

Interesting Facts about JD Salinger and his novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*

Resources

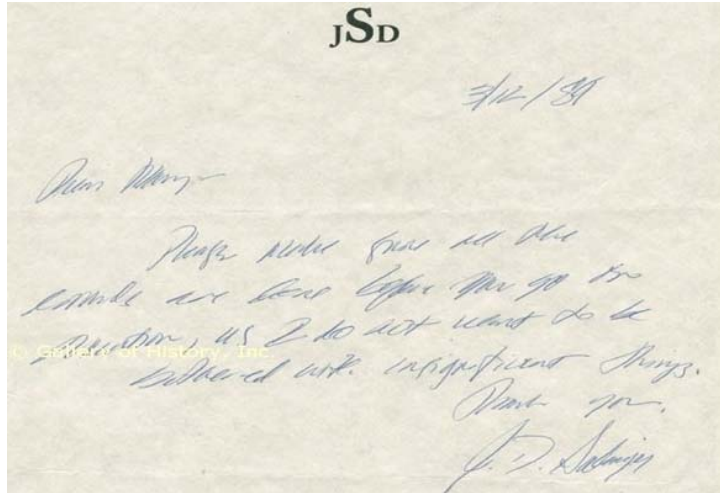
- <http://www.killadj.com/blog/2014/02/11/15-interesting-facts-j-d-salinger/>
- <https://www.biography.com/news/j-d-salinger-documentary-interesting-facts>



In 1942, Salinger was drafted to the Army. During his time in the military, he met fellow writer Ernest Hemingway. The two of them got along well. Salinger also wrote most of *The Catcher in the Rye* during the war.

Salinger landed on Utah Beach on D-Day in the invasion of Normandy. Serving as a counter-intelligence officer, he was one of the first officers to enter a liberated concentration camp.





He could be a nice guy, but more times than not, he wasn't. He wrote to his maid once: "Dear Mary – Please make sure all the errands are done before you go on vacation, as I do not want to be bothered with insignificant things. Thank you. J.D. Salinger." The original copy of the letter later sold for \$50,000 at auction.

Salinger dated a lot, but he never became better at it. He was a bit awkward. According to Leila Hadley Luce, while they were courting he mentioned it was raining, and she said: "Oh, I don't mind, I like to walk in the rain." His response was: "Oh my goodness, what a cliché." She eventually became afraid to talk for fear he would dislike her words.



Tragically, the alienation of anti-hero Holden Caulfield has resonated with society's sociopaths. After assassinating John Lennon in 1980, Mark David Chapman was found by police casually thumbing through a copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Chapman later claimed that the novel was his statement and that it provided the answer to why he'd killed the legendary Beatle. In 1981, after John Hinckley Jr., attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan, investigators reportedly discovered a copy of the book in his hotel room. Hinckley was found not guilty by reason of insanity. And, in 1989, Robert John Bardo, who had been carrying the book, murdered Rebecca Schaeffer, an actress whom he had become obsessed with.

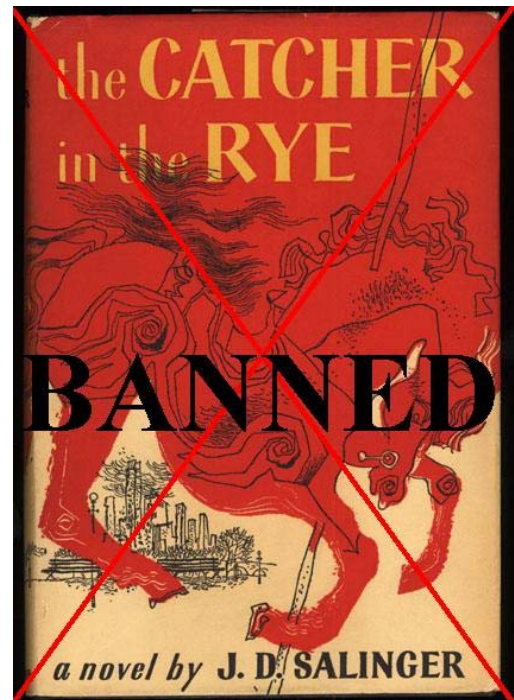


Salinger studied a number of religions during his lifetime, including Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian Science and Scientology. He also practiced yoga, homeopathy and macrobiotic eating, although his seeking may have taken an eccentric turn. According to his daughter Margaret's 2000 biography, her father drank urine and sat in an orgone box, a device invented by Wilhelm Reich, to restore health. Eccentric or not, his pursuit of healthy living may have worked—he died in 2010 at the age of 91.



