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JORDAN, Joseph William, 1916—
J. D. SALINGER AS A WRITER OF FICTION FOR
STUDENTS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1962
Education, theory and practice

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1963
J. D. SALINGER AS A WRITER OF FICTION
FOR
STUDENTS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Joseph William Jordan, B. S., M. A.

The Ohio State University
1962

Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
- To -

My Father and Mother,

William Clifton Jordan

and

Esther Craig Jordan
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Wilfred Eberhart for his guidance, interest, and encouragement these last two years during the course of my graduate study.

My wife and sons deserve recognition for their selflessness in agreeing that I should complete the graduate program.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

J. D. (Jerome David) Salinger was practically unknown as a writer prior to 1951, the year his novel *The Catcher in the Rye* was published. By 1959 Arthur Mizener could, with some degree of certainty, say of him that he was "probably the most avidly read author of any serious pretensions in his generation."\(^1\) *The Catcher in the Rye* effectively captured the public fancy and his reputation has gained steadily with the publication of *Nine Stories* (1953) and *Franny and Zooey* (1961). Young college students particularly have felt that Salinger is speaking for them, making their thoughts articulate. But his appeal is not limited to the adolescent and to the immediately post-adolescent person; he appeals also to the mature minds of adults, college and university professors, literary critics, and high school teachers. Salinger's hold on the American reading public is phenomenal. He is, as Alfred Kazin stated in 1961, rather a special case in American

writing, so much has he been read, discussed, and analyzed. Salinger is not unanimously acclaimed as a distinguished writer, however, for he has been castigated for example by those who do not see eye to eye with him as to his use of language. But his reputation as a controversial author has served him well in selling books and in making him almost a legendary figure. Salinger has maintained his eminence in contemporary American writing for so long because his fiction has substance. Paul Levine notes his depth of thought:

Without bowing to the public opiates of sex, violence, and depravity, without assuming the popular poses of the "beat" or the blase he has quietly managed to present with humor and compassion the most significant and complex moral problems we face today.  

On the dust-jacket of *Franny and Zooey* (1961), Salinger says,

It is my rather subversive opinion that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second-most valuable property on loan to him during his working years. My wife has asked me to add, however, in a single explosion of candor, that I live in Westport with my dog.

Salinger has guarded his "anonymity-obscurity" so well that he is now impossible to see, much less interview. And he does not live in Westport; his home is in a rural area not

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far from Cornish, New Hampshire. Ernest Haveman in the
November 3, 1961, issue of Life magazine states that he
tried diligently but unsuccessfully to meet Salinger; he
peeked through fences and drove around the countryside and
into Cornish in the hope of meeting him. Salinger is a
recluse-with-family and his gate is closed to every
stranger. His family and friends cooperate with him in
preserving his privacy. Harvey Swados, a literary critic
and novelist, suggests that one reason for Salinger's
popularity is that he has become a "character" because of
his inaccessibility to his public; because of this reputa-
tion, Swados feels, he is too highly touted by critics
and too much revered by his readers. Swados points up
Salinger's small output and seems to say that attention
given to Salinger is out of proportion to the work he has
produced. Swados seems also to assume that Salinger wants
to be a "character," but he offers no proof for this
assumption. Writing does not seem to come easily for
Salinger; his staying out of the public view would appear
to be a necessity for him in order to maintain production
of the calibre that has made him famous.

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3Harvey Swados, "Must Writers be Characters?" Saturday Review, October 1, 1960, pp. 12, 13-14, 50.
Very little of Salinger's life is positively known; however, Time magazine for September 15, 1961, set forth what it could uncover. Salinger was born on New Year's Day, 1919, in New York City, to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. The father, Sol Salinger, is an importer of hams and cheeses. Called Sonny in his early days, Salinger attended public schools in Manhattan's Upper West Side. His IQ of 104 was certainly much under the IQ's of the Glass children of his stories who rate as geniuses and have pursued successful careers as children on the radio quiz show, "It's a Wise Child." When he was thirteen young Jerome was enrolled in Manhattan's McBurney School but a year later he was flunked out. At fifteen he was sent to Valley Forge Military Academy, a school similar to Pencey Prep of The Catcher in the Rye, but unlike Holden Caulfield, he received a diploma. In 1937 he spent a few weeks at New York University and then went with his father for several months to Bydgoszcz, Poland, to learn the ham business. After returning to America he entered Columbia University to take a short story course under Whit Burnett, editor of Story. He was drafted in 1942.

By 1944, the author was stationed in Tiverton, Devonshire, training with a small counterintelligence detachment of the 4th Infantry Division—almost exactly the situation of Sergeant X, the tormented hero of the warmest and best of the Nine Stories, For Esme—With Love and Squalor (the author, like Sergeant X, passed the time by
listening to choir practice at a Methodist church in Tiverton). On June 6, five hours after the first assault forces hit Utah Beach, Salinger landed with the 4th in Normandy, stayed with the division through the Battle of the Bulge. He was an aloof, solitary soldier whose job was to discover Gestapo agents by interviewing French civilians and captured Germans. In France, Staff Sergeant Salinger had an audience with War Correspondent Ernest Hemingway, who read Salinger's work and, possibly in appreciation of it ("Jesus, he has a helluva talent"), took out his Luger and shot the head off a chicken. Salinger used a similar incident in *Esme*.4

In 1946 Salinger lived with his parents on Park Avenue. He studied Zen Buddhism and spent much time, with many dates, in Greenwich Village. He moved to Tarrytown, then to Westport, then finally to Cornish, N. H. In 1953 he met Claire Douglas but he did not marry her until 1955. Within these two years she was both married and divorced; Salinger had been married unsuccessfully, while overseas, to a woman physician. By his present wife he has two children, Matthew, two and a half, and Peggy, six years of age.

In 1959, for Harper's magazine, Salinger wrote:

> I've written biographical notes for a few magazines, and I doubt if I ever said anything honest in them. . . .

> I've been writing seriously for over ten years. Being modest almost to a fault, I won't say I'm a born writer, but I'm certainly a born professional. I don't think I ever selected writing as a career. I just started to write when I was eighteen or so and I never stopped. (Maybe that isn't quite true.

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Maybe I did select writing as a profession. I don't really remember--I got into it so quickly--and finally.)
I was with the Fourth Division during the war.
I almost always write about very young people.5

In this sketch Salinger states that he does not "care to know a writer's birthplace, his children's names, his working schedule, the date of his arrest for smuggling guns (the gallant rogue!) during the Irish Rebellion."
Salinger's role as hermit does not appear to be a pose; solitude, for much of his life, has been preferable to sociability.

Early in 1957 David L. Stevenson wrote that although Salinger is the complete professional, a rarity among contemporary writers, he nevertheless "has remained outside the interest of our seriously dedicated critics."6 Compare with this observation the one made by Harvey Swados in October of 1960, quoted earlier in this chapter that too much, perhaps more than he deserves, is being written about Salinger. It is true that before 1957 it was difficult to build much of a bibliography on Salinger; however, from 1958 to the present, critics appear to have

5"J. D. Salinger-Biographical," Harper's, CCXVIII (February, 1959), p. 86.

begun to subject him to serious scrutiny. As yet not many interpretations of Salinger's fiction have been written for the scholarly quarterlies, and currently, what is written is mildly suspicious of Salinger's genius. Leslie Fiedler speaks of Salinger's descent in "Franny" toward "middle-brow bathos" and in "Zooey" there are the "linked ventriloquist's dummies of the three brothers, who seem sometimes only three versions of the single author. . . ."7 Fiedler does not have the same high opinion of "Franny" and "Zooey" (1961) which he first held upon reading them separately in the New Yorker in 1955 and 1957.

Alfred Kazin in 1959 said,

Salinger's work is a perfect example of the lean reserves of the American writer who is reduced to "personality," even to the "mystery of personality," instead of the drama of our social existence. . . . Only, it is thin, and peculiarly heartbreaking at times; Salinger identifies the effort he puts out with the vaguely spiritual "quest" on which his characters are engaged, which reminds me of Kierkegaard's saying that we have become "pitiful," like the lace-makers whose work is so flimsy. The delicate balances in Salinger's work, the anxious striving, inevitably result in beautiful work that is rather too obviously touching, and put together on a frame presented to it by the New Yorker.8


Kazin, writing again in *The Atlantic* in 1961, does not revise his earlier evaluation, *per se*, but he does concentrate on some Salinger strengths, and the "pitiful" aspect of Salinger's writing is not reiterated in the article.

In one form or another, as a fellow novelist commented unlovingly, Salinger is "everybody's favorite." He is certainly a favorite of the *New Yorker*, which in 1959 published another long story around the Glass family called "Seymour: An Introduction" (almost 30,000 words), and thus gave the impression [see previous quotation from Kazin] of stretching and remaking itself to Salinger's latest stories, which have been appearing, like visits from outer-space, at two-year intervals. But above all, he is a favorite with that audience of students, student intellectuals, instructors, and generally literary, sensitive, and sophisticated young people who respond to him with a consciousness that he speaks for them and virtually to them, in a language that is peculiarly honest and their own, with a vision of things that captures their most secret judgments of the world. . . . A fundamental reason for Salinger's appeal (like that of Hemingway in the short stories that made him famous) is that he has exciting professional mastery of a peculiarly charged and dramatic medium, the American short story.⁹

On the one hand, Salinger's talents as a writer come under fire and on the other hand he is lauded as a consummate artist. Probably the air will not clear for a number of years and then only can we be sure if he is a minor writer, albeit a brilliant one, or a master craftsman whose work will endure.

Dan Wakefield, writing on "Salinger and the Search for Love," says,

Salinger is the only new writer to emerge in America since the second world war who is writing on what has been the grandest theme of literature: the relationship of man to God, or the lack of God.10

Granville Hicks, writing on "J. D. Salinger: Search for Wisdom," says of The Catcher in the Rye that Holden Caulfield is a seeker after wisdom: he is not rejecting adultism and maturity but he is sensitive enough to be aware that there must be a better model than his elders have presented to him. "That Salinger can make the search for wisdom seem important to large numbers of young people is not exactly cause for alarm.11

Students in high school will probably not read much if any of Salinger's fiction that remains uncollected. From 1940 to 1948 he wrote twenty stories, not collected, which appeared in Story, Collier's, Esquire, Saturday Evening Post, Mademoiselle, Good Housekeeping, and the New Yorker. These stories do not show the craftsmanship and finesse of those included in Nine Stories; Salinger was


learning his art and was not yet free of the self-consciousness of the apprentice writer. Two stories which conceivably might be read by students interested in the characterization of Seymour Glass, the eldest of the Glass children, are "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" (1955) and "Seymour--An Introduction" (1959), but the fact that probably very few school libraries subscribe to the New Yorker magazine wherein these stories were published, would be discouragement enough for students not to read them. The Salinger books most easily and inexpensively read by high school students are The Catcher in the Rye, Nine Stories, and Franny and Zooey. The first two books are in paperback and it is probable that Franny and Zooey will appear in paperback within two years of its publication as a "novel" in 1961. In the interest of usefulness to high school English teachers, based upon a realistic estimate of student reading, this dissertation limits the discussion of Salinger's fiction to the above three books. These books comprise the best of Salinger's fiction and even the reading of one or two of them will be about all that an English class would customarily do with the works of one author.

This dissertation has concentrated on the meanings to be derived from Salinger's fiction. The mechanics and technique of the short story, for example, have remained unemphasized in favor of the interpretation of a particular
story. What are the important ideas which The Catcher carries, or what is this business of the Jesus Prayer in "Franny"? The doctrine of non-attachment is basic to a more complete understanding of "Zooey"; furthermore, the doctrine teaches a whole way of life which, if practiced, probably could lessen the number of neurotics and psychotics in the United States today. Man, in allowing himself to become so completely enslaved by the external pushes and pulls of his environment, loses his sense of personal direction and is confused by the world around him. C. G. Jung says,

Just as man, as a social being, cannot in the long run exist without a tie to the community, so the individual will never find the real justification for his existence, and his own spiritual and moral autonomy, anywhere except in an extra-mundane principle capable of relativizing the overpowering influence of external factors.12

Jung's extramundane principle for himself is God, but a valid "principle capable of relativizing the overpowering influence of external factors" can just as effectively for some persons be the principle of non-attachment which is discussed in detail in this dissertation in Chapter V, "Zooey." Jung further says,

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12 from The Undiscovered Self by C. G. Jung, copyright 1957, 1958 by C. G. Jung, by permission of Atlantic-Little, Brown and Company, p. 34.
For every manifest case of insanity there are, in my estimation, at least ten latent cases who seldom get to the point of breaking out openly but whose views and behavior, for all their appearance of normality, are influenced by unconsciously morbid and perverse factors.13

Zooey, in advocating the doctrine of non-attachment for Franny, saves her from just these "morbid and perverse factors" which, in her case, had become conscious and which in time might cause her complete breakdown. In the story "Teddy," the ten-year-old boy sees the foolishness of his father who becomes emotional while merely reading the newspaper. The interpretation of Teddy's reaction is facilitated if Salinger's adherence to the principle of non-attachment is known.

