

*The Catcher in the Rye*  
The **BIG** Ideas  
Notes from class discussion

**Conflict:** (this is obviously just a sampling)

Internal

- When he's with Sunny the prostitute, Holden seems unsure/conflicted to become a "man" or to remain innocent/child-like.
- Encounter Mr. Antolini leaves him grappling whether to confront him or run away
- Holden feels uneasy around Mr. Spencer; He does not like to see Mr. Spencer old and sick; doesn't want to hear the teacher's admonishment. He'd rather leave the apartment.
- Graffiti around Phoebe's school makes him mad.

External

- Verbal exchange with Mr. Spencer
- Physical fight with Stradlater
- Physical fight with Maurice
- Date night argument with Sally after Holden calls her a "royal pain in the ass"

**Symbolism:**

Red Hat = security

Allie's baseball mitt = innocence of childhood; creativity

Central Park ducks = curiosity; unknowns

Museum = stability/stagnancy

Fencing Equipment = irresponsibility

Carousel = contentment

School graffiti = loss of innocence

Little Shirley Beans Record = innocence/loss of innocence

**Irony:**

- When Holden visits Sunny. She expects him to have sex with her and be paid for it. The opposite occurs when he just wants to talk
- Holden's parents and teachers have an expectation that because he attends high-end prep schools and is intelligent, he will be motivated, mature, and responsible. Instead, he seems to be exactly the opposite
- Society believes that adults should be wiser and know their true selves, but Holden sees adults as exactly the opposite of what society sees/expects. He sees adults as being less wise and more disingenuous.

**Significance of the title -**

*Remember that a title is usually chosen because it illuminates a motif or theme*

Protection

Innocence

**Possible Themes:**

\*Consider which ones are shared with other works covered throughout the term.

- We are often our own worst enemy \*
- The loss of innocence is an inevitability of life
- The hardships of life are inevitable \*
- There is a need for compassion and empathy in the world \*
- Ultimately, we are responsible for the decisions we make and the consequences \*