. Ask the players to freeze and ask the artists what they see when they look at the players. Take a photo with a digital camera to save the image.

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What to do (continued):

6. What did we learn?

Before the players have returned to their seats, begin a brief class discussion. What did we learn? What specific parts of the narrative did we use to determine the mood and setting? Did any new understanding come out of this? How was Holden interacting with other people? How does that further illuminate his character?

7. Discussing the essay

Distribute the copies you made of the paragraphs from yesterday's lesson, and a copy of the essay assignment sheet. Allow students a few minutes to read through the assignment, ask if there are any questions, and confirm the due date (which should be after the class has completed the novel).

8. Homework

Ask students to read chapters 13, 14, and 15.

How did it go?

What the tableau vivant might have shown us:

1. Holden is beginning to become frantic.
2. He feels trapped.
3. He is no longer annoyed with people around him, but is actually becoming disgusted.
4. He is confused. He craves companionship, but wants to be alone.

If most, or all of these ideas came up either as the students posed the actors, or in the conversation following the exercise, the activity was successful.

The Catcher in the Rye

Name: _____

Quiz: Chapters 1-12

Part I: Choose **two** of the following quotes from the novel. Identify the context, the speaker, to whom or about whom he or she is speaking and write one or two sentences explaining how the quote addresses ideas of conformity, individuality, or phoniness that we've discussed in class (5 points each). Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. "Life *is* a game, boy. Life *is* a game that one plays by the rules."
2. Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right - I'll admit that. But if you get on the *other side*, where there aren't any hotshots, then what's a game about it?
3. He always *looked* good when he was finished fixing himself up, but he was a secret slob anyway, if you knew him they way I did.
4. "You always do everything backasswards." He looked at me. "No wonder you're flunking the hell out of here," he said. "You don't do *one damn thing* the way you're supposed to. I mean it. Not one damn thing."

Part II: Identify **five** of the following objects. What is it? With whom is it associated? Why is it important (1 points each). Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. 	2. 	3. 
4. 	5. 	6. 
7. 	8. 	9. 

The Catcher in the Rye

Essay Assignment

Using the paragraphs I've handed back today as a starting point, write an essay exploring the use of one motif throughout the novel.

The motifs are:

- the Red Hunting Cap
- death/kill/die
- cigarettes
- sex
- phony/pervert/screwball
- money
- ducks in Central Park
- blood
- madness/madman/fiend
- moron
- games/sports

1. Trace the motif from the beginning to the end of the novel. You do not have to catch every, single reference, but try to find every relevant reference.
2. Identify patterns: when and where does this motif occur? What impact does it have on plot and theme? How does it define or impact the characters?
3. Develop a thesis based upon your investigation. What does this motif mean? How is it important to greater themes in the novel.
4. Write an essay starting from your thesis, and arguing that thesis with specific references from the novel *and conclusions you draw based upon your research*.
5. Your first draft of this essay is due on _____.

The Catcher in the Rye

Lesson 6: *So long crumb bum.*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapters 13, 14, and 15: Holden tries to make connections.

What's on for today and why:

Holden's experience with Sunny, the prostitute is, interestingly enough, balanced by his experience with the nuns in the coffee shop. In both cases, Holden tries to reach out and make a connection with other people, with women, and he flounders. In this class, we'll compare the two interactions and find differences and similarities, as odd as that sounds.

What to do:

1. Review what is going on in both scenes

Gauge students' existing understanding of what happens in these chapters with a brief class discussion. Ask directed questions - Who is Sunny? What does she do? What does she want? Who are the nuns? What do they want? etc. until you're confident that everyone is on the same page.

2. Distribute the Venn Diagram worksheets and questions

Using the attached questions, and Venn diagrams, students will compare and contrast how Holden's interactions with Sunny and the nuns. Spend a few moments explaining how to use the Venn Diagrams (refer to the first lesson when we compared and contrasted the terms phony and conformist).