Teachers of high school English likely will know more about how a good short story is constructed than about Eastern philosophy. This dissertation emphasizes explication of the philosophy where appropriate, again with the teacher's needs and those of his class being taken into consideration. Some of the ideas will be new to the students; through fiction they can meet the ideas in a pleasing context. The fiction will stimulate discussion which will contribute to the students' education. The theory of reincarnation, for example, is widely held

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13 Ibid., p. 13.
throughout much of the world. Students may be prompted to investigate further the theory of reincarnation, or theories of concentration, or techniques for gaining greater self-knowledge. They may be prompted to investigate their own psyches, and some may even eventually make substantial contribution to the understanding and knowledge of psychology. The East has a challenging psychology which, if analyzed and examined by the West, could advance Western psychology immeasurably. Students might be prompted to study Eastern psychology to see what it holds for them.

The thesis of this dissertation is that Salinger's fiction is worthy of study by senior high school students. This thesis, of course, needs qualification in that not all school systems and communities will agree that Salinger is a suitable writer because they will find vulgar language, allusions to the sexual relationship, and irreverence toward the Deity and toward established religion. One can hardly open The Catcher in the Rye to a place where a "goddam" does not immediately catch the eye. If for those persons the absence of "goddams" is a criterion for a good book, then there will be very little the English teacher can do to change their minds. In these school systems Salinger's fiction is regarded as inappropriate for study by senior high school students, and that practically settles the matter. In time, perhaps, if The Catcher is
universally accepted as a classic to be read along with other classics such as *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Huckleberry Finn*, then it will have triumphed over a prudery which is not honest in that it forestalls investigation into what the book is really about: life, love, and the pursuit of happiness. Because Salinger's fiction is ultimately wholesome, genuinely artistic, and generally optimistic, it should not be overlooked at the proper level for the contribution it can make to pupils' thinking.

It is impossible to designate which grade in high school can study *The Catcher* or any of the stories with profit. A few ten-year-old boys might read of ten-year-old Teddy with some degree of understanding. Some twelfth year students would derive nothing from "Zooey." Most eleventh and twelfth year students with help from the teacher, should enjoy *Nine Stories*, and practically all of these students, without help from the teacher, could read *The Catcher*. The teacher needs to be on hand as consultant and resource person to guide students toward making the right turns in their interpretation. *Franny and Zooey* should probably not be attempted below the eleventh grade. In schools where the policy of grouping is in effect, capable classes in the ninth and tenth year could conceivably handle most of Salinger's fiction, but it would be wiser to postpone this reading until the eleventh and twelfth year since
younger adolescents should not prematurely be exposed to language and ideas to which they may not as yet have been introduced by their contemporary society. The teacher and school officials need to weigh carefully student maturity and readiness before they sanction The Catcher for any specific class use. The teacher, in his eagerness to be liberal and modern, must not become thereby blinded to the best interests of the class which has been entrusted to him for proper education. Even though a parent might suggest that The Catcher would be a good book for his child to study in English class, the teacher might disagree, knowing the child to be immature; the mere virtue of parenthood does not concomitantly insure wisdom on behalf of the offspring.

The teacher may wish to place Salinger on the list of books for students' free reading activities. It would be wise to place Salinger in the category of mature fiction. If the free reading list is properly annotated by the teacher, he can assume that students understand that their reading is primarily their responsibility, especially with regard to the listings of mature fiction. Individual copies of the free reading list of books can be given to each student with the suggestion that he show the list to his parents for any suggestion they might wish to make concerning such books as Salinger's. The free reading of students is important to their education; it is their
chance to satisfy their reading appetites by extending their interests and by having the freedom to concentrate on favorite topics and themes if they so desire.
CHAPTER II

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

Holden Caulfield, the narrator and principal character in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye says early in the novel:

What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though.1

Many people regard Salinger as a "terrific friend." It is fortunate for him that they cannot call him up whenever they feel like it. In 1951, even before The Catcher was published on July 16, Salinger went to Europe to escape publicity. By January, 1961, The Catcher had, in the United States alone, sold well over a million and a half copies, of which a million and a quarter were in paper-bound form. Since it was reprinted as a paperback in 1953, the novel has been adopted for required or supplementary reading lists in colleges, universities, and secondary

schools across the nation. It is used variously in
English, psychology, and sociology courses, but some
professors do not make it required reading because they
have noted that a majority of their students already have
read it. Primarily because of The Catcher, Salinger is
probably the writer most avidly read by students in this
generation. The novel is the kind of book which some high
school students will have read before their teachers and
will have recommended to their teachers as good reading.
In spite of the fact that the novel is so colloquial and so
"American," it has been translated and has sold well in
Finland, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Israel, and
Great Britain.

Salinger allowed The Book-of-the-Month Club to make
the novel one of its selections; he refused to allow any
book clubs to distribute Franny and Zooey (1961) and yet so
great is Salinger's hold upon his public that the sale of
Franny and Zooey has not suffered for lack of book club
sponsorship. The Catcher has become a part of American
literature; it has moved and amused a school and college
generation because these young readers have experienced the
shock and thrill of recognition; Salinger has written a
novel which pulls the reader into personal identification,
which stimulates awareness of self and society, and which
challenges appraisal of its artistry. It is significant that Salinger has not needed "help" from the movies, or from television to cause his books to be read. His fiction has stood on its own merits.

Just as the novel has been banned in Australia and in South Africa for short periods of time, so has it been placed off limits in some parts of the United States by parents, teachers, school officials, police departments, librarians, and by congressmen. The language of the novel is perhaps the prime objection, but with very few exceptions, such as reviewers for The Catholic World and The Christian Science Monitor, critics at the time of its publication found that its use of the vernacular was an accurate, true, and authentic rendering of Northeastern American adolescent colloquial speech. Actually, Holden Caulfield shows considerable restraint in his use of vulgarisms and does not allow himself the full freedom to use a number of obscene terms that are widely employed by adolescents. The National Council of Teachers of English publication, Books for You, a list for leisure reading for use by students in senior high schools, includes The Catcher in the Rye; the entry is starred to indicate that the book is judged by the Committee on the Senior High School Book List "to be more mature in content and style" than the other listings not marked thus. The sanction of
The National Council of Teachers of English will not be enough inducement in all communities to permit use of the novel in English classes. Someone has said that the hardest thing in the world to open is a closed mind; the English teacher might like to use The Catcher but strong opposition, even on grounds of prejudice and unfair evaluation, may preclude this possibility. If the teacher is eager to change the opinions of those who would prohibit him from teaching the novel, he might schedule discussion periods with objectors for the purpose of attempting to make an honest evaluation of the novel. Many objections to The Catcher are raised because persons flip through the pages, see a profane or vulgar expression, and decide the book is bad. At the time of publication, of the two hundred newspaper and magazine reviews hardly more than twenty were perceptive, intelligent, or accurate. Holden was called Homer; his age was given as fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen, and the time covered by the novel was from three to five days. If professionals have not read the book closely enough to discover its essence, the English teacher is expecting too much of parents and other members of the opposition to assume that they have gone deeper than the colloquial language.

The Catcher is a distinguished novel. High school students like it. The novel could serve as basis for a
thoughtful discussion of life problems in the classroom. The book really needs little in the way of recommendation not only because it has sold itself to thousands of students, but also because the reasons why it is worth reading can be set forth readily.

*The Catcher in the Rye* reads rapidly; it has the magnetic power of holding the reader until the end. Its unpretentious length (less than two hundred pages in the paperback edition) is a point in its favor, particularly with high school students, most of whom no doubt would rather read three or four shorter novels than one long novel having the equivalent number of pages. A rapid reading of *The Catcher* gives one the surface narrative without any difficulty. A sixteen-year-old boy, Holden Caulfield, has just been dismissed from his third prep school for failing four of his five subjects. It is Saturday before Christmas vacation and although he should follow the school calendar and wait until Wednesday to go home, he decides to go to New York City to stay in a hotel, then on Wednesday to go the few blocks to his parents' apartment and face up to their indignation and disappointment at his latest failure in school. Holden is the narrator of his adventures at Pencey Prep and in New York City. At the time he tells the story he is in California where he has been sent for psychiatric treatment; this is
sometime after the Christmas season. The novel is full of humor, the scene changes constantly, and the student's identification with Holden's obvious problems is easy and effortless. If this one level were all there was to the book, the novel would perhaps have had transient popularity and then been quickly forgotten; but this is not the case—the book has evoked serious comment from writers and critics who see much more meaning in: than is immediately obvious.

In 1958, at the University of Virginia, William Faulkner, then perhaps the greatest living American writer, made the following statement about the novel:

I have not read all the work of this present generation of writing; I have not had time yet. So I must speak only of the ones I do know. I am thinking now of what I rate the best one: Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, perhaps because this one expresses so completely what I have tried to say: a youth, father to what will, must someday be a man, more intelligent than some and more sensitive than most, who (he would not even have called it by instinct because he did not know he possessed it) because God perhaps had put it there, loved man and wished to be a part of mankind, humanity, who tried to join the human race and failed. To me, his tragedy was not that he was, as he perhaps thought, not tough enough or brave enough or deserving enough to be accepted into humanity. His tragedy was that when he attempted to enter the human race, there was no human race there. There was nothing for him to do save buzz, frantic and inviolate, inside the glass walls of his tumbler until he either gave up or was himself by himself, by his own frantic buzzing, destroyed.2

2Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (ed.), Faulkner in the University (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 244.
It is the deeper levels of the book which need probing by the high school English teacher to help his students understand that the novel is much more than the bizarre and picaresque adventures of a youth their own age in a city which is a fabulous and exciting place even to some who live there. When Holden tries to join the human race, a contest takes place: Holden versus the human race, Holden trying to make contact with the human race, to apply for membership, and the human race blackballing him so that he is kept outside. If there is no human race, as Faulkner suggests, then indeed it is tragic for Holden to want this contact with a non-entity. It means then that Holden himself is the representative of the human race trying to find others with his common denominator of sympathy, compassion, and honesty. This is a provoking problem: who, finally needs the psychoanalysis, society or Holden? This depends upon who is "right"—society or Holden. As the story is read, there is little difficulty determining the answer: Holden has the reader in his corner perhaps all the way. Faulkner is speaking of "humans" as a race of people higher on the ladder of ethical and moral development than those possessed of more animalistic tendencies—men closer to gods than to demons. Faulkner defines what he means a little more clearly as he continues to speak of Holden:
But his story was an intelligent, very sensitive young man [sic] who was—in this day and time was an anachronism, was almost an obsolescence, trying to cope with a struggle with the present-day world which he was not fitted for, when he didn't want money, he didn't want position, anything, he just wanted to find man and wanted something to love, and he couldn't. There was nothing there. The nearest he came to it was his sister who was a child and though she tried to love him she couldn't understand his problem. The only other human beings he ran into he has preconceptions to doubt—the teacher which could have helped him, and he suddenly began to suspect the teacher's motives. 3

A point about which there is some confusion in the writings of some critics relates to Holden's adolescence. He is an adolescent boy but partly because he is an adolescent, not completely captured by and held slave to adulthood, he can see through much of the sham of adult life. An adolescent should not summarily be disqualified as a judge of adult life simply because his chronological age indicates that he is too young to be called an adult; his sensitivity and perceptiveness may qualify him to judge, maturely, adult life. 4 If Holden sees dishonesty in the adults around him, his perception cannot be ruled invalid merely because he is an adolescent. Of course he

3 Ibid., pp. 246-247.

must remain an adolescent in much of his activity: he con-
demns phoniness wherever he finds it, yet he employs
pretense in buying drinks; he is disgusted that the three
girls from Seattle, whom he casually meets in the Lavender
Room of his hotel intend going to Radio City Music Hall,
yet he goes there himself the next day; he hates lies, yet
he does not hesitate to tell the elevator boy in his apart-
ment building that he is going to visit the Dirksteins when
this is not true. Holden is neither consistently adult nor
adolescent; his erratic behavior is a hallmark of adoles-
cence. It is to Salinger's credit that he has created this
character who is six feet two and one-half inches tall, who
grew six and one-half inches the preceding year, who is
sixteen years of age, and with about "a million gray hairs,"
and who with all of his adolescent faults, is still more of
an adult in some ways than his teachers, his parents, and
other grownups with whom it is his lot to live. Condemning
him for being an adolescent is like blaming an egg for not
being a chicken. Holden, like the egg, has a lot of growing
to do, but primarily in attitudes of tolerance toward his
contemporaries; the novel is about this boy who cannot
honestly sacrifice his mature and adult perceptions of the
world in which he lives in order to adopt the world's
immature and adolescent values and behavior.
Like Zooey in the "Zooey" story, he no doubt will come to feel that how people think and act is none of his business. He will leave behind, as part of his adolescence, his unwarranted personal concern for the "flitty-looking Tattersall vest" the fellow at the next table is wearing. This conjecture is based upon his psychological growth which he has achieved by the end of the novel. He may be under the care of a psychoanalyst but psychoanalysis has not saved him; he has saved himself from disintegration and collapse before the analyst got him.

