

## July 29, 1951: 'Catcher in the Rye' review

Blog Post by: Ben Welter

January 28, 2010 - 10:23 PM

[J.D. Salinger's](#) "The Catcher in the Rye" started landing on bookshelves in the summer of 1951. The novel didn't crack the Tribune's list of best-selling fiction in Minneapolis that July – James Jones' "[From Here to Eternity](#)" topped that list – but it did prompt publication of this favorable review by the Associated Press.

### Mixed-Up Youth Is 'Hero' Of Tough and Tender Story

*THE CATCHER IN THE RYE, by J.D. Salinger (Little, Brown, \$3).*

A YOUNG man possessed of a young man's vigor and callowness and an old man's jaundiced eye rip-snorts his way through this raucous novel and by turns delights, frightens, shocks you and leaves you close to the tears into which he himself bursts as the climax to his mad escapade.

Holden Caulfield is his name. Pencey has just followed the sensible example of several other prep schools and expelled him, for out of five courses he flunked four. Pencey was "lousy," in his opinion; his roommate Stradlater, his neighbor Ackley who cuts his toenails all over the place, his teachers, his courses were lousy and phony, too. His parents have heard the news, but expect him on Wednesday; he decides to go three days early and have himself a time in New York.

He's 16, but it's not the popular, romantic "sweet 16." Here's a boy who likes to tell whopping big lies just for the deviltry of it; who likes to snarl and snap; who likes to suppose, though he admits he doesn't have the family brains, that he's smart.

But for all the grown-up swagger on the surface, he is still 16 inside. He thinks he's fairly sexy, yet every time a girl has said, "stop," he has stopped, and so far they've all said it. He has a little sister Phoebe, skinny but "nice skinny," whom he longs to see again. He mourns his dead brother Allie. He is generous. He imagines himself catching all the people coming the rye and saving them from falling off a cliff.

He tells the story himself; tough and tender, frown and smile, bitter and sweet. It's a sort of lost week end; it's a boy who can't go home again; he belongs to a lost generation and lives in a world he never made. It reminds us of significant conclusions reached by other writers in our time. But besides that, and despite your hoots of laughter at Holden's indomitable speech, this is in essence the tragic story of a problem child, unless indeed it's an indictment of a problem world. Month in, month out, novels don't come much better.

-- A.P.



**J.D. Salinger**



**"The thing is, most of the time when you're coming pretty close to doing it with a girl, she keeps telling you to stop. The trouble with me is, I stop. Most guys don't." -- Holden Caulfield, Chapter 13 (Photo courtesy [mnhs.org](http://mnhs.org))**

© 2015 Star Tribune