3. Pairing Off

This lesson is best attempted by pairs of students. One student will do a close reading of the scene with Sunny, the other will read the scene with the nuns. Each will fill out the question worksheets on their own. Then the two students will work together to complete the Venn Diagram. Handout the question sheet and ask students to decide which member of the pair will do a close reading of Sunny's scene, and which will read the nun's scene. Students should work independently to answer the questions based on their reading. Stress that they should refer to specific passages, words, etc.

4. The Venn Diagrams

After about 10-15 minutes of work, the students in each pair should compare their notes with one another and begin to pick up similarities. They should, together, fill in the Venn Diagram, citing specific page numbers for the similarities they find.

The Catcher in the Rye

What to do (continued):

5. Pulling it all together

After the pairs of students have worked on their Venn Diagrams for ten or fifteen minutes, call the class back together, allowing each pair of students to sit near each other. Draw a large Venn Diagram on the board, and begin surveying the pairs for differences and similarities.

6. The big picture

Now that we have the evidence, what does it tell us about Holden. As different as the Sunny and the nuns were from each other, Holden interacted in similar ways in both instances. Ask the students, why is that? Try to help the class come to a conclusion about Holden's ability to connect with people. Why does he employ similar strategies regardless of whether he's interacting with a nun or a prostitute? Does this reflect some training? Is he conforming to some sort of social norms? Collect the question sheets and the Venn Diagrams from the groups.

7. Homework

Ask students to read chapter 16 for tomorrow.

How did it go?

The fact that similarities exist between Holden's interactions with these different characters was not immediately obvious. Given permission to look for the similarities, students should have used deductive and interpretive skills to look closely at the language in the two chapters. If students pulled similar, but unidentical descriptors from the text, and interpreted them, the lesson was successful. The big picture should have emerged by the end of the class. Holden's interactions with other people are somewhat stifled by his fear of failing to conform. He is also distracted by his obsession with the lives of people when they are not with him. Other ideas that may have emerged:

- Holden gave money to Sunny and to the Nuns, and regretted it afterwards, for different reasons.
- Holden was concerned with being polite and commented on the manners of all three women.
- Holden wondered how their "jobs" impacted their day to day lives.

The Catcher in the Rye

Worksheet 6A - Close reading with directed questions

Name: _____

Circle one: **Sunny** **The Nuns**

1. How does Holden feel about meeting the character? Reluctant? Fearful? Embarrassed? Nervous? Use an excerpt from the text to support your answer:

2. Does Holden describe the character's physical traits? List the adjectives or description here:

3. Does the character want something from Holden? If so, what? Does she get what they wanted?

4. Does Holden give anything to the character(s)? If so, what are his feelings about doing so? Use an excerpt from the text to support your answer.

5. Does Holden think about how the character acts when she is not "on-duty?" Does he make any comments about her behavior and how it relates to her "job?" Use excerpts from the text.