When the novel opens, Holden is at Pencey Prep alone on top of Thomsen Hill, which overlooks the stadium where a football game is being played. He is not attending the game because he is on his way to see Mr. Spencer, the history teacher, and also because he had just returned from New York with the fencing team. During the trip back he was alone because he was ostracized by the fencing team for having left all of the fencing equipment on the subway. Holden is alone, if not physically, at least psychologically, most of the time in the novel. The visit with old Spencer is quite typical of the breakdown in communication between Holden and other persons. Spencer says, "Life is a game, boy. Life is a game that one plays according to the rules."
Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game all right—I'll admit that. But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's a game about it? Nothing. No game.  

Spencer reads Holden's examination paper to him along with the note which Holden had written on the paper.

He put my goddam paper down then and looked at me like he's just beaten hell out of me in ping-pong or something. I don't think I'll ever forgive him for reading me that crap out loud. I wouldn't've read it out loud to him if he'd written it—I really wouldn't. In the first place, I'd only written that damn note so that he wouldn't feel too bad about flunking me.  

Spencer is bullying the boy, trying to be certain that he was justified in flunking Holden. Holden had freely told Spencer at the time of the examination that his failure was justified. Holden chafes at the injustice of the bullying, but,

I felt sorry as hell for him, all of a sudden. . . I sort of put my hand on his shoulder. "Okay?" I said.  

The teacher and the pupil have changed places; Holden has ended the visit by trying to console Spencer because the old man has shown his impotency in trying to help Holden.

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5 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 11.


7 Ibid., p. 17.
Who is the adolescent and who is the adult? The episode is written with beautiful irony which yet does not violate its verisimilitude.

Back at the dorm while reading Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* Holden puts on his red hunting cap, with the peak turned around to the back, which, he admits, is "very corny." Isak Dinesen, along with Ring Lardner, Holden's brother, D. B. (before he went to Hollywood), and Thomas Hardy, is not a phony author in Holden's opinion, as is Hemingway. When the repulsive senior in the next room, Robert Ackley, sees Holden's hat he says it is a deer shooting hat.

"Like hell it is. . . . This is a people shooting hat," I said. "I shoot people in this hat."

Holden's statement looks two directions, as the reader is aware upon finishing the novel. Here, early in the novel, he is referring to his war with the human race, to the Spencers, to the phonies at Pencey Prep. Later when he wants to become the catcher in the field of rye, to catch little children before they fall over "some crazy cliff," his whimsical desire to shoot people has changed to the desire to save them. When he wears the hat backward he looks like a catcher—a baseball catcher, perhaps, but a

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8Ibid., p. 24.
child-catcher as well. The hat figures prominently in the novel. When Holden learns that his roommate, Ward Stradlater, is having a date with Jane Gallagher, a friend whom Holden likes and respects, he is worried for Jane because he is aware of Stradlater's prowess with girls. When Stradlater is getting ready to leave,

I pulled the peak of my hunting hat around to the front all of a sudden, for a change.9

After Stradlater returns and he and Holden get into a fight because of Stradlater's nonchalance about Jane and because Holden calls him names,

I put it on, and turned the old peak around to the back, the way I liked it...10

Holden's cap-work does not denote that sometimes he is, unconsciously or consciously, more of a catcher than at other times; however, whenever he wears the peak around toward the back, he does appear to be showing his rebellion and defiance.

One summer Holden became acquainted with Jane because he and Jane were next door neighbors at their resort. They had a good time playing golf and checkers together.

9 Ibid., p. 33.

10 Ibid., p. 44.
"... she wouldn't move any of her kings. What she'd do, when she'd get a king, she wouldn't move it. She's just leave it in the back row. She'd get them all lined up in the back row. Then she'd never use them. She just liked the way they looked when they were all in the back row."\textsuperscript{11}

Holden liked this habit that Jane had; it is full of symbolism because Jane had a "lousy childhood," which included a stepfather who was always running "around the goddam house naked" and who, Holden suspects, has made advances toward Jane. The kings in the back row are symbols of Jane's desire for security against sexual attack.\textsuperscript{12}

Holden asks Stradlater to be sure to ask Jane if she still keeps her kings in the back row. Of course Stradlater does not, so Holden's quiet warning to Jane about Stradlater does not reach her, and this anxiety over Jane is a primary motive for Holden's fight with Stradlater: he has been powerless to help Jane so he provokes the beating which Stradlater gives him. It is some action at least that he can take on behalf of Jane, even if it is futile.

Stradlater as the borrower of Holden's clothes, toiletries, and girl, grows into a monstrous figure, yet he is

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.

fastidious when it comes to playing the game. "It drove him crazy when you broke any rules. He never smoked in the dorm. It was only me."\textsuperscript{13} But Holden worries as to what chance a nice girl like Jane has against a person like Stradlater. The thought of Jane and Stradlater being together is depressing to Holden. "I got feeling so lonesome and rotten. I even felt like waking up Ackley,"\textsuperscript{14} the boy in the room next to his at the dormitory. "Listen. What's the routine on joining a monastery?" I asked him.\textsuperscript{15}

Throughout the novel there are two worlds in which Holden exists. One is the private world of thought and honest opinion wherein he usually feels lonesome, sad, or depressed; the other world is that of his contemporaries. His contact with his fellows does not always unequivocally reflect his inner thoughts because he has status to maintain, and revelation of his secret world would quickly jeopardize his status with his peers. However, his two worlds do overlap and they do become obvious for the reader as, for example, in his question to Ackley about how to join a monastery. For Ackley, the question is just some

\textsuperscript{13} Salinger, loc. cit., p. 40.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 47.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 48.
more of Holden's "horsing around"; but more seriously it is an out-cropping of Holden's desire to withdraw from a society in which he is lonesome for lack of friends with whom he can feel empathy. It is a great irony throughout the novel that Holden is always thinking of calling Jane on the phone and when he finally does call her, her mother answers at one time and at another time no one answers. With Jane he could communicate and yet he never makes contact with her, either because he never completes the call or because he cannot make up his mind that now is the time to call her. With his brother, Allie, he could communicate, but Allie is dead. With his ten-year-old sister, Phoebe, he can communicate but only to a degree because she is too young to understand fully the nature of his dilemma. His brother, D. B., has prostituted himself to the movies and thus has to some extent erected a barrier of incommunicability between himself and Holden. Holden cannot communicate with his parents; he is waiting until Wednesday to go home so his parents will have time to cool off after receiving the letter announcing his dismissal from school. In the third line of the novel Holden comments on his lousy childhood; without doubt his parents have given him very little time and attention.

It is his secret world that Holden wants to share with another human being; when he cannot, sometimes he
feels like going crazy, or jumping out of a window or at least, he is sad, depressed, or lonesome. Lack of communication is indicative of a lack of love. In searching for someone with whom he can talk, without pretense and without phoniness, Holden is intent upon finding love. Holden knows that it is the need for the maintenance of status which denies the possibility of honesty and insures the continuation of pretense. In the world of his imagination, Holden values the kind of world he would like to be a member of, and this world is honest—not phony—and it is communicative and friendly. In the course of the novel Holden learns that a friendly world is not to be found, with rare exceptions, except in his imagination, in his secret world. It is then that he wishes to find a cabin in the woods where he can live untouched by the phoniness around him; he would take refuge there and not try any longer to beat down the walls that separate people because of their inability to love. Significant as to the stature of the novel is the fact that Holden's idea of a retreat to the woods is but a temporary panacea for his problems.

Holden decides suddenly to leave the school; he takes the train to New York late Saturday night. On the train he meets Mrs. Morrow whose son, Ernest, attends Pencey. Holden introduces himself as Rudolph Schmidt;
Rudolph is actually the janitor of his dorm. He tells Mrs. Morrow that Ernest is one of the most popular boys at Pencey when really

Her son was doubtless the biggest bastard that ever went to Pencey, in the whole crumby history of the school. He was always going down the corridor, after he'd had a shower, snapping his soggy old wet towel... That's exactly the kind of a guy he was.16

Holden, having started to lie, enjoys it, augmenting the lie to even greater dimensions. He feels that he is making Mrs. Morrow happy by telling her how wonderful her son is, yet he is not sure that she is completely taken in. And finally he starts to read the timetable "just to stop lying." When he is lying he is following a peer trait and he is proud of his ability to carry it off successfully. At the same time he has misgivings about his lying because he likes Mrs. Morrow and he feels it is rather unfair to her to give a false impression of her son Ernest. Throughout the novel the contrast is maintained between what Holden may at the moment be doing or saying and what he feels he should do or say. Salinger portrays Holden's adolescence by showing the opposing forces of whim and duty pulling the youth apart. Holden's language while talking to Mrs. Morrow is devoid of vulgarisms; however, in his

16 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
asides, as in the quotation above, he uses the prerogative of speaking without inhibition. His invitation to Mrs. Morrow to join him in the club car for a cocktail is both an adult social gesture and the expression of his hungry adolescent desire for companionship.

While in the taxi on the way to his hotel in New York Holden asks the driver to join him for a cocktail. This invitation is refused. When Holden asks him what happens to the ducks when the lake in Central Park freezes over, the driver acts threatened: "What're ya tryna do, bud?"17 There is no communication between Holden and the taxi driver. At the hotel Holden witnesses acts of perversion from his window.

I'm not kidding, that hotel was lousy with perverts. I was probably the only normal bastard in the whole place--and that isn't saying much.18

What he sees is revolting to Holden, but at the same time he finds it fascinating to watch. He admits that

Sex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't.19

17 Ibid., p. 57.
18 Ibid., p. 58.
19 Ibid., p. 59.
He thinks of calling up Jane but instead he calls up a Faith Cavendish whose name had been given him by an Edmund, or Edward, or at least Eddie, Birdsell, whom he had once met at a "goddam stupid party." The call produces no results: she is not receptive to Holden's suggestion that he come to her apartment for a cocktail and when she suggests a meeting for the next day he says that he cannot see her then. Since the beginning of the novel Holden has had no completely satisfying communication with any other person: his teacher, "old Spencer," Ackley, Stradlater, Mrs. Morrow, the cabby, and Faith Cavendish.

Holden likes often to talk about his sister, Phoebe; she is someone whom he really likes and admires and we suspect that with her he can find satisfactory companionship, but she is only ten years of age. Holden is at least half an adult, so even in Phoebe he can not find the friend whom he needs to alleviate fully his constant sense of loneliness.

In the Lavender Room of his hotel, Holden dances with three girls from Seattle who are visiting in the city and are on the look-out for movie stars. They are impossible as conversationalists and Holden is depressed. After sticking him for the check without offering to pay even for the drinks which they had before he met them, they leave to go to bed. He is depressed at the thought of
their getting up early to attend the first show at Radio City Music Hall. To come all the way from Seattle to attend a stage-show and movie which are, in Holden's opinion, poor entertainment, is the height of nonsense. Yet, Holden himself goes to Radio City on Sunday, also, but only because he cannot think of anything else to do. Holden's opinion of the movies is very low.

In a high school English class the question may be raised: Is not Holden's dislike of the movies a flaw in the novel? Do not most sixteen-year-old boys enjoy attending the movies? Holden's castigation of phoniness whenever he sees it has a natural target in the movies for in them the phoniness is particularly self-evident. Holden knows that his brother, D. B., since going to Hollywood to write for the movies, has not written anything of value. Holden's perception has been sharpened by having attended movies and the theater for most of his life; theater-going is a part of the heritage of a wealthy child and adolescent in New York. There is a difference between Holden's up-bringing and the up-bringing of most middle-Western adolescents; constant theatre attendance in New York should lead any sensitive youngster toward a higher degree of discrimination in entertainment. At Radio City he sees not only the phoniness of the movie but also the reason why the movies are often as phony as they are:
The part that got me was, there was a lady sitting next to me that cried all through the goddam picture. The phonier it got, the more she cried. You'd have thought she did it because she was kindhearted as hell, but I was sitting right next to her, and she wasn't. She had this little kid with her that was bored as hell and had to go to the bathroom, but she wouldn't take him. She kept telling him to sit still and behave himself. She was about as kind-hearted as a goddam wolf. You take somebody that cries their goddam eyes out over phony stuff in the movies, and nine times out of ten they're mean bastards at heart. I'm not kidding.20

The vast majority of people who pay to see movies like them. So important are the movies to the stitching together of The Catcher that Bernard S. Oldsey21 asserts that Holden's name is an ironic amalgam of the names of two picture stars, William Holden and Joan Caulfield, who co-starred in 1947 in Dear Ruth, the story of a young girl who writes to an overseas soldier and who tries to appear more mature than she really is. On the first page of The Catcher Holden says,

If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies.
Don't even mention them to me.22

But he mentions them again and again; he cannot so easily escape so essential a part of his environment.

