

After reading about the formation novel (below), read Chapter 15 of *The Catcher in the Rye* and look for textual details that could either support or resist the reading that the novel is a "bildungsroman."

Traits of a Bildungsroman ("formation novel")

1. The story focuses on the **psychological and moral growth** of the protagonist from youth to adulthood.
2. The protagonist is often a **sensitive person** who is **looking for answers and experience**.
3. The **goal is maturity**, and the protagonist **achieves it gradually and with difficulty** (a "hard-won" maturity)
4. The protagonist is then able to **reach out and help others after having achieved maturity**.
5. The plot must follow a certain course. The **protagonist grows from child to adult** in the novel
6. **Often involves a separation from family**. The protagonist desires to **leave home and become "his own man."**
7. **Often in autobiographical form**.
8. The protagonist **often seeks to gain an identity of his own**
9. He is **usually from a small, provincial place, venturing into a much more complex place**.
10. **Education is crucial** to the protagonist, in that it is part of the child's maturation and preparation for impending adulthood.

11. Often, the **protagonist becomes disillusioned (disappointed)**. The new world does not match his shining hopes and dreams.
12. He must **come to terms with or accept, after painful soul-searching, the sort of world he lives in.**
13. In other words the inner development and maturity of the protagonist takes place after his "education" in the new place. It is this **newfound self-knowledge that signals the ultimate maturity of the hero.**
14. **Often ends with a display of pride** in his accomplishment (maturity)
15. Often, the protagonist **returns to the place he wanted so desperately to escape to achieve this maturity.**
16. It is with this **return home**, where the reader is **reminded of who the protagonist was** and where he came from, that **his development can most clearly be seen.**
17. Although he has come full circle, the memories of the boy that was are perfectly suited to emphasize **the man that he has become.**
18. The protagonist is NOT superior to others.

"I'm comin'," old Maurice said. But he didn't.

"I mean it, Maurice, hey. Leave him alone."

"Who's hurtin' anybody?" he said, innocent as hell. Then what he did, he snapped his finger very hard on my pajamas. I won't tell you where he snapped it, but it hurt like hell. I told him he was a goddam dirty moron. "What's that?" he said. He put his hand behind his ear, like a deaf guy. "What's that? What am I?"

I was still sort of crying. I was so damn mad and nervous and all. "You're a dirty moron," I said. "You're a stupid chiseling moron, and in about two years you'll be one of those scraggy guys that come up to you on the street and ask for a dime for coffee. You'll have snot all over your dirty filthy overcoat, and you'll be--"

Then he smacked me. I didn't even try to get out of the way or duck or anything. All I felt was this terrific punch in my stomach.

I wasn't knocked out or anything, though, because I remember looking up from the floor and seeing them both go out the door and shut it. Then I stayed on the floor a fairly long time, sort of the way I did with Stradlater. Only, this time I thought I was dying. I really did. I thought I was drowning or something. The trouble was, I could hardly breathe. When I did finally get up, I had to walk to the bathroom all doubled up and holding onto my stomach and all.

But I'm crazy. I swear to God I am. About halfway to the bathroom, I sort of started pretending I had a bullet in my guts. Old Maurice had plugged me. Now I was on the way to the bathroom to get a good shot of bourbon or something to steady my nerves and help me really go into action. I pictured myself coming out of the goddam bathroom, dressed and all, with my automatic in my pocket, and staggering around a little bit. Then I'd walk downstairs, instead of using the elevator. I'd hold onto the banister and all, with this blood trickling out of the side of my mouth a little at a time. What I'd do, I'd walk down a few floors--holding onto my guts, blood leaking all over the place-- and then I'd ring the elevator bell. As soon as old Maurice opened the doors, he'd see me with the automatic in my hand and he'd start screaming at me, in this very high-pitched, yellow-belly voice, to leave him alone. But I'd plug him anyway. Six shots right through his fat hairy belly. Then I'd throw my automatic down the elevator shaft--after I'd wiped off all the finger prints and all. Then I'd crawl back to my room and call up Jane and have her come over and bandage up my guts. I pictured her holding a cigarette for me to smoke while I was bleeding and all.