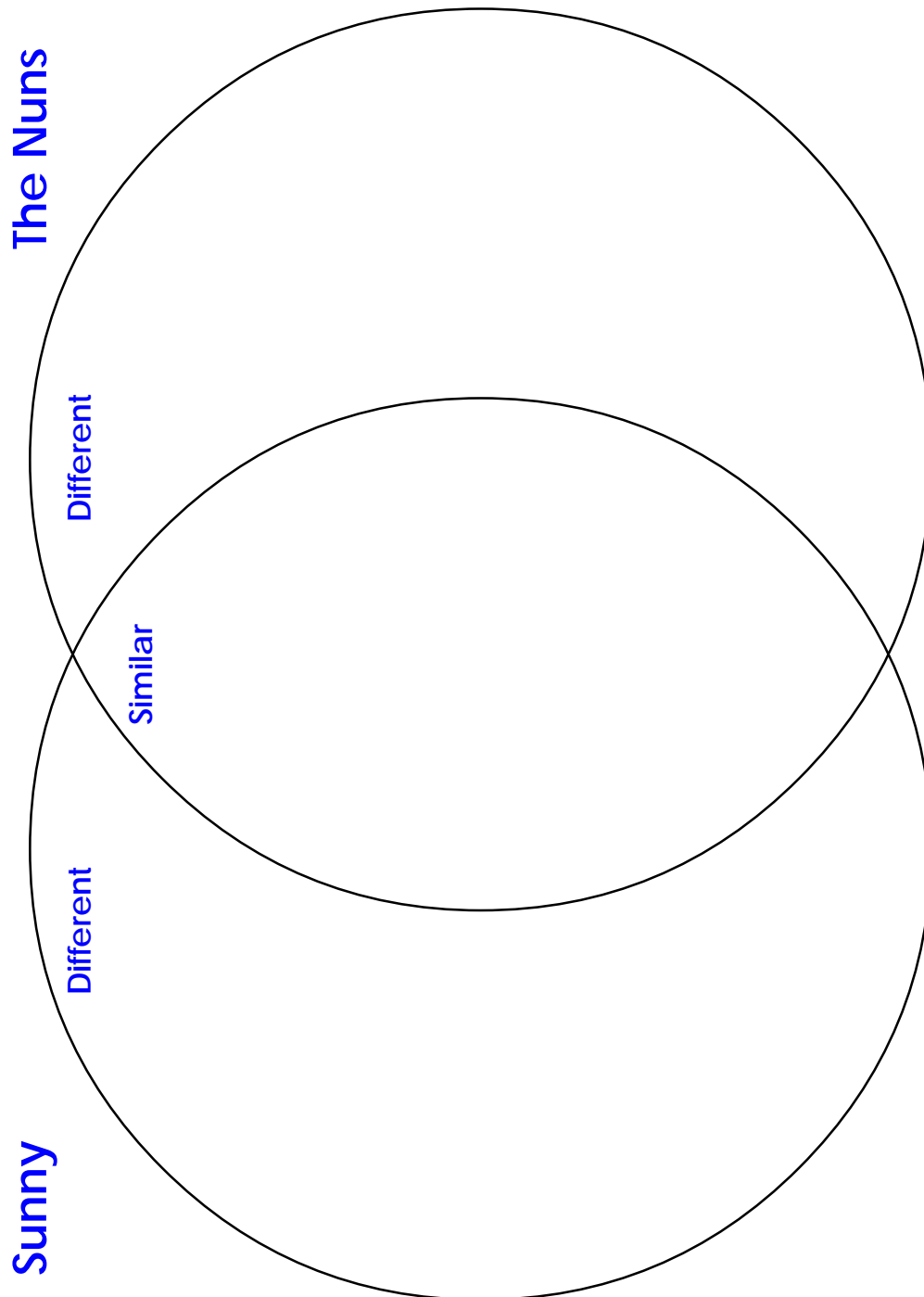
6. Does Holden have any regrets after meeting the character? How does he feel about his behavior during their meeting? Use excerpts from the text.

7. How would you judge Holden's experience with this character? Was it successful? Did he make a connection?

The Catcher in the Rye

Handout 6B: Venn Diagram

Names: _____



The Catcher in the Rye

Lesson 7: *Killing time with Holden.*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapters 16

What's on for today and why:

This is an important chapter, filled with details and references which impact the remainder of the novel - but it doesn't really fit in with the chapters preceding or following it. In today's lesson, students will work in groups to edit this chapter into one dense paragraph. Students should use their knowledge of Holden to identify and record key elements of the chapter. Students will then use their selected excerpts to construct a well-edited, information-dense paragraph which sums up the chapter. It should be written in Holden's first-person narrative style.

Today you will also introduce the webquest on censorship, which students will complete over the course of the next week, as homework.