20Ibid., pp. 126-127.


22Salingar, loc. cit., p. 5.
On his way to a night club, Holden inquires of another taxi driver if he knows what happens to the ducks during the winter in Central Park. The driver does not know nor does he care. He rejects Holden's invitation to stop off and have a drink. In the night club, Holden feels sorry for Ernie, the piano player, a snob who yet tries to appear humble.

I don't even think he knows any more when he's playing right or not. It isn't all his fault. I partly blame all those dopes that clap their heads off—they'd foul up anybody, if you gave them a chance.23

Holden asks the waiter to ask Ernie if he would care to join him for a drink. Holden thinks that the waiter probably never gave Ernie the message. It is significant that Holden is continually asking if someone would care to join him—and only rarely does anyone care to. Also, "nobody cared how old you were" at Ernie's. "You could even be a dope fiend and nobody'd care."24 Contrary to the care-less-ness of others, Holden, even only if he feels sorry for someone, shows his care and concern for him. A friend of D. B.'s, Lillian Simmons, at Ernie's, is blocking the aisle while talking to Holden.

23Ibid., p. 78.

24Ibid., p. 78.
It was funny. You could tell the waiter didn't like her much, you could tell even the Navy guy didn't like her much, even though he was dating her. And I didn't like her much. Nobody did. You had to feel sort of sorry for her, in a way.  

Holden's compassion tempers his castigation of the phony, the boring, the sordid, or merely "the funny-looking."

Real ugly girls have it tough. I feel so sorry for them sometimes. Sometimes I can't even look at them, especially if they're with some dopey guy that's telling them all about a goddam football game.  

Compassion also figures in Holden's brush with the prostitute who is sent to his room in the hotel by the elevator operator, Maurice. Holden would like to talk with her; he is embarrassed; and he is not quite sure how he got into this situation in the first place. The situation simply started developing when Maurice asked him if he wanted a girl, and it soon became too late to stop it.

This episode in the book has been cited as scandalous and as reason enough why the novel should not be read by young people. If the episode is analyzed carefully, it is obvious that Holden is basically moral throughout. He was depressed from walking forty-one blocks to his hotel because he was tired of riding in taxicabs; someone at

\(^{25}\text{Ibid., p. 80.}\)

\(^{26}\text{Ibid., p. 79.}\)
Pencey had stolen his gloves and he became depressed thinking about how yellow he would have been about getting them back; the stale smell of cigar smoke in the hotel lobby was revolting to him; and when Maurice suggested sending a girl to his room he was too unhappy to think correctly. He retains his virginity because he feels sorry for Sunny, the prostitute, just as he has felt sorry for some of the girls he has known and whom he has watched "losing their brains" during the process of necking. Before Sunny arrives he tries to rationalize the dilemma he is in and to justify the sexual act by assuming that he needs practice for marriage. Holden feels sad as he is hanging up her dress:

I thought of her going in a store and buying it, and nobody in the store knowing she was a prostitute and all. The salesman probably just thought she was a regular girl when she bought it. It made me feel sad as hell—I don't know exactly why.27

He lies about an operation which he says has incapacitated him and finally he has to resist her advances to get rid of her. When Maurice and Sunny come back later to demand another five dollars, Maurice needlessly and with no trace of humaneness, hits Holden hard in the stomach. Holden's reputation for integrity has not been damaged during the

27 Ibid., p. 88.
episode. It is he that has been propositioned and beaten up, stolen from, and bullied, and it is he that is saddened by the contact with this segment of adult society. If Salinger intends that the episode make social commentary, his writing is not obviously pointed in this direction, but the commentary can be emphasized, if necessary, to show that adult society, in this instance, is immoral. Salinger is able to depict this immorality without stooping to write pornographically. After reading this episode, the reader is forced to ask himself again: who is crazy, Holden, or the world in which he lives? Is it necessarily unfortunate for a novelist to depict a situation involving a pimp or a prostitute? How is an author to remain honest if in the life situation where these characters abound he cannot write about them? Cardinal Newman has said that it is impossible to have a sinless literature about a sinful people. If either Holden, the good protagonist, or Salinger had regarded Holden's brush with the prostitute as inherently proper and ethical, then, the censors could safely shout something about its immorality. Throughout the novel sexual matters are handled with restraint, discretion, and understanding.

Immediately following the episode of the prostitute is the episode with the nuns. One of the nuns calls Holden "a very sweet boy"; Sunny had called him "crumb-bum." He gave the nuns ten dollars for charity; it was ten dollars that Sunny wanted, and finally got, for her visit to Holden. He was beaten up by Maurice because he gave Sunny only the five dollars originally agreed upon. Holden is sorry after the nuns have gone that they let him give them only ten dollars. The two episodes placed in juxtaposition represent the best and the worst of society, and each episode, by contrast, sets off the other. Holden is sad that the nuns do not have good luggage and that they cannot go to some swanky place for lunch. He likes them but he hopes that they will not try to find out if he is Catholic because such inquisitiveness in the past has ruined more than one good conversation for him. He tries to imagine his mother, or his aunt, or Sally Hayes's mother collecting for charity on a street corner with a basket. The picture is not easily conjured: these women are too wealthy, and they lack the humility necessary to accept contributions gracefully. Holden unobtrusively contrasts these women with the nuns and the nuns have his approval because of their lack of phoniness, because of their genuine humility and ability to love their fellowman.
In the park looking for Phoebe, he helps a little girl tighten her skate.

God, I love it when a kid's nice and polite when you tighten their skate for them or something. Most kids are. They really are. I asked her if she'd care to have a hot chocolate or something with me, but she said no, thank you. She said she had to meet her friend. Kids always have to meet their friends. That kills me.29

The passage above illustrates Holden's love for children; he does not feel repelled by the child when she does not care to have a hot chocolate with him, because she is so polite; Holden finds genuine love in children. When the title of the novel is fully explained, these incidents with children will be remembered as having special significance for it is the children who can be saved; they have not yet mastered the questionable art of pretense and lovelessness.

In the Museum of Natural History which Holden knew from many visits during his childhood,

The best thing . . . was that everything always stayed right where it was . . . the only thing that would be different would be you . . . . Certain things they should stay the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone. I know that's impossible, but it's too bad anyway.30

Holden likes little islands of stability in an environment flooded with insecurity, phoniness, and uselessness.


30 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
Perhaps children should stay children, for then they would remain polite and "nice" and not become bores and phonies.

The chapter relating Holden's date with Sally Hayes is an interesting study in affirmation and negation:

Holden's mind swings like a pendulum from one extreme to the other. This pendulum style of writing serves not only to show Holden's adolescence but also his steadily increasing loss of stability. It is Sunday and life for Holden must get much blacker before it can get brighter later in the novel when he finally meets his sister. High school students would enjoy a close look at this Chapter Seventeen to see the clever and effective technique of pendulum action which Salinger uses to characterize his hero. Throughout the chapter, as throughout the novel, Holden reveals himself as fundamentally honest and idealistic. It is difficult for an author to create a good character because if the character sounds phony, then he would no longer carry the sympathy of the reader along with him; he would not then be the "good guy." It is probably easier for the hero to portray himself as an honest demon than as an honest angel.

Holden is in the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel waiting to meet a friend whom he has previously dated, Sally Hayes, for a date at two o'clock. He watches the girls who are sitting waiting for their dates.
It was really nice sightseeing, if you know what I mean.
In a way, it was sort of depressing, too, because you kept wondering what the hell would happen to all of them.32

Many of them will marry (N) "guys that are very boring."
But I have to be careful about that. I mean about calling certain guys bores. I don't understand boring guys.33

Holden's roommate, at Elkton Hills, Harris Macklin, was a (N) bore, but

The sonnybitch could whistle better than anybody I ever heard.34

Finally, Sally Hayes comes up the stairs.
I'm crazy. (N) I didn't even like her much, and yet all a sudden (A) I felt like I was in love with her and wanted to marry her.35

Sally has a very loud voice:

it always gave me a pain. . . .
"Swell to see you," I said. I meant it, too.36

31"A" or "N," denoting affirmation or negation, will be placed before the statement to indicate Holden's position.
32Salinger, loc. cit., p. 112.
33Ibid., p. 112.
34Ibid., pp. 112-113.
35Ibid., p. 113.
36Ibid., p. 113.
In the taxi on their way to the theater to see Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne,

(A) . . . I told her I loved her and all. 
(N) It was a lie, of course. (A) but the thing is, I meant it when I said it.37

Sally wants Holden to let his hair grow—lt's so lovely.

(N) Lovely. . . .

(A) The show wasn't as bad as some I've seen. 
(N) It was on the crappy side, though.38

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne

(A) . . . were very good, (N) but I didn't like them much.39

After the first act, Holden and Sally go out for the inter-
mission.

(N) You never saw so many phonies in all your life. . . .40

And there follows in the chapter a page and a half of un-
mitigated negation by Holden; he fulminates at large against Sally, and the Andover friend she met during the inter-
mission.

37 Ibid., p. 114.
38 Ibid., p. 114.
39 Ibid., p. 115.
40 Ibid., p. 115.
(N) I sort of hated old Sally by the time we got in the cab. . . . 41
Sally has the desire to go ice-skating at Radio City so she can wear one of those little short skirts. She does not know how to skate.

(A) She was killing herself. It was brutal. I really felt sorry for her. 42

Seated at a table having a Coke and a much deserved rest, Sally asks Holden if he is coming over to her house to help trim the Christmas tree. (A) He replies that, yes, he will come. Then follows a revealing passage in the novel wherein Holden elaborates the difficulties of his life. He is fed up with school and with life in New York.

(N) "...I hate living in New York and all. Taxicabs, and Madison Avenue buses, with the drivers and all always yelling at you to get out at the rear door, and being introduced to phony guys that call the Lunts angels, and going up and down in elevators when you just want to go outside." 43

To Sally, Holden says,

(A) "You're probably the only reason I'm in New York right now, or anywhere. If you weren't around, I'd probably be some place way the hell off." 44

41 Ibid., p. 116.
42 Ibid., p. 118.
43 Ibid., pp. 118-119.
44 Ibid., p. 119.
As to a boys' school, as a place to get an education,

(N) "It's full of phonies, and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day..."

Sally says that "Lots of boys get more out of school than that."

(A) "I agree! I agree they do, (A-N) some of them! But that's all I get out of it. See? That's my point. That's exactly my goddam point," I said. (N) I don't get hardly anything out of anything. I'm in bad shape. I'm in lousy shape."

Holden suddenly gets the idea of taking Sally to Massachusetts and Vermont, to live in cabins, to chop wood, to get married, and to get a job.

(A) "It's beautiful as hell up there. It really is." (A) ... I sort of reached over and took old Sally's goddam hand. (N) What a goddam fool I was.

When Sally hedges at accepting Holden's idea,

(N) I was beginning to hate her, (A-N) in a way. ... (N) I was getting depressed as hell again.  

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46 Ibid., p. 120.
47 Ibid., p. 120.
48 Ibid., p. 121.
Sally says that she and Holden could do the things that Holden wants to do after they have finished college. But he says,

(N) "It wouldn't be the same at all. You don't see what I mean at all." 49

And then,

(N) We both hated each other's guts by that time. You could see there wasn't any sense trying to have an intelligent conversation. I was sorry as hell I'd started it.

(N) "C'mon, let's get outta here," I said. "You give me a royal pain . . . if you want to know the truth." (A) . . . I apologized like a madman, but she wouldn't accept my apology. 50

Then, (A-N) Holden laughed and this made Sally more angry than ever.

(A) I stuck around for a while, apologizing and trying to get her to excuse me, but she wouldn't. . . . (N) I shouldn't've left without her, but I was pretty goddam fed up by that time.

If you want to know the truth, I don't even know why I started all that stuff with her. I mean about going away somewhere, to Massachusetts and Vermont and all. I probably wouldn't've taken her even if she'd wanted to go with me. (N) She wouldn't have been anybody to go with. The terrible part, though, is that (A) I meant it when I asked her. (N) That's the terrible part. I swear to God I'm a madman. 51

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49 Ibid., p. 121.
50 Ibid., p. 121.
51 Ibid., p. 122.
Salinger's pendulum style of writing in this chapter is not self-conscious; Holden, inevitably, is now affirmative, now negative. The style reflects the state of Holden's mind and helps to answer the question he asks of Sally:

"Did you ever get fed up?" I said. (N) "I mean did you ever get scared that everything was going to go lousy unless you did something?"