The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding.

I stayed in the bathroom for about an hour, taking a bath and all. Then I got back in bed. It took me quite a while to get to sleep--I wasn't even tired--but finally I did. 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. I didn't want a bunch of stupid rubbernecks looking at me when I was all gory.

CHAPTER 15

I didn't sleep too long, because I think it was only around ten o'clock when I woke up. I felt pretty hungry as soon as I had a cigarette. The last time I'd eaten was those two hamburgers I had with Brossard and Ackley when we went in to Agerstown to the movies. That was a long time ago. It seemed like fifty years ago. The phone was right next to me, and I started to call down and have them send up some breakfast, but I was sort of afraid they might send it up with old Maurice. If you think I was dying to see him again, you're crazy. So I just laid around in bed for a while and smoked another cigarette. I thought of giving old Jane a buzz, to see if she was home yet and all, but I wasn't in the mood.

What I did do, I gave old Sally Hayes a buzz. She went to Mary A. Woodruff, and I knew she was home because I'd had this letter from her a couple of weeks ago. I wasn't too crazy about her, but I'd known her for years. I used to think she was quite intelligent, in my stupidity. The reason I did was because she knew quite a lot about the theater and plays and literature and all that stuff. If somebody knows quite a lot about those things, it takes you quite a while to find out whether they're really stupid or not. It took me years to find it out, in old Sally's case. I think I'd have found it out a lot sooner if we hadn't necked so damn much. My big trouble is, I always sort of think whoever I'm necking is a pretty intelligent person. It hasn't got a goddam thing to do with it, but I keep thinking it anyway.

Anyway, I gave her a buzz. First the maid answered. Then her father. Then she got on. "Sally?" I said.

"Yes--who is this?" she said. She was quite a little phony. I'd already told her father who it was.

"Holden Caulfield. How are ya?"

"Holden! I'm fine! How are you?"

"Swell. Listen. How are ya, anyway? I mean how's school?"

"Fine," she said. "I mean--you know."

"Swell. Well, listen. I was wondering if you were busy today. It's Sunday, but there's always one or two matinees going on Sunday. Benefits and that stuff. Would you care to go?"

"I'd love to. Grand."

Grand. If there's one word I hate, it's grand. It's so phony. For a second, I was tempted to tell her to forget about the matinee. But we chewed the fat for a while. That is, she chewed it. You couldn't get a word in edgewise. First she told me about some Harvard guy-- it probably was a freshman, but she didn't say, naturally--that was rushing hell out of her. Calling her up night and day. Night and day--that killed me. Then she told me about some other guy, some West Point cadet, that was cutting his throat over her too.

Big deal. I told her to meet me under the clock at the Biltmore at two o'clock, and not to be late, because the show probably started at two-thirty. She was always late. Then I hung up. She gave me a pain in the ass, but she was very good-looking.

After I made the date with old Sally, I got out of bed and got dressed and packed my bag. I took a look out the window before I left the room, though, to see how all the perverts were doing, but they all had their shades down. They were the height of modesty in the morning. Then I went down in the elevator and checked out. I didn't see old Maurice around anywhere. I didn't break my neck looking for him, naturally, the bastard.

