Catcher In The Rye-Summary

The Catcher In The Rye, by J.D. Salinger, is one of the classic novels of post-WWII American Literature, a coming-of-age tale that captures the alienation, confusion, and search for identity of adolescence. The story follows Holden Caulfield, a fifteen year old who thinks he’s smarter than he is, and believes himself to be surrounded by phonies, decrying the shallowness of the world. Holden knows he’s about to be kicked out of his fourth private school, and decides to leave early and spend the weekend in New York City on his own.

Holden desperately vacillates between seeking out contact and connections and retreating into the security of himself, wearing cynicism like a blanket. His interactions with others are awkward and often inappropriate, and he grows increasingly more outlandish in his behavior, and increasingly more isolated as each attempt at connection backfires. Confused by romance, adult interaction, and his lack of ability to find his own place in the world, his last connection to normalcy seems to be his little sister , who he adores alongside his “phoney” Hollywood writer older brother and the saintly ghost of his dead younger brother. It is his sister, Phoebe, who may hold the chance to save Holden from the self-destructive whirlpool he slips farther into with the passing of each day he spends on his own.

The Catcher In The Rye is set in the 1950’s, but its themes of alienation, of feeling alone in a crowd, and of confusion as to how to find one’s place in a world that seems so much bigger as an adult than it did as a child are universal and have resonated with readers of every generation since the novel was published.