The reader is anxious to see what happens. Is everything "going to go lousy" or will everything work out to a more happy conclusion? We know from the first page of the novel that Holden is in California, close to Hollywood, at some sort of a "crumby place" but we do not know why he is there. In the encounter with Sally particularly, but throughout the novel generally, Holden unconsciously appears to be psychoanalyzing himself; he is not talking from a couch but in his evaluation of his thought and actions he is nevertheless treating himself. The style of the writing derives from the psychoanalytic situation. There is ultimate therapy in Holden's analysis of society and of his attitudes toward his environment.

Psychiatry is a topic of conversation between Holden and Carl Luce at the Wicker Bar around ten o'clock Sunday night. At Whooton school Luce was supposed to be

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52 Ibid., p. 118.
Holden's Student Adviser; the irony is heavy in that Luce "advised" the boys regularly about sex, "especially perverts and all." Luce now has contempt for a girl he knew while at Whooton. Holden says,

"That isn't nice. If she was decent enough to let you get sexy with her all the time, you at least shouldn't talk about her that way." 53

Luce accuses Holden of immaturity; it is Holden who is hewing closer to the line of logic in the discussion than Luce when he says, speaking of the sexual relationship:

"I know it's supposed to be physical and spiritual, and artistic and all. But what I mean is, you can't do it with everybody—every girl you neck with and all—and make it come out that way. Can you?" 54

Luce refuses either to face Holden's logic or to recognize his sensitivity. His solution for Holden's life is psychoanalysis but he shows his lack of real concern for Holden when he says.

"It's none of my goddam business what you do with your life. ... I couldn't care less, frankly." 55

Luce is quite possibly homosexual; Holden does not like "flits," as he calls them, but he wants companionship so desperately that he pleads with Luce:

53 Ibid., p. 131.
54 Ibid., p. 133.
55 Ibid., p. 134.
"Have just one more drink," I told him. "Please. I'm lonesome as hell. No kidding."56

But Luce cannot talk to Holden any longer. Holden stays at the bar getting drunk. Instead of calling Jane because he thinks he is too drunk he calls Sally to tell her he will be over to trim the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. He really does not like Sally very much and he wishes later that he had not called her, but his loneliness and his intoxication override his reason.

In Central Park Holden searches around the lagoon to see if any ducks are there. He thinks of dying of pneumonia—his head is wet from the dunking he gave himself in the men's room at the bar. And he skips the change in his pocket, five quarters and a nickel, across the lagoon where it is not frozen. It is very dark in the park and Holden has reached the ultimate depths of his depression. He decides to go home to say hello to Phoebe.

Ironically, Holden has to sneak into his apartment to escape detection by his parents. When they do come home and his mother enters Phoebe's room, Holden hides in the closet. Then when leaving the apartment he has to sneak out; this is Sunday night and he is not due home until Wednesday. Phoebe says many times to Holden, "Daddy'll

56 Ibid., p. 135.
kill you," because he has flunked out of yet another school.

Once in Phoebe's room, before awakening her,

   I went around the room very quiet and all, looking at stuff for a while. I felt swell, for a change. I didn't even feel like I was getting pneumonia or anything any more. I just felt good, for a change.57

Holden has found an island of stability in a crazy world; he knows that Phoebe cares about him and that she is unhappy about how her father will treat him. But she tells him after he has told her what a phony place Pencey is,

   "You don't like anything that's happening."58

He insists that he likes Allie, but Phoebe reminds him that Allie is dead. Also he likes sitting there talking to Phoebe. When she asks him what he would like to be, his reply explains the title of the novel:

   "... I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around--nobody big, I mean--except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff--I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going. I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be. I know it's crazy."59

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57Ibid., p. 144.
58Ibid., p. 152.
59Ibid., p. 156.
Earlier in the novel while walking along the street, Holden listened to a little boy singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye." The little boy was walking next to the curb in a straight line.

The cars zoomed by, brakes screamed all over the place, his parents paid no attention to him, and he kept on walking next to the curb and singing "If a body catch a body coming through the rye." It made me feel better. It made me feel not so depressed any more.60

The title of the novel, of course, derives partly from this incident. Salinger at this point on page 105 planted a solid clue relative to the meaning of the title, but yet the meaning of the title is not clear. It is not until Phoebe asks Holden, fifty pages later, what he would like to be, that the meaning of the title becomes clear.

Tom Davis61 has pointed out the similarity of Holden's mission as a catcher in the rye to the mission of the compassionate bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism. The bodhisattva is willing to be reincarnated many times for the purpose of helping all sentient beings finally escape from the process of birth and death. This process, Samsara, is also referred to as a wheel of birth and death which enslaves and entraps so that humans forget their

60Ibid., p. 105.

original mission of getting through this phase of their existence as quickly as possible in order to progress in their evolution toward spiritual perfection. The bodhisattva, knowing that most humans are unaware of their reasons for being, is dedicated to the task of awakening them if possible, or of trying to save them if they will permit it, from the folly of their lives. Davis quotes the Vajradhāvajā Sutra in stating the resolution of the bodhisattva.

I take upon myself the burden of all suffering. . . . I have made the vow to save all beings. . . . All beings I must set free. The whole world of living beings I must rescue from the terrors of birth . . . of all kinds of moral offence, of all states of woe . . . of the jungle of false views. . . . I must rescue all these beings from the stream of Samsara . . . I must pull them back from the great precipice. [italics added]

The bodhisattva resolves to be a kind of catcher of humanity; Holden, too, wishes to save children from their loss of innocence, from the phoniness of the world; he does not want them to fall off "some crazy cliff" into the stew that is humanity. Holden is even concerned about the ducks in Central Park; that they are sentient beings places them within the pale of his obligation to care about them. Holden's chief concern about others, whether they are Stradlater or the golden-haired male piano player at the Wicker Bar, is that they do not care what happens to other people. Holden does care about others; the resemblance
between the cliff and the precipice is too striking to be merely coincidental. Holden would like to be a catcher in the rye but he realizes toward the end of the novel that, even with his heightened sensitivity he is either quite powerless to prevent the loss of children's innocence or that it may be wiser not to interfere with the destiny of others.

The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them.62

Phoebe, too, is riding the carousel, symbolically the wheel of birth and death, and she is grabbing for the gold ring; if she falls off her horse, Holden will run to pick her up.

At the Antolini apartment, Holden prepares to stay the night. He is sleepy and has a bad headache but Mr. Antolini, his English teacher while at Whooton school, insists upon advising him as to how to live his life; Mr. Antolini is drinking heavily. People are always advising Holden without knowing what his problems are. One is reminded of the old grad at Pencey who comes back to the school excitedly looking for his initials on a door in the bathroom and who advises generously the whole time he is looking.

62Salinger, loc. cit., p. 190.
So my roommate and I walked him down to the bathroom and all, and we had to stand there while he looked for his initials in all the can doors. He kept talking to us the whole time, telling us how when he was at Pencey they were the happiest days of his life, and giving us a lot of advice for the future and all... you don't have to be a bad guy to depress somebody—you can be a good guy and do it. All you have to do to depress somebody is give them a lot of phony advice while you're looking for your initials in some can door—that's all you have to do.63

Holden observes that Mr. Antolini may get to be an alcoholic if he is not careful. One is reminded of the switch in teacher-pupil roles at the beginning of the novel that took place between Holden and "old" Spencer. Antolini has the feeling which he expresses to Holden that Holden is riding for some kind of a fall.

"I don't want to scare you," he said, "but I can very clearly see you dying nobly, one way or another, for some highly unworthy cause."64

Holden has already expressed to Phoebe that he would like to be a catcher in the rye, so Antolini's advice is not hitting the target. Antolini is assuming that Holden's efforts will be unworthy and he will perish in pursuit of them. Antolini quotes a psychoanalyst named Wilhelm Stekel:

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63 Ibid., p. 152.

64 Ibid., p. 169.
"The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." 

Holden, in wanting to be a catcher in the rye, wants to live humbly for a cause; he, actually, is a mature person in his desire, but Antolini, who should be one of the most intelligent adults in the novel, is assuming the opposite of him. Holden and Antolini are not in communication with each other because Antolini does not understand Holden's problems. Antolini assumes, however well he camouflages the point, that Holden must apply himself in school. Antolini says that in school one can read of the moral and spiritual troubles of other men, who if they are well educated, nine times out of ten express themselves more clearly, more persistently, and more humbly than the un-academic persons. At his present stage of development Holden cannot brook the idea of school; to tell him to apply himself in it is just not relevant. Holden does not have time, in his current crisis, to learn how others have handled themselves in their societies; his solution rests with him. Antolini is not helping him by telling him to obtain wisdom. A point of communication between Holden and Antolini could have been: What must Holden do now to survive

\[65\text{ibid.}, p. 170.\]
in a society that, right or wrong, is presently insufferable to him? The problem is more basically psychological than social. He cannot become a bodhisattva or a catcher if he himself cannot survive. Phoebe came much closer to pinpointing his difficulty when she said to him:

"You don't like anything that's happening."66

Zooey in *Franny and Zooey* helps Franny out of difficulties similar to Holden's by suggesting that everybody is divine and one does what he has to do for others but without personal involvement without compromising one's own standards of excellence. What others think and the way they act is of no personal concern; one helps in his society but one cannot grieve over failure, nor even exult over success. Holden in effect has arrived at this point of view when at the end of the novel he allows children on the carrousel to fall off if they must, while grabbing for the gold ring. Of course he cares, but he cannot interfere with their destiny until they are ready for him to help them.

Whatever might have been of value in Antolini's advice is cancelled, temporarily, at least, when Holden suspects him of making a homosexual advance. Later Holden

is not so sure if he acted correctly by leaving immediately
the Antolini apartment.

I mean I wondered if just maybe I was wrong about
thinking he was making a flitty pass at me. I
wondered if maybe he just liked to pat guys on
the head when they're asleep.67

Holden remembers many fine things in the past that Mr.
Antolini has done; the more he thinks about Antolini the
more confused he becomes.

After a long walk that becomes physically painful
and after the mental agony of wrestling with his confusion,
Holden resolves to act.

... I decided I'd go away. I decided I'd never
go home again and I'd never go away to another
school again.68

He rejects Antolini's advice to go back to school to find
wisdom and like Huck Finn he decides that the best way to
live is to "light out for the territory." Holden, to
insulate himself completely in his private world would
become a deaf-mute,

That way I wouldn't have to have any goddam stupid
useless conversations with anybody.69

67 Ibid., p. 175.

68 Ibid., p. 178.

69 Ibid., p. 179.
But first he has to see Phoebe to say goodbye to her. At her school he sees an obscene two-word notation on the wall which he angrily erases.

It drove me damn near crazy. I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them—all cock-eyed, naturally—what it meant, and how they'd all think about it and maybe even worry about it for a couple of days. I kept wanting to kill whoever'd written it... I knew, too, I wouldn't have the guts to do it.

The next sign he sees, he cannot rub out because it is scratched into the wall. Holden says that even in a million years one could not rub out even half the obscene signs in the world. While waiting for Phoebe in the museum, in the tomb where the mummies are kept, Holden sees another obscene legend. He had found the tomb to be quiet and peaceful until he saw the sign. Carl F. Strauch has made much of Holden's visit to the tomb: he is dying to his old life and he will have to be reborn a new man into the world. The symbolism of death and becoming twice-born is reinforced by his fainting in the toilet and by his feeling better thereafter.

70 Ibid., p. 181.

Phoebe has dragged her suitcase along with her as she meets Holden because she wants to go West with him. She, like Holden, values love and fraternity above the comparatively sterile life she is living. Her rebellion is suggested by her role of Benedict Arnold in the school Christmas play. She, in her fashion, is seeking her true identity. She changes her middle name from "Josephine" to "Weatherfield." When Holden tells her that she cannot go West with him, both her disappointment and his own unconvincing logic as to why her position is any different from his, force him to change his mind about leaving. When she says that she will not go back to school Holden assumes the stature of mentor and catcher in the rye and asks her,

"Will you go back to school tomorrow like a good girl?"  

This is his moment of insight; he is offering advice that until this moment he could not himself take from others. Will he, next fall, go back to school like a good boy? He cannot be phony around his sister; good advice for her is good advice for him. In trying to save Phoebe he has assumed a responsibility for also saving himself because the role of catcher, if not phony, means conscientious leadership.

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72Salinger, loc. cit., p. 187.
Holden watches Phoebe riding the carrousel and ends his narration on a note of happiness.

I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God, I wish you could've been there.\textsuperscript{73}

He has found a segment of life that is not phony but that is beautiful. Symbolically, he finally appreciates the beauty of the wheel of birth and death that is man's lot; he is rejecting life in this world no longer but is enjoying that which is beautiful in it. There is hope that he will learn to accept also that which is not enjoyable and not beautiful, although he does not make any promises on this score.

Although he has been forced by his parents and by society to go to a psychiatrist for help, he has already started to help himself by his unstinting appreciation of Phoebe on the carrousel and by his having talked out his problem through his writing of the novel.