I got a cab outside the hotel, but I didn't have the faintest damn idea where I was going. I had no place to go. It was only Sunday, and I couldn't go home till Wednesday--or Tuesday the soonest. And I certainly didn't feel like going to another hotel and getting my brains beat out. So what I did, I told the driver to take me to Grand Central Station. It was right near the Biltmore, where I was meeting Sally later, and I figured what I'd do, I'd check my bags in one of those strong boxes that they give you a key to, then get some breakfast. I was sort of hungry. While I was in the cab, I took out my wallet and sort of counted my money. I don't remember exactly what I had left, but it was no fortune or anything. I'd spent a king's ransom in about two lousy weeks. I really had. I'm a goddam spendthrift at heart. What I don't spend, I lose. Half the time I sort of even forget to pick up my change, at restaurants and night clubs and all. It drives my parents crazy. You can't blame them. My father's quite wealthy, though. I don't know how much he makes--he's never discussed that stuff with me--but I imagine quite a lot. He's a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in. Another reason I know he's quite well off, he's always investing money in shows on Broadway. They always flop, though, and it drives my mother crazy when he does it. She hasn't felt too healthy since my brother Allie died. She's very nervous. That's another reason why I hated like hell for her to know I got the ax again.

After I put my bags in one of those strong boxes at the station, I went into this little sandwich bar and had breakfast. I had quite a large breakfast, for me--orange juice, bacon and eggs, toast and coffee. Usually I just drink some orange juice. I'm a very light eater. I really am. That's why I'm so damn skinny. I was supposed to be on this diet where you eat a lot of starches and crap, to gain weight and all, but I didn't ever do it. When I'm out somewhere, I generally just eat a Swiss cheese sandwich and a malted milk. It isn't much, but you get quite a lot of vitamins in the malted milk. H. V. Caulfield. Holden Vitamin Caulfield.

While I was eating my eggs, these two nuns with suitcases and all--I guessed they were moving to another convent or something and were waiting for a train--came in and sat down next to me at the counter. They didn't seem to know what the hell to do with their suitcases, so I gave them a hand. They were these very inexpensive-looking suitcases--the ones that aren't genuine leather or anything. It isn't important, I know, but I hate it when somebody has cheap suitcases. It sounds terrible to say it, but I can even get to hate somebody, just looking at them, if they have cheap suitcases with them. Something happened once. For a while when I was at Elkton Hills, I roomed with this boy, Dick Slagle, that had these very inexpensive suitcases. He used to keep them under the bed, instead of on the rack, so that nobody'd see them standing next to mine. It depressed holy hell out of me, and I kept wanting to throw mine out or something, or even trade with him. Mine came from Mark Cross, and they were genuine cowhide and all that crap, and I guess they cost quite a pretty penny. But it was a funny thing. Here's what happened. What I did, I finally put my suitcases under my bed, instead of on the rack, so that old Slagle wouldn't get a goddam inferiority complex about it. But here's what he did. The day after I put mine under my bed, he took them out and put them back on the rack. The reason he did it, it took me a while to find out, was because he wanted people to think my bags were his. He really did. He was a very funny guy, that way. He was always saying snotty things about them, my suitcases, for instance. He kept saying they were too new and bourgeois. That was his favorite goddam word. He read it somewhere or heard it somewhere. Everything I had was bourgeois as hell. Even my fountain pen

was bourgeois. He borrowed it off me all the time, but it was bourgeois anyway. We only roomed together about two months. Then we both asked to be moved. And the funny thing was, I sort of missed him after we moved, because he had a helluva good sense of humor and we had a lot of fun sometimes. I wouldn't be surprised if he missed me, too. At first he only used to be kidding when he called my stuff bourgeois, and I didn't give a damn--it was sort of funny, in fact. Then, after a while, you could tell he wasn't kidding any more. The thing is, it's really hard to be roommates with people if your suitcases are much better than theirs--if yours are really good ones and theirs aren't. You think if they're intelligent and all, the other person, and have a good sense of humor, that they don't give a damn whose suitcases are better, but they do. They really do. It's one of the reasons why I roomed with a stupid bastard like Stradlater. At least his suitcases were as good as mine.