What to do:

1. Explaining the assignment to the assembled class.

Students will work in pairs. Each pair will carefully read chapter 16 for a second time, identifying together key elements, sentences, actions, interactions, which they believe impact Holden or will impact Holden in relation to his confusion and alienation. Students will copy those sentences, and edit them into a dense, well structured paragraph, which sums up the action in chapter 16. The paragraph should be written in Holden's first-person, narrative style.

2. Break into pairs.

Students should split off into pairs and begin by reading the chapter. Walk around the class to make sure each pair of students are working together, and are stopping, as they read to pull out ideas, sentences, words, etc.

3. Fifteen minute warning.

After fifteen minutes of reading and identifying ideas, confirm that each pair of students will be ready to begin writing in five minutes, if they have not begun writing already. Students should write their paragraphs in the voice of Holden, and as first person narrative.

4. Read aloud.

After every pair of students have finished writing their paragraphs, ask for one or two volunteers to read aloud. When one group has read their paragraph, ask if anyone has anything completely different from what was read. Move to that group, and continue. As the students to turn in their paragraphs.

The Catcher in the Rye

What to do (continued):

5. Censorship webquest

Since no study of *The Catcher in the Rye* would be complete with a reference to its status as one of the most frequently challenged books of the twentieth century, today it is time to introduce the Censorship Webquest:

<http://www.geocities.com/catcherbanned>

Write the word CENSOR on the board. Survey the class for definitions, and write an agreed upon definition on the board. Ask students if they've ever heard of books being banned by schools or libraries. If so, allow students to share their anecdotes, then tell them that *Catcher* was the third most frequently challenged book of the 1990's - which is remarkable, considering it is a fifty year old novel. Give students a due date for their webquest essays (take into consideration that they are also working on the word tracing essays, assigned a few days ago).

6. Homework

Ask students to read chapters 17, 18 and 19 for tomorrow.

How did it go?

The skills exercised in distilling chapter sixteen should prove valuable to students as they try to distill their motif tracing into coherent essays. Also, each student should have mentioned the appearance of the novel's title in chapter 16, and no doubt, everyone included that detail in their paragraph. If you choose to grade these paragraphs, look for

- Creative editing techniques, which tie ideas together effectively
- Mention of key plot/theme elements which will be valuable when we pull the novel together.
- A strong sense of a unifying idea or theme
- Maintained first person narrative writing style

The Catcher in the Rye

Lesson 8: *I felt like marrying her the minute I saw her.*

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapters 18 - Holden makes an indecent proposal.

What's on for today and why:

“Salinger’s novel is the one that most touches on the innocence and angst that wrestled throughout the postwar years, until Vietnam drew a curtain on the suburban tract homes and conformist values that gave rise to such early television shows as *Leave it to Beaver* or *The Ozzie and Harriet Show*.” (Pinkster, 78). In the years following WWII, considerable value was placed upon the role of the nuclear family. Young people were expected to marry and raise families, and contribute in a conformist, and “productive” way to the continued success of the United States. This ideal, however, was questioned almost immediately, as the 1950’s gave rise to Jack Kerouac and his “Beat generation.” These authors and poets considered, among other things, their struggle to maintain selfhood *and* meet the expectations of society.

In today’s lesson, we’re going to read and discuss an excerpt from *Marriage* by the “beat” poet Gregory Corso. Students will then create Holden’s version of a poem on marriage by utilizing a technique called “found poetry.” They will, in pairs, use words and lines from chapter 17-19 to create a poem that expresses Holden’s feelings about marriage and/or his desire to be with Sally.

What to do:

1. Set the stage for this discussion

Review the information in the introduction to this lesson with students. Stress the idea that conformity was considered key to maintaining a stable nation in the years following WWII and into the Cold War.