... I sort of miss everybody I told about. Even old Stradlater and Ackley, for instance. I think I even miss that goddam Maurice. It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid., p. 191.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., p. 192.
Teaching a novel in senior high school is generally quite a formidable task. The novel as an art form provides the writer with time and space to develop character and situation intricately and in detail. The short story is a small canvas that can be viewed in its entirety more easily than can the novel. A day spent in class on a short story can leave teacher and students with the feeling that explication, analysis, and appreciation are under control. By the end of the period there can be a sense of accomplishment by virtue of the completion of the study. The study of a novel should probably extend in high school for at least a week in order to view as many facets of its structure and meaning as possible. Control of the study must be very strong so that the sense of development and progression toward valid conclusions is not lost somewhere in the middle of the week. A baseball can be thrown with much more accuracy than a basketball; the smaller canvas can be understood more quickly and easily than the extended mural.

Of prime importance is student understanding of the fundamental meaning of the story. If Holden is presumed to be representative merely of adolescent rebellion, hating phonies and carping at boring teachers and wrong neckties, then Salinger does appear to be an irresponsibly adolescent writer. But Holden, even while piqued at what to him is
wrong, undercuts his position, and shows compassion and 
sympathy for the object of his pique. And by the end of 
the novel he has transcended rebellion to an extent that 
the adolescent aspects of his personality have receded in 
favor of a more mature outlook than even his adult friends 
are able to achieve. Holden's growth should receive 
emphasis in the high school class which is studying the 

novel.

The Catcher is composed of twenty-six chapters.

After the class members, individually, have first read the 

novel, each student could choose one chapter for intensive 
study and a short report to the class, followed by questions 
and a discussion. The teacher might demonstrate the 
reporting technique by himself taking one chapter. Insofar 
as possible, students would not re-tell the story but would 
discover for their classmates hidden meanings which were 
not uncovered during the first reading. For example, in 
Chapter Four, Stradlater is trying, for Holden, to think of 
the name of his date.

"Im thinking . . . Oh. Jean Gallagher." Boy 
I nearly dropped dead when he said that. "Jane 
Gallagher," I said. I even got up from the wash-
bowl when he said that.75

75 Ibid., p. 31.
The student might wish to discuss why Stradlater says "Jean" and why Holden emphasizes "Jane"; in Chapter Six Holden remembers that Stradlater did not know if her name was Jane or Jean. What does this incident tell the reader about the characters of Stradlater and Holden? There is so much in each chapter that the student, even with intensive study, will not be able to glean it all.

Another method of class study is suggested by the episodic construction of the novel. Panels of class members could be responsible for the discussion of the more important episodes in the novel. This method will stimulate more discussion than the chapter method above but it will not cover the novel quite so minutely. The teacher and class, presumably knowing themselves, should be the final arbiters of how best to attack the novel.

If the novel is sanctioned by school authorities for classroom study, then it would seem possible for the class to discuss all aspects of it. There is sex in the novel; this aspect of an adolescent's life should not be evaded furtively as though it did not exist. Holden's views of the sexual relationship with girls, though confused, are wholesome. The strong contrast between his views and those of Stradlater or of Carl Luce should be made clear. Just as one cannot discuss the Kinsey Report without reference to sex, so one cannot discuss The Catcher
without reference to it. If the discussion is thoughtful, poised, and completely forthright, the atmosphere of timidity and secretiveness disappears. The class, if it is a right class for the book, will feel complimented when an air of maturity pervades in the discussion. The classroom should be a controlled situation; the teacher can see to it that Holden's problems are clearly understood. If the teacher cannot bring appreciation and unity and beauty out of student confusion about the novel, then The Catcher should not be attempted. Salinger will be thought of as a bad writer by students who have not been helped by their teacher to understand and to appreciate him.

It might be well for the class to read aloud together a chapter to discover all that is in it. This could be done at the beginning of the study of the novel to sensitize students to methods of perception. Chapter Twenty-three is six pages and it is not turbulent or rife with vulgarity. Holden is with Phoebe in her room. By reading the chapter word for word the teacher and class can scrutinize each sentence for humor, symbol, imagery, irony, unconscious out-cropping of feeling, the relationship existing between Holden and his sister, reference to the fundamental theme such as "catcher in the rye," and so on. For example, in the next to the last paragraph on page 162, Holden says:
It was a helluva lot easier getting out of the house than it was getting in, for some reason. For one thing, I didn't give much of a damn anymore if they caught me. I really didn't. I figured if they caught me, they caught me. I almost wished they did, in a way.

Does getting in and out of the house suggest Holden's lack of security at home, from his childhood to the present? Does getting caught a home, reinforce the fact of his alienation from the nest? Holden has wanted to be a catcher. Does he also need to be caught? Does this not suggest that all persons, throughout the world, need to catch others, to uphold them, and not to contribute to their delinquency, misery and suffering, poverty, and death? Is his expression, "I really didn't," an effort to be honest, an effort to escape the phoniness he dislikes in others? Is his wistful wishing to be caught an expression of a deeper desire than the desire to go West, to run out on his society? By this time in the novel, is there the same degree of shock to words like "helluva" and "damn" as there was in the first pages? Has the constant use of these words become so habitual, perhaps even tiresome, that the reader tends now to regard them lightly, as he would familiar clichés devoid of repulsiveness, and words which do not carry a strong literal meaning?

Teaching The Catcher is a challenge for the high school English teacher. And it can be an exciting
experience for himself and for the class. Teaching the novel the first time will probably not be so successful as subsequent teachings because the novel is one that has to be lived with for awhile for all aspects of its meaning and artistry to become apparent. Salinger has said that he was writing the book off and on for ten years; time spent putting things into the novel, in Salinger's fiction, means that time, likewise, must be spent by the teacher in digging them out.
CHAPTER III

NINE STORIES

Nine Stories is a collection of J. D. Salinger's stories first published by Little, Brown and Company, Boston, in 1953. The stories had previously been published in the New Yorker magazine from 1948 to 1953 with the exception of "Down at the Dinghy" which was published in Harper's Magazine in 1949, and "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" which was first published in 1953 in Nine Stories.

The stories do not consistently follow a common pattern throughout as to theme, character, or setting. In three of the stories, members of the Glass family are involved: Seymour in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," Walt in "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," and Boo Boo in "Down at the Dinghy." The characters in the other six stories are not known to the Glasses nor do they interrelate from one story to the other. Stories with a New York City setting are "Just Before the War with the Eskimos," "The Laughing Man," and "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes." "Uncle Wiggily" is laid in a New York suburban setting and "Down at the
Dinghy" takes place at a lake within commuting distance from New York. "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" is set partly in New York but mostly in Montreal. Florida is the scene for "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," and an ocean liner in mid-Atlantic is the scene for "Teddy." "For Esme-with Love and Squalor" is laid in England and on the Continent during the war. In all of the stories New York City is never a completely missing item: a telephone call from Florida to New York may be made or a sergeant overseas may have received a letter from his wife who is living in New York, or the liner may have New York as its destination. Salinger, an ex-New Yorker himself, continued to write of persons living in New York in *The Catcher in the Rye* and in "Zooey." It is no wonder that Salinger has been assigned by critics to the *New Yorker* school of fiction; in addition to his style and technique of narration, New York City permeates much of his writing.

Three of the nine stories end with the death of a main character: "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "The Laughing Man," and "Teddy." All of the stories have the theme of love, or the lack of it, as a more or less prominent thread running through them. Six of the stories feature children as important, or as central, to the plot. Two of the stories, "Just Before the War with the Eskimos" and "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" have adolescents as
protagonists, and only one story, "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," is written solely about adults. It is significant that only in this last story is the factor of sexual relationship obvious; on that score it is the only one of the stories which might be objectionable to students, teachers, parents, or school officials; however, Salinger handles the story so discreetly that there should be no more objection to it than to certain Biblical stories which speak far more plainly of the sexual relationship, also illicit, than does "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes." In two of the stories mystical experience is a factor: De Daumier-Smith is almost overcome by a blinding light which he receives but which does not originate externally to his psyche; and Teddy, of course, is the complete mystic, able to produce at will the supernormal experience of his choice.

The variety of fiction offered by Nine Stories is a point in favor of using the book in high school English classes. No one story is so similar to another that the class might feel that stories by other writers could well have been substituted for some of them. Most writers on Salinger's fiction seem to agree that his best short stories are to be found in Nine Stories; if the teacher agrees with this consensus, and if Salinger is not anathema to his superiors, he would do well to include some or all of
these stories in his short story unit. Published as a paperback book since 1954, *Nine Stories* can be personally owned by the students, and it is easily obtained.

"A Perfect Day for Bananafish"

The story, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" first was published in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1948 (January 31). This story is the first story to be published by Salinger which introduces a member of the Glass family. Since then we have met all of the members of the Glass family and, judging by Salinger's high regard for them, more stories about them will be forthcoming. Franny and Zooey Glass, the two youngest children have been spotlighted in *Franny and Zooey* (1961); Walt Glass was the early love of Eloise in "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" (1948); Walt's twin and his junior by twelve minutes, Waker, a Roman Catholic priest, has not as yet figured prominently in any Salinger fiction; Boo Boo Tannenbaum (née Glass) and her son Lionel are the principals in "Down at the Dinghy" (1949); Buddy Glass is the producer of the home movie that is "Zooey" but he has not as yet been given a story that is all his own; Seymour Glass, the principal in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" has been featured in two other stories published in the *New Yorker*: "Raise High the Roof Beam,
Carpenters" (1955), and "Seymour—An Introduction" (1959). These stories, along with "Zooey" which was also published in the New Yorker in 1957 and later in book form along with "Franny" as Franny and Zooey in 1961, give copious information about the guru, the spiritual head of the Glass family, Seymour Glass.

Seymour, the eldest of the seven Glass children, was born in February, 1917. He entered Columbia University at fifteen years of age and received his Ph.D. in English at an age when most students were just getting out of high school. He taught English for a year or two. He entered military service and while he was at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, he met Muriel Fedder, whom he married on June 4, 1942. As "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" indicates, he underwent psychoanalysis, and his first attempt at suicide, that of driving the Fedders' car into a tree, probably early in 1948, was unsuccessful. His second attempt at suicide, on March 18, 1948, is altogether successful; it ends the vacation he and Muriel are taking in Florida at a place, though not in the same room as Muriel tells her mother, where they had spent their honeymoon.

The story can be divided into three main parts; in the first part Muriel is talking long distance with her mother, who is in New York; in the second part Seymour is about a quarter of a mile down the beach with little Sybil
Carpenter; in the third part, which is rather like a coda, Seymour returns to the hotel and shoots himself.

Muriel and her mother are similar to the extent that they are clothes-conscious, social status-conscious, and shallow. While waiting to get her call through to her mother, Muriel read an article in a women's magazine called "Sex is Fun—or Hell"; Seymour had previously asked her what she did with that book of poetry he had sent her from Germany (probably the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke) and she does not know where the book is. Seymour calls his wife "Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948." The mother is worried that Seymour may lose control of himself and harm Muriel; the obvious remedy of course, for both mother and daughter, is more psychiatry for Seymour. Muriel knows a psychiatrist at the hotel: he plays bingo and can be found in the bar all day long, but Muriel finds it hard to talk to him seriously about Seymour because the bar is such a terribly noisy place. For the reader, the idea that this psychiatrist could help Seymour is preposterous.

Salinger interestingly depersonalizes Muriel by appearing to take very little interest in her himself. Her mother, of course, calls her "Muriel" but whenever Muriel says something, the statement is never followed or preceded by "Muriel said" but always by "said the girl." On page eleven there is no variation of the pattern; there are eight
"said the girl's." In the second part of the story the same distance between author and character is maintained with respect to Seymour; it is nearly always "said the young man" or "the young man said." However, whenever Sybil speaks and it is necessary to indicate that she is talking, her name is mentioned:

"My daddy's coming tomorrow on a nariplane," Sybil said, kicking sand.
"Not in my face, baby," the young man said, putting his hand on Sybil's ankle.1

The name "Sybil" is important enough to Salinger to be emphasized: the child is a prophetess, an oracle, or a fortuneteller because in her desire to play the game of looking for bananafish, she sees one and as a result Seymour loves her for her complete childish innocence and compatibility, and he identifies himself with her discovery by seeing himself as a bananafish.

The young man suddenly picked up one of Sybil's wet feet which were drooping over the end of the float, and kissed the arch.2

Sybil, of course, is not consciously a prophetess but Seymour assigns to her this role. Both communicate with each other far more successfully, certainly, than do Seymour and Muriel. Seymour's level of interpretation is not

2Ibid., p. 17.
intelligible to the child but the child's observations can be interpreted by Seymour as words of profound wisdom; she is individualized by Salinger and her sibylline stature is underlined by constant use of her name. Conversely, Salinger may have wished in this first Glass story to make Seymour a kind of Everyman; his stature and his individuality as a Glass family saint came as an afterthought and would be developed in stories subsequent to this one. But in this story there is no evidence for Seymour's sainthood; he cannot be a saint and commit suicide. Salinger, in killing off prematurely so important a member of his Glass family, has created difficulties for himself in his later attempts to justify Seymour's sainthood.