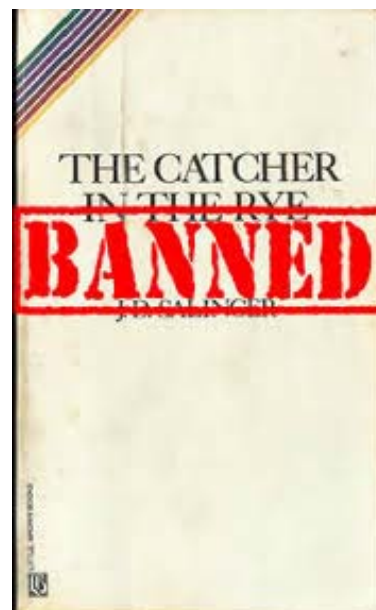
Facts about *The Catcher in the Rye*

In 1961, a teacher in Tulsa, OK, was fired for assigning the book to an 11th grade English class. “The teacher was [sic] appealed and was reinstated by the school board, but the book was removed from use in the school” (Sova 23).



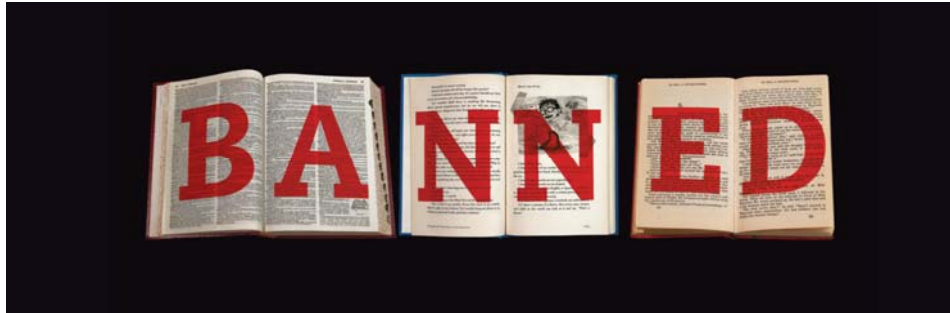
The banning continued...

- In 1965, *The Catcher in the Rye* is banned from a Brentwood, PA school. The superintendent said he was unsure if “the fifteen-year-old can take it.”
- This book was also the most frequently banned book in schools between 1966 and 1975. It was also the second most taught book in high schools.



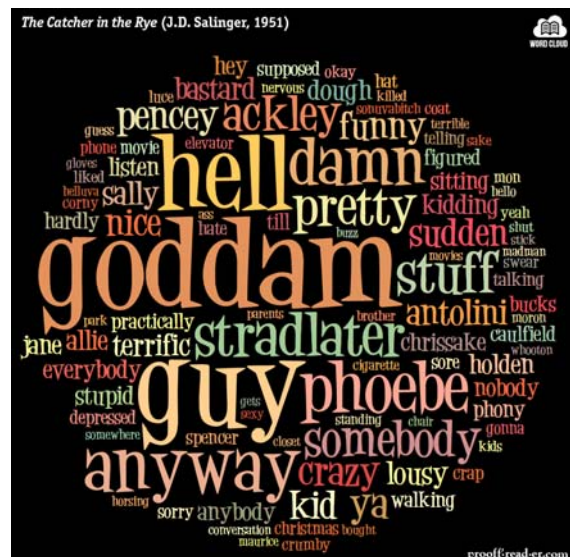
And continued...

