



Jury and Takemoto

## ME VERSUS THE WORLD: HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S REBELLION AGAINST "PHONINESS"

Seminar Leader: CHRISTOPHER JURY; House Leader: AYA TAKEMOTO

June 10th, 2014

### Course Description

In this seminar we will be discussing a very famous American novel called *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was written in 1951 by a young author called J. D. Salinger and won him lasting fame and the respect of millions of teenagers around the world. In the novel, a sixteen-year-old boy named Holden Caulfield, disgusted with all the lying and hypocrisy in the adult world, skips school and heads to New York City. After hitting bars, picking up a prostitute, and going to the zoo with his little sister, he cuts his story off. He writes to us from a mental institution where he has spent the last few months recuperating. Holden is a very funny guy, but almost as soon as he introduces himself he makes it clear that he is not happy. He is really annoyed at how dishonest the world is. He does not like it when people says things just out of empty courtesy, or pretend to understand when they really do not care at all. He calls this "phoniness". After reading the Japanese translation of the whole book, in class we will discuss select passages of the English text and look at Holden's criticism of humanity, his own personal problems and ultimately aim to think very carefully about what the book means for our own lives. What kind of life should we live? How do we manage conflicts between ambition, expectations, and our own heart?

### Message from the Seminar Leader

Hi guys! My name is Christopher Jury (most people call me Chris though), and right now I'm a freshman at Harvard College. I plan to major in East Asian Studies, focusing my studies on Japanese literature. I come from a small community in New Zealand and have never been to Japan before so I am really looking forward to this opportunity to finally experience it! In my spare time, I like to read, play the piano and hang out with my friends. I'm really excited by this chance to discuss *The Catcher in the Rye* with you. It's been one of my favourite books since I was fourteen. I'm ready to help you guys in any way I can with the language – as I totally understand how hard it is sometimes (the Japanese teachers always pick on me knowing I'll make a mess of things ☺). Particularly in this book given it has so much 1950s slang and informal language! I would love to chat with you guys before the program so feel free to get in contact with me about anything, Catcher in the Rye-related or not, at .



## Message from the House Leader

Hello everyone! My name is Aya Takemoto and I am a senior at Sophia University studying management, but at the moment I'm in Reading, United Kingdom, as an exchange student. My hometown is in the countryside near Osaka and I like Reading's similar small town atmosphere. At Reading University I am studying politics. At first glance, politics and management seem like quite different disciplines, but they actually share some of the same principles. Though it took me time to realise this and I am still struggling with new subject, I am now enjoying it. I listen to music in my spare time and enjoy playing the piano – and even in the UK I discovered the practice rooms in different campuses ☺ I am very excited to visit Komatsu this summer and make this seminar interesting together with you guys. *The Catcher in the Rye* is a fascinating book. I often felt like I was reading about my own thoughts! Hope you enjoy reading the novel and I am looking forward to seeing you. Please feel free to send an email if there is anything you would like to know.

## Pre-Assignments

- Salinger, J. D. キャッチャー・イン・ザ・ライ、訳：村上春樹。白水社 (2003) <sup>1</sup>
- Selections from “The Catcher in the Rye” and Miles Franklin’s “My Brilliant Career” in English collected in a booklet that will be provided, entitled *Imagining and Remembering Holden Caulfield*. Approximately 8 A4 pages of English reading.
- Seminar Worksheet.

## Course Schedule

### Day 1: *Frustration and Disgust: Holden Caulfield and His Problems with the World*

To start things off, we will be reviewing the book's plot and making sure everyone has a good grasp of the characters and Holden's adventures. We will be talking about our feelings about the book. We will then look at the book's opening and Holden's conversations with his history teacher and his room-mates. Why does Holden get so frustrated with them?

### Day 2: *Desire and Disappointment: Holden's Search for Consolation*

Holden is unhappy with the world, and he heads to New York to try and find some way out of his unhappiness. We will talk about Holden's efforts to reach out to friends and acquaintances. What is behind all his phone calls and his meetings with stranger after stranger? Why is he never satisfied after these meetings?

### Day 3: *Conflict and Confusion: Holden's Problems with Himself*

It's easy to love Holden and hate the world he criticizes—but he's not perfect. We will talk about the problems that emerge in Holden's own psychology. Are these problems responsible for his unsatisfying relationships? Do they undermine his criticisms of the adult world?

---

<sup>1</sup>Students will be reimbursed upon arrival to KSS for buying their own copy of this book beforehand.



**Day 4: *Redemption***

On the final day, we will think about *The Catcher in the Rye* as a piece of evidence about human life. It contains information about how we might come to see other people, and information about internal struggles we might ourselves have. It contains relationships and feelings we might ourselves be dealing with. At the end of the novel, Holden comes to no philosophical resolution: but do we? In the face of the evidence the book provides, how do we respond to the challenge of living? How do our reflections on Holden's problems affect our feelings about life in general?

We will look at the conclusions reached by a totally different teenager, a girl from rural Australia, at the end of Miles Franklin's famous novel *My Brilliant Career* and see how these compare with what we feel after reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. Does Sybylla (the main character) present a mature solution to the problems Holden poses?