2. Read *Marriage*

Go around the room, asking each student to read a single line from the poem. Next ask students to read it around again, stopping at terminating punctuation: .?! or -

3. Discuss the poem

How does the author feel about marriage? What must he do to “be good.” Does he want to be married? How does he feel about society’s expectations of him? What does he want to do about these expectations? What frustrates him about the “girl next door?” What is his strongest “pro-marriage” argument? How is that a reflection of society?

The Catcher in the Rye

What to do (continued):

4. Break into pairs

Ask students to split off into pairs. Each pair of student will write one “found poem.”

5. Explain “found poetry”

“Found poetry,” simply means, poetry created of “found” words. Chapters 17 through 19 are your source - look for words, phrases, entire sentences. Arrange them to create a poem which you believe expresses Holden’s thoughts about marrying and or running away with Sally. Remember, you may only use words that are in the text.

6. Read the poems aloud

Ask for volunteers to read their poems aloud. Discuss the tone of one or two of the poems. Collect all of the poems. You may want to create an anthology of these poems and redistribute them to the class.

7. Homework

Ask students to read chapters 20, 21, and 22.

How did it go?

Although it could be considered a bit “racy” or even vulgar, *Marriage* is a wonderful reflection of early 1950’s struggles with conformity. Read through students’ poems, the lesson was successful if

- Students captured Holden’s ambivalence toward Sally - he loves her, he hates her, she’s a space filler, she’s the one person he wants to be with...etc.
- You get a sense from the poetry that Holden wants to go against the grain, to *not* do what is expected of him
- Students included lines or words that indicate that Holden wants to escape, run away, be free of the constraints of society’s expectations.
- That there is no tidy ending to the poem - there is no solution, because no one wants to join in his rebellion.

There are many, many different ideas, themes, questions that could emerge from this exercise. Keep an open mind, and use these poems to gauge students’ understanding of some of the “big picture” themes you’re exploring, and how the language of the book supports these themes.

The Catcher in the Rye

Marriage - Gregory Corso

Should I get married? Should I be good?
Astound the girl next door with my velvet suit and faustus hood?
Don't take her to movies but to cemeteries
tell all about werewolf bathtubs and forked clarinets
then desire her and kiss her and all the preliminaries
and she going just so far and I understanding why
not getting angry saying You must feel! It's beautiful to feel!
Instead take her in my arms lean against an old crooked tombstone
and woo her the entire night the constellations in the sky-

When she introduces me to her parents
back straightened, hair finally combed, strangled by a tie,
should I sit with my knees together on their 3rd degree sofa
and not ask Where's the bathroom?
How else to feel other than I am,
often thinking Flash Gordon soap-
O how terrible it must be for a young man
seated before a family and the family thinking
We never saw him before! He wants our Mary Lou!
After tea and homemade cookies they ask What do you do for a
living?

Should I tell them? Would they like me then?
Say All right get married, we're losing a daughter
but we're gaining a son-
And should I then ask Where's the bathroom?

O God, and the wedding! All her family and her friends
and only a handful of mine all scroungy and bearded
just waiting to get at the drinks and food-
And the priest! he looking at me as if I masturbated
asking me Do you take this woman for your lawful wedded wife?
And I trembling what to say say Pie Glue!
I kiss the bride all those corny men slapping me on the back
She's all yours, boy! Ha-ha-ha!
And in their eyes you could see some obscene honeymoon going on-
Then all that absurd rice and clanky cans and shoes
Niagara Falls! Hordes of us! Husbands! Wives! Flowers! Chocolates!
All streaming into cozy hotels
All going to do the same thing tonight
The indifferent clerk he knowing what was going to happen
The lobby zombies they knowing what
The whistling elevator man he knowing
Everybody knowing! I'd almost be inclined not to do anything!
Stay up all night! Stare that hotel clerk in the eye!
Screaming: I deny honeymoon! I deny honeymoon!
running rampant into those almost climactic suites
yelling Radio belly! Cat shove!
O I'd live in Niagara forever! in a dark cave beneath the Falls
I'd sit there the Mad Honeymooner
devising ways to break marriages, a scourge of bigamy
a saint of divorce-

[...portions of the poem have been omitted]

O but what about love? I forget love
not that I am incapable of love
It's just that I see love as odd as wearing shoes-
I never wanted to marry a girl who was like my mother
And Ingrid Bergman was always impossible
And there's maybe a girl now but she's already married
And I don't like men and-
But there's got to be somebody!
Because what if I'm 60 years old and not married,
all alone in a furnished room
with pee stains on my underwear
and everybody else is married!
All the universe married but me!