- In 1977, parents of a girl in NJ fought, unsuccessfully, to have the book removed from curriculum, calling it “filthy” and “sex education.”
- In 1982, school officials removed the book from all school libraries because it contained ‘excess vulgar language, sexual scenes, and things concerning moral issues.’



And wait, it still continues...

- According to the Chicago-based American Library Association, the book was the 13th most frequently challenged book in the country's school systems from 1990 to 2000 (“Banned and/or Challenged books...”).
- In 2004, parents and the community in Noble High School in Maine argued against including the book in the curriculum.



Other banned books

Other books that have been challenged for being taught in schools:

- *Hamlet*
- *King Lear*
- *Tom Sawyer*
- *Huckleberry Finn*
- *Dr. Doolittle*
- *The Bible*
- *The Lord of the Flies*
- *A Clockwork Orange*
- *A Child Called It*



Here are still other books on the [top 100](#) most challenged books between 1990-2005.

- *Scary Stories* (Series) by Alvin Schwartz
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- *Harry Potter* (Series) by J.K. Rowling
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
- *Alice* (Series) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- ***The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger**
- *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- *Goosebumps* (Series) by R.L. Stine
- *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
- *Go Ask Alice* by Anonymous



STILL...

The Catcher in the Rye remains one of the most taught books in schools, as well as one of the most popular among teens and adolescents. It tells the story of a Holden Caulfield, who hates school, has been expelled and takes off to New York City for a few days.

Told from a first person viewpoint, *The Catcher in the Rye* depicts a young man's painful journey toward a coming of age.



Picture it...

Holden now (1949) at age 17 telling the story.

Holden, then, in
“madmen days,” 1948, at
age 16

The Catcher in the Rye

Background Information

- **Stream of consciousness:** In a literary context, a **technique** used to describe the narrative method where novelists **describe the unspoken thoughts and feelings of their characters without resorting to objective description or conventional dialogue.**
- Writing almost as one thinks.

J.D. Salinger

- Very elusive – little is known about life
- Born: January 1, 1919, Manhattan, New York City, New York, United States
- Died: January 27, 2010, Cornish, New Hampshire, United States

- The general view that Salinger is himself a sort of Holden Caulfield is understandable.
 - Grew up in NYC
 - Attended private high school in PA (Valley Forge Military Academy)
 - Failed out of college
 - Very good at “compositions,” like Holden’s character

- When asked in a 1953 interview if the story was autobiographical Salinger replied, “Sort of...My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book, and it was a great relief telling people about it.”

In-class Activity

- Put yourself into Holden's shoes. What would you do if you were expelled from school and knew that your parents would not know you were expelled for two days?
- Plan out those two days and please keep your responses school appropriate.

Works Cited

"Banned and/or Challenged Books from the Radcliffe Publishing Course Top 100 Novels of the 20th Century." 2005. 15 Sept.

2006. American Library Association. <<http://www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopresskits/bbbwpresskit/bannedchallenged.htm> >

Sova, Dawn B. *Banned Books: Suppressed on Social Grounds*. vol. 2. New York: Facts on File, 1998.

Holden's World

- The *Catcher in the Rye* was published at a time when the burgeoning American industrial economy made the nation prosperous and entrenched social rules served as a code of conformity for the younger generation:
 - First color newsreel shown by Warner Bros.
 - The United States Supreme Court rules that religious instruction in public schools violated the Constitution.
 - President Harry Truman signs the Marshall Plan which authorizes \$5 billion in aid for 16 countries after World War II
 - Arab-Israeli War: Egypt, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia attack Israel.

Holden's World (cont.)

- Cold War: The Berlin Blockade begins.
- Cold War: President Harry S. Truman issues the second peacetime military draft in the United States amid increasing tensions with the Soviet Union (the first peacetime draft occurred in 1940 under President Roosevelt).
- U.S. President signs Executive Order 9981, ending racial segregation in the United States Armed Forces.
- U.S. presidential election, 1948: Harry S. Truman defeats Thomas E. Dewey for the US presidency.