In the water, while pushing the float on which Sybil is lying, Seymour explains the tragic life of the bananafish:

Well, they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas... Naturally, after that they're so fat they can't get out of the hole again. Can't fit through the door... They die.3

The bananas can be broadly interpreted as "things." Seymour's self-education consisted of collecting and

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3Ibid., p. 16.
absorbing a preponderance of wisdom directed toward the attainment of self-perfection. The Western mode of living, concerned as it is with the amassing of wealth and acquiring of all the accoutrements of civilization such as a wife and a formal education characterized by mediocrity and pragmatic values considered essential by society—all of these for Seymour cloy the spiritual life which demands perfection in all areas of endeavor and unalloyed dedication to this perfection. Seymour's dilemma was that he was caught in the net of materiality, he was married to a spiritual tramp, and he saw no way to extricate himself except by a bullet through the right temple. He, in this story at least, is not a complete mystic but he is close enough to this goal to be dissatisfied with anything less than perfection. To resign himself to imperfection in his present stage of spiritual development is to violate a vital principle; such violation constitutes for him a kind of prostitution. In his diary in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" (1955) which explains but does not change the circumstances of his suicide, he writes:

I'll champion indiscrimination till doomsday, on the ground that it leads to health and a kind of very real, enviable happiness. Followed purely it's the way of the Tao, and undoubtedly the highest way. But for a discriminating man to achieve this, it would mean that he would have to dispossess himself of poetry, go beyond poetry. That is, he couldn't possibly learn or drive himself to like bad poetry in the abstract, let alone
equate it with good poetry. He would have to drop poetry altogether. I said it would be no easy thing to do. Dr. Sims said I was putting it too stringently—putting it, he said, as only a perfectionist would. Can I deny it? ¹

Unwilling to compromise the desire for living a poetic life directed toward spiritual perfection with, virtually, the mandate to live without it, Seymour dies like the bananafish, but of his own volition, preferring not to wait until the malaise from which he suffers should become more virulent and more unendurable. In the short third part of the story Seymour reprimands the woman in the elevator for looking at his feet.

"If you want to look at my feet, say so," said the young man. "But don't be a God-damned sneak about it." ⁵

Seymour's remarks, an indication of his abnormal mental state, are shockingly amusing at first and they throw the reader off guard before being faced with the stark reality of the suicidal act. The impact of pulling the trigger is heightened by Seymour's startling remark to a strange woman. Seymour knows that human beings are gods with feet


⁵ Salinger, loc. cit., p. 17.
of clay and he resents his clay feet, his inability to live. They, symbolically, are responsible for his killing himself. When the woman looks at them, his reprimand is, in effect, also one directed against himself; it is his last protest against his own weakness as a human being, and it is his protest against society, as represented by the woman, which is forcing him into suicide. The remarks about feet by Seymour are not nearly so cryptic as they appear to be upon first reading the story. At the age of sixteen Seymour had offered a Zen critique of the Gettysburg address to the shocked radio audience of the "It's a Wise Child" show:

I'd said that 51,112 men were casualties at Gettysburg, and that if someone had to speak at the anniversary of the event, he should simply have come forward and shaken his fist at the audience and then walked off. . . .

Seymour figuratively shakes his fist at the woman looking at his feet; it will be remembered that he kisses Sybil's feet. The woman is representative of a fully-gorged porcine bananafish; Sybil is only slightly ensnared thus far; she is merely jealous of Sharon Lipschutz because of Seymour's attentions to her. Seymour can love the child; he is contemptuous of the woman in the elevator—and very probably of himself for what he is about to do.

6Wakefield, loc. cit., p. 78.
It is significant that Room 507 where Seymour prepares to die, smells of new calfskin luggage and nail-lacquer remover.

He glanced at the girl lying asleep on one of the twin beds. Then he went over to one of the pieces of luggage, opened it, and from under a pile of shorts and undershirts he took out an Ortgies calibre 7.65 automatic. He released the magazine, looked at it, then reinserted it. He cocked the piece. Then he went over and sat down on the unoccupied twin bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.7

Muriel is asleep (she has never been awakened spiritually) and the sleeping arrangement suggests the existing gulf between the girl and the young man. He both glances and looks at the girl, not at "Muriel," or not at "his wife," because she is basic to much of his inability to live. He has also maintained until the end the gulf between them by sitting down on the unoccupied twin bed.

Gwynn and Blotner write:

Salinger skillfully manipulates the images which suggest an underlying motif: Seymour's sexual inadequacy. There is his obsession with trees, his story of the engorged bananafish trapped in the banana hole, his paranoid suspicion that a woman is staring critically at his bare feet, and his choice of the pistol as the suicide weapon.8

7Salinger, loc. cit., p. 18.

In view of Seymour's high-level spiritual attainments and aesthetic sensitivity, however, it seems futile to try to explain him in terms of his despondency over a supposed sexual inadequacy. It is more plausible to assume that Seymour has outgrown the need for sexual gratification; this is one of the marks of a saint and Salinger in his later stories about him tries to keep his sainthood in focus. Although born into the world of nature where man, along with the animals, experiences hunger, sleep, fear, and sex, Seymour has advanced out of the world of nature toward the world of spirit where consideration of right and wrong and perfection of attainment are of prime importance to him. He has grown beyond mere animal nature into spiritual manhood. To apply ordinary criteria to him is unfair and illogical. Were all the soldiers in World War II sexually inadequate because of their attachment to their carbines, their Garands, and their Colt 45's--or to their 16-inch guns on their favorite battleship? Even applied to an ordinary person such as the average American G.I., the suggestion that a gun in his hand makes him immediately suspect sexually is indeed amusing. When one considers Seymour's extraordinary insights and desires, the suggestion that he too was sexually inadequate (from whose point of view, incidentally?) because he used a pistol with which to kill himself is even less plausible.
The above critics make another statement:

Because Seymour Glass and Sybil Carpenter are so preoccupied with their own feet, the story falls below the heights of "For Esme," but it still has a power beyond melodrama.9 Obviously they see no reason for feet in the story; if they could but find a reason for the feet, they might regard the story more highly. Upon close examination, Salinger's footwork in the story is not seen to be idle shuffling: meaning is apparent.

Another critic, Maxwell Geismar,10 believes that because Seymour has pushed Sybil on the float out into the Florida ocean (the water is not quite up to his chest) there are intimations of his intention to murder the child. There is no support for so cold-blooded an assumption; Seymour is not vindictive, vengeful, or crazy; his whimsical remark to Sybil about his liking Sharon Lipschutz is consistent with his high regard for children and animals:

"What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You probably won't believe this, but some little girls like to poke that little dog with balloon

9Ibid., p. 21.

What possible reason could Seymour have for considering the thought of drowning Sybil? If he is a lunatic, as Mrs. Fedder prefers to believe, then of course he is capable of infanticide--and that would make Mrs. Fedder right. In Salinger's fiction, however, the Mesdames Fedders are never right. They are the enemy to sensitive and superior souls like the Glass children. It is this enemy that the Glass children must eventually learn to accept, to tolerate, and even to love. Franny and Zooey Glass learn this hard fact of life but Seymour, of all people, prefers not to.

Seymour resembles Melville's Bartleby in his determination, at least in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," not to come to terms with the life that he sees himself forced to live. He tried, both through marriage and through psychoanalysis, to become adjusted to his society, but he could not, finally, betray his convictions and go along with the mob.

High school students must not be left with the impression that Seymour's suicide was noble or praiseworthy because he steadfastly preferred perfection in life rather than mediocrity in thought and action. Seymour failed to learn how to live life, so all of his wisdom relative to

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the meaning of life went for nothing. In "Zooey," Franny and Zooey succeed where Seymour failed: they devise a formula for continuing to exist in the midst of all their "enemies"; it is a very simple formula: change the enemies to friends and through practice of non-attachment do not become too personally involved even with the newly-found friends. If Franny and Zooey can continue to exist in a now "friendly" world without compromising their desire to live on their own terms as artists and as a part of the human race, then their formula is one Seymour should have followed. It will be interesting to study how Salinger in future stories elaborates the life of Seymour to justify his saintliness. The flaw of suicide for the West is a very deep one to rub out, but it can probably be done, as Salinger has done in "Teddy," by turning to the appropriate philosophies of the East for support and justification.
"Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut"

Suburban, sophisticated Connecticut is normally not thought of as a place where one could find Uncle Wiggily, the kindly old rheumatic rabbit gentleman made famous by Howard Garis. But the title goes far toward explaining the story: kindness and love can be found in a wasteland of alcohol and boredom--and, as is quite usual in Salinger's fiction, a little child shall lead them, the adults, to make the discovery.

Eloise Wengler has invited a college chum, Mary Jane, to her home for a visit. They begin drinking and reminiscing about college friends. Mary Jane's reaction much of the time to even the most commonplace remark is "Marvellous." She is a stupid, fatuous person, though undoubtedly good-looking, who does have the insight to remark about Eloise's callousness concerning the death of their college teacher, "Eloise, you're getting hard as nails."12 Eloise's marriage to her husband, Lew, is a loveless one and her bitterness is directed not only toward him but also toward her small daughter, Ramona, who is myopic, and who has no playmates except those she imagines for herself such as, currently, Jimmy Jimmereeno. Jimmy is

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12Ibid., p. 21.
fortunate in that she wears boots instead of the pesky galoshes that Ramona has to put on or take off every time she leaves or enters the house.

As the liquor begins to take effect, Eloise remembers Walt. "He was the only boy I ever knew that could make me laugh. I mean really laugh." Eloise is still in love with him and she tenderly remembers his saying "Poor Uncle Wiggily" when she fell and twisted her ankle. Walt, a member of the Glass family—his twin brother is Waker, the Roman Catholic priest—was killed during the war by a freak explosion. Eloise has to cry as she relates the circumstances of Walt's death. After Eloise has shown over the telephone her contempt for her husband and has awakened Ramona in order to move her over into the center of her bed—she sleeps at the edge of the bed so as not to hurt Mickey Mickeranno (Jimmy, according to Ramona, earlier was run over and killed)—she experiences an epiphany, a sudden flash of insight which is the climax of the story:

She picked up Ramona's glasses and, holding them in both hands, pressed them against her cheek. Tears rolled down her face, wetting the lenses. "Poor Uncle Wiggily," she said over and over again.

13 Ibid., p. 25.

14 Ibid., p. 31.
Eloise has identified herself with her daughter, Ramona. Both have led unhappy lives, Eloise in her marriage and Ramona because the loveless and nagging criticism of Eloise. Eloise’s pre-marital life was happy as represented by the sensitive and fun-loving relationship with Walt. She contrasts her tender and innocent love for Walt with her current degeneration into hardness and inhumanity. She sees that Ramona’s Jimmy Jimmereeno has been Ramona’s equivalent for her Walt:

...a symbol of the secret image of love, unhampere by awful reality. Ramona characterizes Jimmy by green eyes, black hair, and no freckles (he is unique); by lacking parents (he can be monopolized); by a sword (he is a masculine, military hero). Walt is unique in his humor and tenderness, is not connected with having or being parents, and is an ironical military hero—in that altogether “he felt he was advancing in the Army, but in a different direction from everybody else” by being about to lose insignia in each promotion; furthermore, he was really killed while in the Army. ... 15

When Eloise realizes that Ramona believes that Jimmy has been run over and killed and that Ramona has replaced him with Mickey, she understands that her daughter is as lonely as she is, and Ramona, too, is "Poor Uncle Wiggily," for her eyes are her disability just as at one time with Walt, Eloise’s sprained ankle was her disability.

15Gwynn and Blotner, loc. cit., pp. 22-23.
The child has led the mother back to an appreciation of tenderness, humaneness, and innocence. Although intoxicated, Eloise feels love and sympathy for her daughter whom she has long cut off from love; she tucks in the blankets and kisses her before leaving the room. She goes unsteadily downstairs and wakes Mary Jane.

"Mary Jane. Listen. Please," Eloise said, sobbing. "You remember our freshman year, and I had that brown-and-yellow dress I bought in Boise, and Miriam Ball told me nobody wore those kind of dresses in New York, and I cried all night?" Eloise shook Mary Jane's arm. "I was a nice girl," she pleaded, "wasn't I?" 16

There is tragic remorse in Eloise's pleading to be reassured even by the frivolous Mary Jane that at one time at least she was innocent and naive, that she could laugh and love and be friendly rather than condemn, deride, hate, and be "sophisticated." The story is a repudiation of that kind of experience which destroys innocence. It would seem that for Eloise her innocence can never be recovered; she has to be satisfied with the memory of innocence. But her sense of loss may be strong enough to save her. Because of her compassion for both Walt and her daughter, she has rejoined humanity, and Uncle Wiggily will feel at home even in Connecticut. When Eloise is nostalgic for Walt, her self-pity is in control; when she identifies herself with

16 Salinger, loc. cit., pp. 31-32.
Ramona, her self-pity is externalized into the compassion which includes her daughter.\(^{17}\) To a degree Eloise has moved toward remembering how to love, a knowledge that constituted a major part of her early innocence.