Ah, yet well I know that were a woman possible
as I am possible
then marriage would be possible-
Like SHE in her lonely alien gaud
waiting her Egyptian lover
so i wait-bereft of 2,000 years and the bath of life.

The Catcher in the Rye

Lesson 9: Oh Holden, *why* did you do it?

Sections covered in this lesson:

Chapter 22 - Holden's conversation with Phoebe

What's on for today and why:

Holden finally has a chance to speak with Phoebe. Throughout the book, he's referred to her as one of the only people who might understand what he's going through. What he finds out, however, is that even Phoebe is disappointed with him, and that the role he set up for himself - the very idea of being a "catcher in the rye" doesn't exist. Phoebe cares about Holden, as she cares for every member of her family, but she is, ultimately, only ten years old. Her capability for sympathy is limited.

In today's lesson, we'll use performance to take a closer look at Holden's visit with Phoebe. This lesson refers to page numbers from the Little, Brown paperback edition of the novel. ISBN: 0-316-76948-7; (c) May, 1991.

With four pairs of students, we'll read through chapter 22, and explore the dialog between Holden and Phoebe. Students will then discuss what conclusions can be made by watching this reading, and will discuss those ideas as a group.

What to do:

1. Ask for eight volunteers

Ask for eight students to volunteer to perform chapter 22. Divide these students into pairs and assign the following pages:

Part I: 166-167

Part II: 168-169

Part III: 170-171

Part IV: 172-174

Ask the actors to leave the room, or go to a corner of the room and review their lines. They may, as in past exercises, use the narrative as source of cues to their performance, but may only speak lines from the dialog. Remind them to consider the relationship between Phoebe and Holden, and the relative ages of the two characters.

2. While the actors prepare

Ask the class a general question: How did Holden expect Phoebe to feel about his early return from school? How do you know?

3. Watch the performance

Have each group of students perform their parts, while the rest of the class notes incidences when Holden tries to explain what he's going through, and how Phoebe reacts.

The Catcher in the Rye

What to do (continued):

4. Discuss the notes the students took

Ask: “So, what happened when Holden tried to explain himself?” Finally, Holden has an opportunity to express many of the problems swimming through his head. He bares his soul to Phoebe, and she responds, “Dad is going to kill you.” And just when we thought Holden was close to pulling himself together, out he goes, back into the city to find someone to understand him. Someone with whom he can have an “intellectual conversation.”

What happens when Holden explains to Phoebe that he’d like to be the “Catcher in the rye?”

Survey the class for their answers, encourage everyone to refer to the text. As the actors from referenced text how they decided how they would deliver the lines.

5. Does Phoebe understand?

Why is Phoebe disappointed with Holden? Is it *just* because he left school? What does she say about his feelings for Allie? What is she trying to tell Holden? What does her attention span say about her ability to understand Holden’s crisis? Finally, is Phoebe a “phony?”

7. Homework

Ask students to the end of the book for tomorrow and write down one question about the story they feel remains unanswered.

How did it go?

Holden has been disintegrating since page one of the novel. Chapters 21 and 22 are, however, the site of some serious crumbling. Phoebe is disappointed in Holden, but more than that, she’s worried about what her parents will say. She wants Holden to “like something,” she wants him to think of something he’d “like to do,” and she bursts his bubble by correcting his interpretation of the Robert Burns poem - meaning the one idea Holden had - that he’d like to catch children in the rye - is invalidated.