Anyway, these two nuns were sitting next to me, and we sort of struck up a conversation. The one right next to me had one of those straw baskets that you see nuns and Salvation Army babes collecting dough with around Christmas time. You see them standing on corners, especially on Fifth Avenue, in front of the big department stores and all. Anyway, the one next to me dropped hers on the floor and I reached down and picked it up for her. I asked her if she was out collecting money for charity and all. She said no. She said she couldn't get it in her suitcase when she was packing it and she was just carrying it. She had a pretty nice smile when she looked at you. She had a big nose, and she had on those glasses with sort of iron rims that aren't too attractive, but she had a helluva kind face. "I thought if you were taking up a collection," I told her, "I could make a small contribution. You could keep the money for when you do take up a collection."

"Oh, how very kind of you," she said, and the other one, her friend, looked over at me. The other one was reading a little black book while she drank her coffee. It looked like a Bible, but it was too skinny. It was a Bible-type book, though. All the two of them were eating for breakfast was toast and coffee. That depressed me. I hate it if I'm eating bacon and eggs or something and somebody else is only eating toast and coffee.

They let me give them ten bucks as a contribution. They kept asking me if I was sure I could afford it and all. I told them I had quite a bit of money with me, but they didn't seem to believe me. They took it, though, finally. The both of them kept thanking me so much it was embarrassing. I swung the conversation around to general topics and asked them where they were going. They said they were schoolteachers and that they'd just come from Chicago and that they were going to start teaching at some convent on 168th Street or 186th Street or one of those streets way the hell uptown. The one next to me, with the iron glasses, said she taught English and her friend taught history and

American government. Then I started wondering like a bastard what the one sitting next to me, that taught English, thought about, being a nun and all, when she read certain books for English. Books not necessarily with a lot of sexy stuff in them, but books with lovers and all in them. Take old Eustacia Vye, in *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy. She wasn't too sexy or anything, but even so you can't help wondering what a nun maybe thinks about when she reads about old Eustacia. I didn't say anything, though, naturally. All I said was English was my best subject.

"Oh, really? Oh, I'm so glad!" the one with the glasses, that taught English, said. "What have you read this year? I'd be very interested to know." She was really nice.

"Well, most of the time we were on the Anglo-Saxons. Beowulf, and old Grendel, and Lord

Randal My Son, and all those things. But we had to read outside books for extra credit once in a while. I read *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy, and *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius--*"

"Oh, *Romeo and Juliet*! Lovely! Didn't you just love it?" She certainly didn't sound much like a nun.

"Yes. I did. I liked it a lot. There were a few things I didn't like about it, but it was quite moving, on the whole."

"What didn't you like about it? Can you remember?" To tell you the truth, it was sort of embarrassing, in a way, to be talking about *Romeo and Juliet* with her. I mean that play gets pretty sexy in some parts, and she was a nun and all, but she asked me, so I discussed it with her for a while. "Well, I'm not too crazy about *Romeo and Juliet*," I said. "I mean I like them, but--I don't know. They get pretty annoying sometimes. I mean I felt much sorrier when old Mercutio got killed than when *Romeo and Juliet* did. The think is, I never liked *Romeo* too much after Mercutio gets stabbed by that other man--*Juliet's* cousin--what's his name?"

"Tybalt."

"That's right. Tybalt," I said--I always forget that guy's name. "It was *Romeo's* fault. I mean I liked him the best in the play, old Mercutio. I don't know. All those Montagues and Capulets, they're all right--especially *Juliet*--but Mercutio, he was--it's hard to explain. He was very smart and entertaining and all. The thing is, it drives me crazy if somebody gets killed-- especially somebody very smart and entertaining and all--and it's somebody else's fault. *Romeo and Juliet*, at least it was their own fault."

"What school do you go to?" she asked me. She probably wanted to get off the subject of *Romeo and Juliet*.

I told her Pencey, and she'd heard of it. She said it was a very good school. I let it pass, though. Then the other one, the one that taught history and government, said they'd better be running along. I took their check off them, but they wouldn't let me pay it. The one with the glasses made me give it back to her.

"You've been more than generous," she said. "You're a very sweet boy." She certainly was nice. She reminded me a little bit of old Ernest Morrow's mother, the one I met on the train. When she smiled, mostly. "We've enjoyed talking to you so much," she said.

