

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 10 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 7

Reading selection from Chapter 20



New York City today

I've lived in New York all my life, and I know Central Park like the back of my hand, because I used to roller-skate there all the time and ride my bike when I was a kid, but I had the most terrific trouble finding that lagoon that night. I knew right where it was--it was right near Central Park South and all--but I still couldn't find it. I must've been drunker than I thought. I kept walking and walking, and it kept getting darker and darker and spookier and spookier. I didn't see one person the whole time I was in the park. I'm just as glad. I probably would've jumped about a mile if I had. Then, finally, I found it. What it was, it was partly frozen and partly not frozen. But I didn't see any ducks around. I walked all around the whole damn lake--I damn near fell in once, in fact--but I didn't see a single duck. I thought maybe if there were any around, they might be asleep or something near the edge of the water, near the grass and all. That's how I nearly fell in. But I couldn't find any.

Finally I sat down on this bench, where it wasn't so goddam dark. Boy, I was still shivering like a bastard, and the back of my hair, even though I had my hunting hat on, was sort of full of little hunks of ice. That worried me. I thought probably I'd get pneumonia and die. I started picturing millions of jerks coming to my funeral and all. My grandfather from Detroit, that keeps calling out the numbers of the streets when you ride on a goddam bus with him, and my aunts--I have about fifty aunts--and all my lousy cousins. What a mob'd be there. They all came when Allie died, the whole goddam stupid bunch of them. I have this one stupid aunt with halitosis that kept saying how peaceful he looked lying there, D.B. told me. I wasn't there. I was still in the hospital. I had to go to the hospital and all after I hurt my hand. Anyway, I kept worrying that I was getting pneumonia, with all those hunks of ice in my hair, and that I was going to die. I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father. Especially my mother, because she still isn't over my brother Allie yet. I kept picturing her not knowing what to do with all my suits and athletic equipment and all. The only good thing, I knew she wouldn't let old Phoebe come to my goddam funeral because she was only a little kid. That was the only good part. Then I thought about the whole bunch of them sticking me in a goddam cemetery and all, with my name on this tombstone and all. Surrounded by dead guys. Boy, when you're dead, they really fix you up. I hope to hell when I do die somebody has sense enough to just dump me in the river or something. Anything except sticking me in a goddam cemetery. People coming and putting a bunch of flowers on your stomach on Sunday, and all that crap. Who wants flowers when you're dead? Nobody.

When the weather's nice, my parents go out quite frequently and stick a bunch of flowers on old Allie's grave. I went with them a couple of times, but I cut it out. In the first place, I certainly don't enjoy seeing him in that crazy cemetery. Surrounded by dead guys and tombstones and all. It wasn't too bad when the sun was out, but twice--twice--we were there when it started to rain. It was awful. It rained on his lousy tombstone, and it rained on the grass on his stomach. It rained all over the place. All the visitors that were visiting the cemetery started running like hell over to their cars. That's what nearly

drove me crazy. All the visitors could get in their cars and turn on their radios and all and then go someplace nice for dinner--everybody except Allie. I couldn't stand it. I know it's only his body and all that's in the cemetery, and his soul's in Heaven and all that crap, but I couldn't stand it anyway. I just wish he wasn't there. You didn't know him. If you'd known him, you'd know what I mean. It's not too bad when the sun's out, but the sun only comes out when it feels like coming out.

After a while, just to get my mind off getting pneumonia and all, I took out my dough and tried to count it in the lousy light from the street lamp. All I had was three singles and five quarters and a nickel left--boy, I spent a fortune since I left Pencey. Then what I did, I went down near the lagoon and I sort of skipped the quarters and the nickel across it, where it wasn't frozen. I don't know why I did it, but I did it. I guess I thought it'd take my mind off getting pneumonia and dying. It didn't, though.

I started thinking how old Phoebe would feel if I got pneumonia and died. It was a childish way to think, but I couldn't stop myself. She'd feel pretty bad if something like that happened. She likes me a lot. I mean she's quite fond of me. She really is. Anyway, I couldn't get that off my mind, so finally what I figured I'd do, I figured I'd better sneak home and see her, in case I died and all. I had my door key with me and all, and I figured what I'd do, I'd sneak in the apartment, very quiet and all, and just sort of chew the fat with her for a while. The only thing that worried me was our front door. It creaks like a bastard. It's a pretty old apartment house, and the superintendent's a lazy bastard, and everything creaks and squeaks. I was afraid my parents might hear me sneaking in. But I decided I'd try it anyhow.

So I got the hell out of the park, and went home. I walked all the way. It wasn't too far, and I wasn't tired or even drunk any more. It was just very cold and nobody around anywhere.

