

J.D. (Jerome David) Salinger (born 1919)

- Best known for *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
- Themes: strong yet delicate mind, loss of innocence, the redemptive capacity of children, alienation
- Salinger is also known for his reclusive nature and has not given an interview since '80 and has not published since '65.
- Amidst the publicity of a new story publication, Salinger quickly withdrew from the arrangement
- Took a lot of rejection from the New Yorker and hated *My Foolish Heart*, a film adaptation of his short story.
- Of his 35 published short stories, those which Salinger wishes to preserve are collected in *Nine Stories* (1953).
- His small literary output is a subject of controversy among critics. (Immaturity or a need for privacy?)
- Salinger grew up wealthy in NY City where the novel is set
- Went to private schools
- Served in WWII (interrogated prisoners of war & liberated a camp)
- Hospitalized for combat stress
- Became a Buddhist

The Novel

- Set in a “rest home”—novel is a flashback of 4 days in NY
- First person narrative—reliability? Slang & profanity.
- 50 characters. Siblings Allie, D.B. & Phoebe; teachers Mr. Antolini and Mr. Spencer; friends Ackley, Stradlater, Jane, Sally, & James Castle.

Trivia

- Salinger dated Oona O'Neill, before she became Chaplin's wife
- Met Hemingway in Europe; they became friends
- Sean Connery's character in *Finding Forester* (2000) is based on J.D. Salinger. Film attempts to answer the Salinger enigma.
- In the movie *The Good Girl* (2002), Jake Gyllenhaal plays a character named Holden constantly reading *Catcher in the Rye*.
- John Lennon's assassin was reading *Catcher in the Rye* and claimed it would explain the murder.