

# *The Catcher in the Rye*

by J.D. Salinger

# Salinger's Early Life

- The son of a prosperous foods importer, Jerome David Salinger was born in New York City on New Year's Day of 1919.



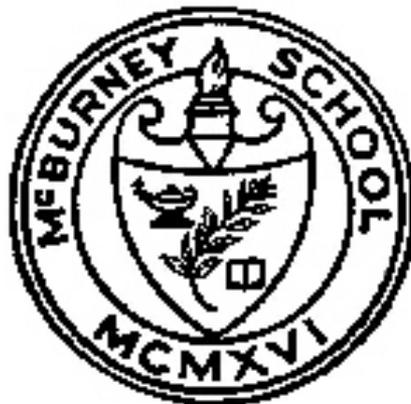
# Salinger's Early Life, continued



- Salinger's early ambition centered upon dramatics, showing “an innate talent for drama,” but this average student was consistently reported to be a quiet, polite, and somewhat solitary child.

# Salinger and School

- His parents enrolled him in McBurney School, a private institution in Manhattan, in 1932, and much like the fictionalized character in the novel, Holden Caulfield, he did not adjust well and constantly struggled with grades.



# Salinger and School, continued



- Concerned about their son's academic progress, the Salingers sent him to Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania when he was 15 years old.

# Salinger and School, continued

- There he became active in drama and singing clubs and demonstrated an interest in writing as he contributed to the school's yearbook and literary magazine, in which he published a poem that would later become the school's anthem.



# Salinger and School, continued

- Salinger did eventually graduate from the military academy and moved on to attend New York University, Ursinus College, and Columbia University. He continually withdrew from the colleges due to poor grades or lack of interest.



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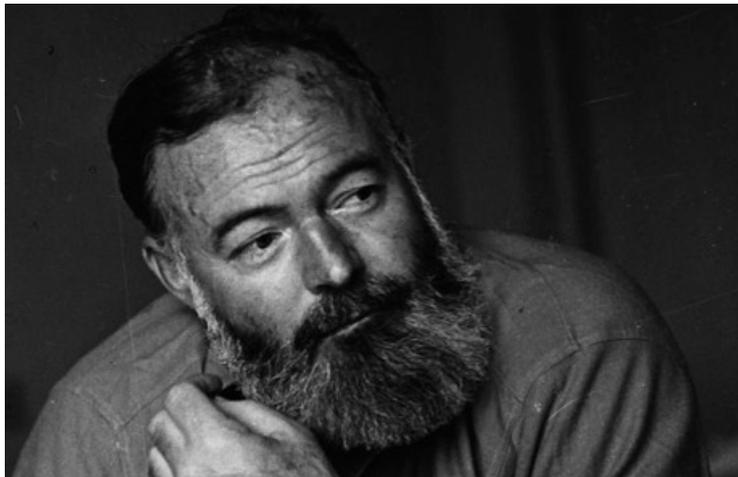
# Military Experience

- Salinger was drafted into the army in 1942, received counterintelligence training, landed on Utah Beach in Normandy during the D-day invasion on June 6, 1944, and participated in five campaigns in Europe, witnessing some of the heaviest fighting in the war.



# An Interesting Tangent

- Salinger arranged to meet Ernest Hemingway during World War II, and called their subsequent correspondence one of the few positive memories of his army life.

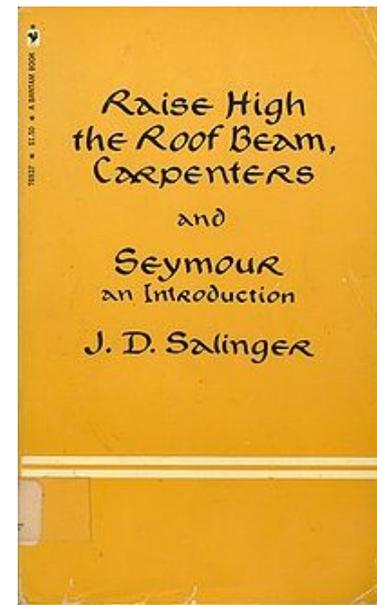
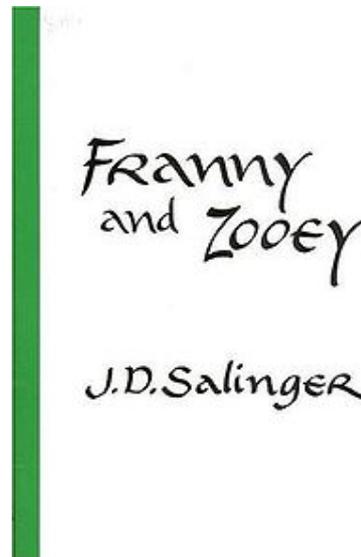
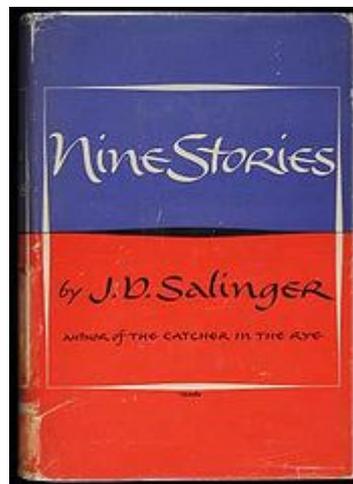
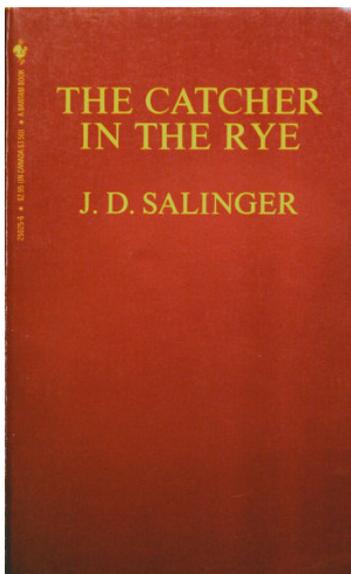


