Catcher in the Rye Background

Salinger

* Raised in NYC (where the novel takes place)
* Served in WWII
* Best-known for *Catcher in the Rye*
* Did not like publicity. He did not want his picture on his novel and refused interviews.

Background Info

* Holden Caulfield, the narrator, begins his story in a mental institution where he is recovering from a recent breakdown
* The novel is a flashback of the events that led to his breakdown. He begins with the moments right before he left Pencey Prep, his boarding school

Terms to Know:

* Bildungsroman = coming-of-age story
* Quest narrative = character searches for truth, values and him/herself
* Frame story = story within a story
* Stream of Consciousness = narrator narrates whatever comes to mind
* Colloquial speech = slang, the way people really talk

Controversy

* *Catcher* is considered a controversial novel
* The challenges concerning its use in schools generally begin with Holden’s frequent use of vulgar language.
  + Other concerns include sexual references, blasphemy, undermining family values and moral codes, encouraging rebellion, promoting drinking, smoking, lying, and promiscuity
  + The challengers are often unfamiliar with the plot

Post Modernism

* 1950s to Present
* Concern for individual in isolation
* Discusses social issues
* Narrative