All or most of these unifying ideas should have come out in class discussion, and these ideas should be tied to our big picture idea: The pressures of conformity. Phoebe wants Holden to conform - to find happiness in normalcy. She is impatient with his ramblings and worries obsessively about what people (that is their parents) will think of Holden’s latest rebellion.

You should’ve pursued class discussion until students came within sight of these points. They needn’t agree on every point, but some discussion is necessary.

The Catcher in the Rye

Lesson 10: Don't ever tell anybody anything.

Sections covered in this lesson:

Concluding our study of *Catcher in the Rye*

What's on for today and why:

(Based on Lesson 21 - Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching *Hamlet*) After spending ten days studying four days in the life of Holden Caulfield, we're ready to pull it together. For homework last night, you asked each student to come up with a question that he or she believes remains unanswered at the end of the book.

What to do:

1. Questions

Moved the desks into a circle, or sit around a table, seminar-style. Round-robin fashion, ask each student to pose a question that remains unanswered for him or her. For example: What is Holden looking for from different people in the novel? From Mr. Antolini? From the nuns? From Sally? Or what was Mr. Antolini up to?

List the questions on the board, or, preferably, on an overhead.

2. Answers

Present these questions as topics for group exploration and discussion. The teacher should serve as a referee, allowing students to suggest answers.

3. Pulling it together

Ask students to answer the question, "For what was Holden searching during his 'madman' weekend in New York?"

4. "The mark of an immature man..."

Write this quote on the board: **The mark of an 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.**

5. Pulling it all together.

What does that mean? Ask a few directing questions, and allow students to discuss this quote. Ask students to paraphrase this statement. What does it mean to "live humbly?" Is there a message about conforming in this quote? Finally, what are Holden's last words to us? What can we interpret from his words?

The Catcher in the Rye

What to do (continued):

6. Homework

Remind students to study for the unit exam on *Catcher in the Rye*, which will be given during the next class period. Students should study their notes from all class activities, and make special note of questions and answers discussed today.

How did it go?

The caliber of questions, peer responses, and general atmosphere of the room will tell you whether students have completed a successful study of *Catcher in the Rye*. If the questions were primarily plot-driven, you've missed the boat. If they focused on Holden's language and the attitude he expressed through his language, we were all on track. The final quote, which Mr. Antolini quoted from Wilhelm Stekel, should provide a point of unification, and enable students to come to some conclusions.

Name: _____

Choose **FIVE** of the following excerpts from the novel and respond by naming the speaker, about what or whom he or she is referring, and write a few sentences about how the excerpt addresses the ideas we've been studying in class: conformity/phoniness, isolation/loneliness, making contact with other people/sympathy, etc. (5 points each).

1. The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of a mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one.
2. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody.
3. But you don't have to be a bad guy to depress somebody - you can be a *good* guy and do it. All you have to do to depress somebody is give them a lot of phony advice while you're looking for your initials in some can door - that's all you have to do.
4. Daddy's going to kill you. He's going to *kill* you.
5. Here's my idea. How would you like to get the hell out of here? Here's my idea. I know this guy down in Greenwich Village that we can borrow his car for a couple of weeks. What we could do is, tomorrow morning we could drive up to Massachusetts and Vermont, and all around there, see. It's beautiful as hell up there. It really is.
6. The kid was swell. He was walking in the street, instead of on the sidewalk, but right next to the curb. He was making a game out like he was walking a very straight line, the way kids do, and the whole time he kept singing and humming.
7. Did you ask her if she still keeps all her kings in the back row?
8. Game, my ass. Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game, all right - I'll admit that. But if you get on the *other side*, where there aren't any hotshots, then what's a game about it?
9. You don't like *anything* that's happening.

EXTRA CREDIT (up to 5 points)

Is Holden Caulfield a phony? Why or why not?