# Lasting Military Effects

- Salinger's experiences in war affected him emotionally. He was hospitalized for "combat stress reaction" and even later told his daughter "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live."

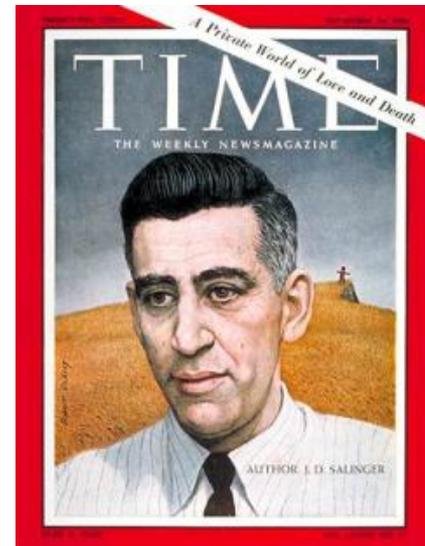
# Literary Career

- Until his recent death, Salinger had not been submitted a work for publication since 1965, and his actual published works are quite few for such a well known and respected American author.

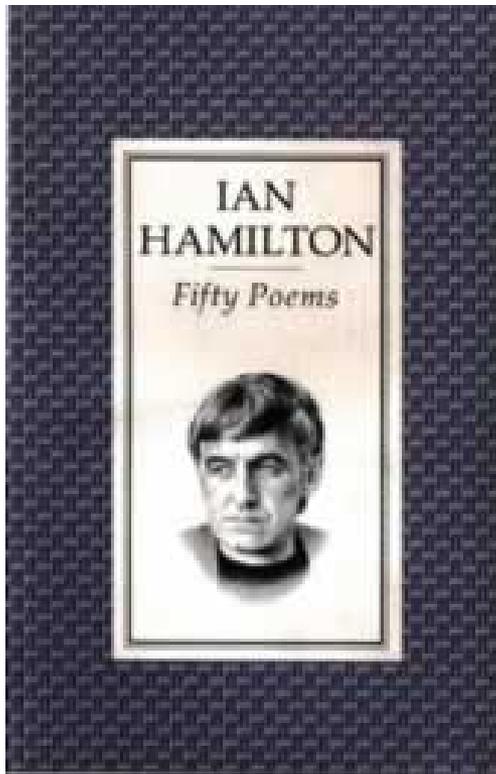


# Professional Notoriety

- Popularity gravely disturbed Salinger, and he became a recluse, living in Cornish, New Hampshire.
- He ordered his portrait removed from subsequent re-printings of *The Catcher in the Rye* saying of his popularity, "I found [it] hectic and professionally demoralizing."
- He refused all professional interviews for decades.



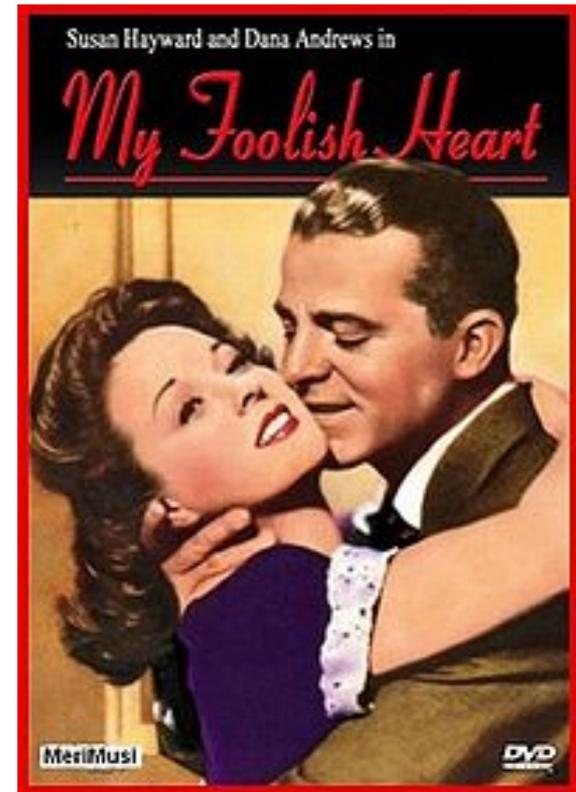
# Professional Notoriety, continued



- Citing infringement of copyright and invasion of privacy, he was granted a legal injunction against Ian Hamilton, who attempted, without success, to publish an unauthorized biography, using letters Salinger had written over the years to friends.