Discussion Questions

1. Which part of New York City is Holden in at this point in the novel?
2. What happened to Holden's hand when everyone was at Allie's funeral? What did he do to himself, and why did he do it? Describe and summarize the backstory.
- 3i) Why does Holden finally decide to go home? Apart from the cold, is it possible to present a psychological reading of his decision to return home?
- 3ii) There are 26 chapters in the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Assuming that Holden is writing or telling his story in a rest home, is it significant that he talks about homecoming in Chapter 20. Does narrative therapy work for an alienated teenager like Holden?

Respond to one of the questions fully:

WRITING GOOD THESIS STATEMENTS

Adapted from <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/high-school-english-lessons/20762-thesis-statement-lesson-plan/>

What to Do Before Writing

Before writing a thesis statement, the writer must be aware of his or her **audience and purpose**. Unclear thesis statements emanate from the minds of writers with an unclear purpose. Write effective thesis statements by doing the following:

- You must begin with a topic question. If your instructor has assigned an essay question to answer, this step has been done for you. If you are doing a research paper, take time to come up with a good topic question.
- You must form an opinion and state it clearly. Do not be wishy-washy.
- Be sure you have approached your evidence fairly, without bias.
- Consider both sides of a controversial issue.
- Once you've established the topic question, a clear position, and objectivity, you're ready to write a thesis statement.

What Is a Thesis Statement?

Students have heard the term thesis statement hundreds of times by the time they reach high school, yet have only a vague understanding of what one is. What is it? A thesis statement...

- presents your opinions or thoughts on a subject or an issue. You cannot write an essay without one.
- must contain a subject + an opinion.
- answers the topic question (the one you created or the one presented to you by the instructor).

TIP: A thesis statement should never contain the following: *in my opinion, I think, I believe*, etc. Tell them that the entire thesis represents what they believe. However, it may be helpful for students to begin their thesis statement rough draft with *in my opinion, I believe, or I think* to make sure they are expressing their thoughts or opinion on a specific subject or issue. When writing the final draft, simply eliminate those phrases.

Writing a Good Thesis Statement

It is important to recognize the difference between good and bad thesis statements.

- A good thesis statement is simple and concise: it should be no longer than one sentence, regardless of essay length.
 - Good Example: *Success is a result of doing the right things consistently.*
 - Bad Example: *In a world full of success gurus and books about success, it becomes ever so more important to delineate the one trait that ultimately determines success: doing the right things consistently.*
- A good thesis statement is limited to one main idea.
 - Good example: *The key to successful dieting is focusing on a specific goal.*

- Bad example: *The key to successful dieting is focusing on a specific goal, which is also the key to successfully running a business and coaching a football team.*
- A good thesis statement is **a declarative sentence with no qualifiers** (*might, maybe, perhaps, etc.*):
 - Good example: *Lebron James' ability to score, pass, and rebound make him the league's most valuable player.*
 - Bad example: *Does Lebron James' ability to score, pass, and rebound make him the league's most valuable player?*
 - Bad Example: *Lebron James' ability to score, pass, and rebound just might make him the league's most valuable player.*

Write It Out

Knowing what to do and actually doing it are not the same. The following steps will help you write clearly:

- Write several trial statements: writing is a process. Revise.
- If you're having trouble deciding which side to take on a controversial issue, write your thesis statement from two different points of view. Then decide which one better represents your opinion. If you still can't decide, list facts on both sides of the issue and decide which facts make a more persuasive argument.

Evaluating the Work

Evaluate your writing. Use the following questions to analyze their statement:

- Have you answered the question or merely restated it? The following examples are based on this question: **Does Romeo's prior feelings for Rosaline diminish the credibility of his love for Juliet?**
 - Good example: *Romeo's prior feelings for Rosaline diminish the credibility of his love for Juliet.*
 - Bad example: *This essay examines whether or not Romeo's prior feelings for Rosaline diminish his love for Juliet.*
- Have you tried to argue both sides of the case? It is important to acknowledge the other side and address the other position. That does not, however, excuse you from choosing a side.
 - Good example: *Juliet was not the first woman to capture Romeo's fancy; she was, however, the one who affected him the most.*
 - Bad example: *Romeo loved Juliet with all his heart, but he loved Rosaline too. It could be argued they were both his favorite.*
- Have you prejudged the issue by using loaded language? Immature writers manipulate readers through emotionally-charged language.
 - Bad example: *Immature, whiny, male-pig Romeo, a male harlot, ruined precious Juliet whom he loved no more than Rosaline.*

The mid-term assessment will be on Class 9. You will be writing a three-paragraph essay, containing an introduction, a body paragraph, and a conclusion. To prepare for the midterm, think about these questions/prompts at home. In class today, focus on one question/prompt.

1. Write an essay about how another character in the novel would perceive Holden Caulfield.
2. Write an essay about the symbolic significance of any meaningful object in *The Catcher in the Rye*.
3. Write an essay about the idea of “phoniness” in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Which question would you choose? Explain your choice.

What would your thesis statement look like? (In other words, what will you argue?) You may modify your thesis statement for the mid-term essay.

What evidence would you use to support your thesis statement?