I said I'd enjoyed talking to them a lot, too. I meant it, too. I'd have enjoyed it even more though, I think, if I hadn't been sort of afraid, the whole time I was talking to them, that they'd all of a sudden try to find out if I was a Catholic. Catholics are always trying to find out if you're a Catholic. It happens to me a lot, I know, partly because my last name is Irish, and most people of Irish descent are Catholics. As a matter of fact, my father was a Catholic once. He quit, though, when he married my mother. But Catholics are always trying to find out if you're a Catholic even if they don't know your last name. I knew this one Catholic boy, Louis Shaney, when I was at the Whooton School. He was the first boy I ever met there. He and I were sitting in the first two chairs outside the goddam infirmary, the day school opened, waiting for our physicals, and we sort of struck up this conversation about tennis. He was quite interested in tennis, and so was I. He told me he went to the Nationals at Forest Hills every summer, and I told him I did too, and then we talked about certain hot-shot tennis players for quite a while. He knew quite a lot about

tennis, for a kid his age. He really did. Then, after a while, right in the middle of the goddam conversation, he asked me, "Did you happen to notice where the Catholic church is in town, by any chance?" The thing was, you could tell by the way he asked me that he was trying to find out if I was a Catholic. He really was. Not that he was prejudiced or anything, but he just wanted to know. He was enjoying the conversation about tennis and all, but you could tell he would've enjoyed it more if I was a Catholic and all. That kind of stuff drives me crazy. I'm not saying it ruined our conversation or anything--it didn't--but it sure as hell didn't do it any good. That's why I was glad those two nuns didn't ask me if I was a Catholic. It wouldn't have spoiled the conversation if they had, but it would've been different, probably. I'm not saying I blame Catholics. I don't. I'd be the same way, probably, if I was a Catholic. It's just like those suitcases I was telling you about, in a way. All I'm saying is that it's no good for a nice conversation. That's all I'm saying.

When they got up to go, the two nuns, I did something very stupid and embarrassing. I was smoking a cigarette, and when I stood up to say good-bye to them, by mistake I blew some smoke in their face. I didn't mean to, but I did it. I apologized like a madman, and they were very polite and nice about it, but it was very embarrassing anyway.

After they left, I started getting sorry that I'd only given them ten bucks for their collection. But the thing was, I'd made that date to go to a matinee with old Sally Hayes, and I needed to keep some dough for the tickets and stuff. I was sorry anyway, though. Goddam money. It always ends up making you blue as hell.

CHAPTER 16

After I had my breakfast, it was only around noon, and I wasn't meeting old Sally till two o'clock, so I started taking this long walk. I couldn't stop thinking about those two nuns. I kept thinking about that beatup old straw basket they went around collecting money with when they weren't teaching school. I kept trying to picture my mother or somebody, or my aunt, or Sally Hayes's crazy mother, standing outside some department store and collecting dough for poor people in a beat-up old straw basket. It was hard to picture. Not so much my mother, but those other two. My aunt's pretty charitable--she does a lot of Red Cross work and all--but she's very well-dressed and all, and when she does anything charitable she's always very well-dressed and has lipstick on and all that crap. I couldn't picture her doing anything for charity if she had to wear black clothes and no lipstick while she was doing it. And old Sally Hayes's mother. Jesus Christ. The only way she could go around with a basket collecting dough would be if everybody kissed her ass for her when they made a contribution. If they just dropped their dough in her basket, then walked away without saying anything to her, ignoring her and all, she'd quit in about an hour. She'd get bored. She'd hand in her basket and then go someplace swanky for lunch. That's what I liked about those nuns. You could tell, for one thing, that they never went anywhere swanky for lunch. It made me so damn sad when I thought about it, their never going anywhere swanky for lunch or anything. I knew it wasn't too important, but it made me sad anyway.

I started walking over toward Broadway, just for the hell of it, because I hadn't been over there in