# Professional Notoriety, continued

- A film based on the short story, "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," was released in 1949. Although the film received generally favorable reviews, Salinger reportedly was so upset by the distortion of his theme that he vowed never to allow Hollywood to get hold of another piece of his work.



# Recently Deceased...New Works?

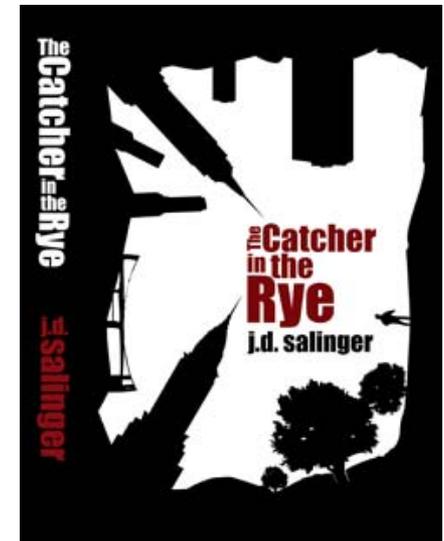
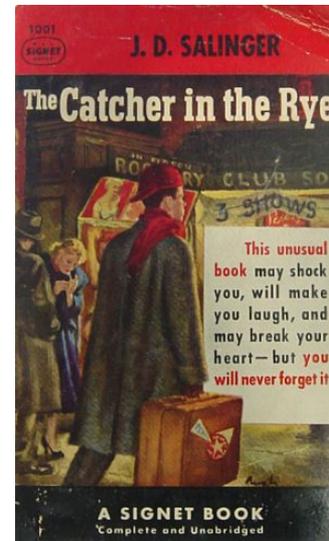
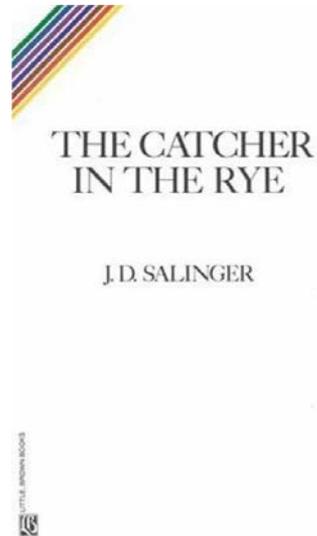
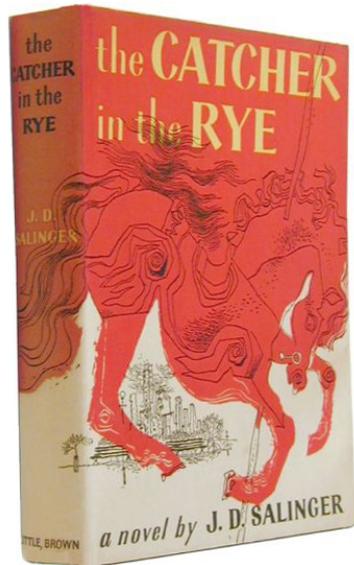
- According to ex-lover Joyce Maynard, Salinger still wrote daily until his death in January of 2010. He apparently kept his unpublished manuscripts locked safely away in a vault in his house.
- In a rare 1974 interview in the *New York Times*, he stated, "There is a marvelous peace in not publishing...I like to write. I love to write. But I write just for myself and my own pleasure." Furthermore, he saw publication as "a damned interruption."
- Daughter Margaret Salinger explained in her memoir *Dream Catcher* that her father has an intricate filing and labeling system for his unpublished manuscripts.

# *The Catcher in the Rye*

- *The Catcher in the Rye* is based on Holden Caulfield, a 17-year old high school junior. Recovering from a mental breakdown in a California rest home (read that "mental institution"), he narrates his decline the previous December following his expulsion from Pencey Prep, an exclusive prep school in Pennsylvania. Holden is expelled because he has failed four out of five classes, passing only English.

# The Catcher in the Rye

- *The Catcher in the Rye* is a frame story, or long flashback.



# Scholarly Reaction

- Reviews of the novel were mixed, ranging from out and out approval to questions about Salinger's attitude, his use of colloquial language (read that "profanity") the focus on an adolescent boy, and the sexual situations in the novel.



# Reader Reaction

- The main character captured the mood of a generation of high school and college students. Holden has become a symbol for misunderstood youth.



# Thematic Focus

- The innocence of childhood and the eventual loss of innocence.
- Coping with death and the loss of loved ones.
- The authentic and the artificial (“phoniness”).
- Sexual naiveté and confusion.