Gwynn and Blotner stress the identification of Eloise with her daughter because of their common bond of unprepossessing faces.

"What I need is a cocker spaniel or something," she tells Mary Jane, the confidante of the story. "Somebody that looks like me." And to her home-coming husband, whom she callously leaves stranded at the station, she says: "I'm not funny. Really I'm not. It's just my face." This is Eloise's salvation, for it enables her to release her secret lost love into an active bond, albeit brief and drunken, with her myopic daughter, as she puts her to bed. . . .\(^{18}\)

The point that these authors make is based, however, upon shaky evidence. Eloise resents the resemblance of Ramona to her father and grandmother. Because of Ramona's weak eyes and the necessity for wearing thick-lensed glasses, she is certainly not a beautiful child, and so her father and grandmother are probably not handsome people. If Eloise and Ramona do not resemble each other, we can very easily assume that Eloise is a pretty woman; Salinger specifically calls attention to "her thin but very pretty


\(^{18}\)Gwynn and Blotner, *loc. cit.*, p. 23.
legs." Her remark about the cocker spaniel refers to the dog as rather a love object; she feels that the child, her husband, and his mother are solidly against her. We should not forget, also, that a cocker spaniel is a very good-looking animal.

The other remark, "It's just my face," is too trite, lacking other evidence, to mean that Eloise has an unprepossessing face. It is more to the point to believe that one reason she has not liked Ramona has been that Ramona is homely, but now with the matured insight which she achieves, she can forgive Ramona her looks and see that Ramona now is "Poor Uncle Wiggily," just as Eloise herself once was, and Eloise now can assume Walt's old role of the comforter and the compassionate one.

The story is skilfully wrought, but it will be difficult for high school students to understand its full meaning without help. It is easy for the teacher to imagine the students coming to the end of the story with puzzled expressions on their faces. Most will want to know what happened. Why does Eloise plead with Mary Jane to tell her that she once was a nice girl? High school students probably have not had much experience co-creating with an author, reading him so closely that they pick up his various clues along the way, to be held in suspension, until they can use them at the end of the story to explain an
otherwise obscure climax and denouement. Just as the student has to learn to read Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner because their techniques of writing are not immediately obvious and commonplace, so with Salinger. He plays fair; consequently, he has the right to expect logical conclusions by the reader because he has dropped hints and made preparation throughout the story for the ending however obscure it might at first appear to be. Salinger involves the reader if only because his meaning is not immediately obvious; one must go back over the story to study the clues and to review the nuances of characterization which change a name into an individual. When the high school student can be helped to read and to study in this careful way, he too can be expected to make his own discoveries, which is part of the thrill of reading good fiction. Of course many students will at first not like an author who requires such close attention. But the English class should be a place where literary subtleties can be examined, where the students are led to stretch their powers of interpretation, and where they can gain a sounder basis for appreciation of literature. Salinger would seem to be an ideal author for capable classes to study: he makes the student stretch, and the student, unlike Tantalus, is rewarded for his effort.
A place in the story where students may well exercise their powers of insight is found in the passage in which Eloise is talking about Walt and Lew, her husband. Mary Jane asks,

"Have you ever told Lew about him—I mean at all?"
"Oh," Eloise answered, "I started to, once. But the first thing he asked me was what his rank was."
"What was his rank?"
"Hal" said Eloise.
"No, I just meant—"
Eloise laughed suddenly, from her diaphragm.19

Eloise's contempt for her husband is subtly transferred to Mary Jane, when Mary Jane asks the same question that Lew had asked. From then on in the story when Eloise tells Mary Jane that her husband is unintelligent, phony, and dishonest, she is, in effect, placing Mary Jane, who is too dull to catch the implication, in the same category. And when Eloise says to Mary Jane, "... what's the use of talking? Let's drop it, I'll just depress you,"20 she is stating the difficulty of her communication not only with Mary Jane but with her husband. It is an interesting trick in writing which Salinger uses to link two characters together so that what is said of one serves to describe the other. This technique saves time, and since Lew never

20Ibid., p. 27.
appears in the story, the fact that he is like Mary Jane does not hurt his individuality. Salinger's literary sociogram is ingenious and successful.

There are aspects of this story which will be unpalatable for some adults, and these adults will feel that these aspects quite automatically rule out the story for study by high school students. The language is occasionally mildly vulgar. Eloise and Mary Jane are getting drunk; Mary Jane tells Eloise about a girl named Jackson, who told Mary Jane about almost getting raped by a colored soldier in Germany. If these incidentals seem shocking to some readers, then the English teacher should not stubbornly insist upon teaching the story. There is perhaps a kind of immorality in merely attempting to teach a story which is unacceptable, on moral grounds, to students and parents and administrators. Other methods will have to be found to show that, analogically, this story is not written to sanction the use of vulgar language, nor to illustrate the pleasures of drinking, nor to stimulate sexually by relating the Jackson incident. The large and honest purpose of this story is extremely moral: a mother confesses her inhumanity and loss of innocence and desires to make amends by feeling love and sympathy for her daughter. If a character becomes moral, she certainly has to have been immoral in order that the change can be
effected from immorality to morality; for a reader not to tolerate the presence of unobtrusive immoral incidents in a story is to allow for no change in a character—a prejudice that can emasculate the art of fiction in its efforts to depict life.

It is a high school English teacher's responsibility to help students to discriminate good from bad writing, moral from immoral purpose in writing. A story such as "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" can serve as an excellent vehicle for making this very important analysis and discrimination.

"Just Before the War With the Eskimos"

Ginnie Mannox, fifteen, and Selena Graff, a classmate at Miss Basehoar's school, have played tennis together for five straight Saturday mornings. Selena always brings fresh cans of tennis balls but even so, Virginia resents always having to pay the cab fare home. She considers Selena the biggest drip at the school and loses no opportunity to tell others of her opinion. The two girls come to the Graff apartment after playing tennis and Ginnie waits for Selena to get the money; Selena's mother is ill
and Selena may have to awaken her to obtain the money but this makes no difference to Ginnie. The two girls are not at all friendly toward each other.

While Ginnie is waiting, Franklin, Selena's brother, comes into the living room. To Ginnie, he is funny-looking, even "goofy": he is in pajamas, has no slippers, and he wears glasses. His mouth is open. He is holding a cut finger wrapped in toilet paper. He tells Ginnie that her sister Joan is "Queen of the goddam snobs." He has written eight letters to her and she has never answered. Joan has rejected him and the Army has rejected him; the fact that he quit college suggests that he was rejected there also; Selena thinks of him as "a character." Ginnie does not reject him; she responds sympathetically to his conversation. As he looks out of the window at the people on the street he regards them with a mixture of pity and contempt:

"Goddam fools... They're all goin' over to the goddam draft board," he said. "We're gonna fight the Eskimos next. Know that?"21

Just as society in all departments has rejected him, he reciprocates by feeling superior to society.

After Franklin has left the room in order to shave, Ginnie looks for someplace to hide or throw away the

21 Ibid., p. 39.
chicken sandwich he has given her. The entrance of Eric, Franklin's friend, prevents her from disposing of the sandwich. Eric is extremely effeminate—a description he would no doubt consider a compliment. He talks in italics; his concern for clothes is patently girlish and the fact that he is dog hairs from head to foot because of the sojourn of his mother's dog in his apartment is a matter of no small concern to him. He, too, was never in the Army.

When Selena returns at the end of the story with the money for her half of the taxi fares, Ginnie does not wish to take it. Although earlier in the story Ginnie has said that she needs the money in order to go to the movies, now at the end she offers to call Selena later so that they might arrange to spend the evening together. On her way home she thinks of trying to dispose of the chicken sandwich but she cannot make herself throw it away. She puts it back into her pocket.

A few years before, it had taken her three days to dispose of the Easter chick she had found dead on the sawdust in the bottom of her wastebasket.22

Upon first reading the story one may have the feeling that very little has happened. The story is kept low-key with little crescendo of feeling or increase of narrative tempo. A second reading shows that Ginnie,

22Ibid., p. 44.
antagonistic at first toward Selena finally becomes sympathetic and friendly toward her. Franklin, rejected by society, makes overtures of friendship to Ginnie, offering her a glass of milk and a chicken sandwich. Ginnie has gained insight into the tragic plight of Franklin and she sees his gift as one of good-hearted generosity. She then perhaps feels "small" in her demands upon Selena to pay up the money she feels Selena owes her. Ginnie's change of attitude is further quickened when she understands that Franklin has, certainly, been forced, by the normal society that has rejected him, to accept the questionable company of Eric. Franklin's degeneracy, if it is to be so labelled, is not altogether a personal responsibility. Of course Ginnie is only fifteen, and although she probably does not see the situation in terms of societal rejection, degeneracy, and compensatory acceptance of Eric by Franklin, she feels the sadness in Selena's family over this unfortunate misfit of a son and brother. Ginnie perhaps feels intuitively that no member of the human race, however initially funny-looking can be written off as a completely expendable item; he must be taken account of, especially if he has shown his kindness and consideration by offering a gift, even though it is only a chicken sandwich. Ginnie accepts the gift and changes from negation to affirmation,
from rejection of Selena's friendship unless it is on her own terms, to acceptance and sympathy for others irrespective of personal prejudice.

When Franklin observes that the people in the street are going to fight the Eskimos next, he casts doubt upon society's competence to judge him as it has. He cruelly implies that society is not a fit judge of what is best for itself; the height of absurdity would be to fight the Eskimos, a helpless, primitive, tiny minority, the killing off of which could serve no possible civilized purpose. He implies that people are so foolish as to fight or kill only for the sake of maiming or exterminating. He, Franklin, has been a minority, fought against and maimed for what intelligent purpose? He is rebelling at the injustice of having been judged by an incompetent judge—a force which does not know who or what he is. Ginnie, in sympathizing with Franklin, also has tentatively repudiated society's indictment of Franklin.

Quite as usual, Salinger does not tell the reader what is to be found in his story but he has shown that there is much to discover if one cares to examine.

Gwynn and Blotner suggest that Franklin is suffering "from a paranoia aggravated by having been 4-F in World War II."23 This is not quite accurate. Franklin may feel

hunted and persecuted, it is true, but he is very much aware that the hunters and persecutors are very silly and foolish; his realization of this fact releases him from any obligation to remain awe-struck or to take their power seriously. A paranoiac has systematized delusions, perhaps of grandeur or of persecution. Franklin has no delusions; he is much more wide-awake and aware than those who are themselves deluded as to his spiritually legitimate and basic identity. Franklin lampoons the system when he says:

"... this time all the old guys're gonna go. Guys around sixty. Nobody can go unless they're around sixty," he said. "Just give 'em shorter hours is all... . Big deal." 24

He has no delusions of grandeur about a society that is so ridiculous. But yet, when Ginnie says, "You wouldn't have to go, anyway... .," and Franklin replies, "I know," one realizes that Franklin, in spite of his awareness, nevertheless would rather like to be a part of the foolishness. He is alone, and although his isolation has helped him toward wisdom, it has not concomitantly provided comfort.

One critic 25 has suggested that the chicken sandwich might be suggestive of the Eucharist, administered in


this story to Ginnie, by Franklin a caricature of an El Greco-type crucified Christ. Franklin's abnormal heart condition suggests his ability to love in a loveless world and his job in the airplane factory which lasted for a thirty-seven month period corresponds to the length of Christ's ministry. Also, the airplane-making may be understood as being a metaphorical implementation of the Christ mission: spiritual levitation. And when Franklin offers the sandwich to Ginnie and says, "Take it, for Chrissake," he really means "for Christ's sake." The sandwich can be equated with the Easter chick, dead for three days before Ginnie could dispose of it; this chick in turn, suggests the body of Christ.

One must admit that the symbolism is there if one wishes to exploit it. Franklin then in consorting with Eric has found his publican and sinner; Franklin is performing a ministry, not caught in a net of degeneracy. Salinger is quite cryptic in "Just Before the War With the Eskimos" as to the acceptance or rejection of Christ. The title of the story hints, also that there is an urgency to this acceptance, for if we are so foolish as to have to hunt down individuals, a Franklin or an Eskimo, these are our last moments before doomsday; we are foolishly capable of anything, even our own self-destruction; and certainly in
not being able to love, society is committing Sui (Self)-
cide already. The war with the Eskimos, according to the
title, is imminent and the question very obviously is: what
are we going to do about it?

The story for senior high school students,
initially, will be difficult to decipher but the teacher's
guidance in helping the students discover the themes and
techniques of character development can make the story
intelligible at a higher level than that immediately per-
ceived. The ages of Ginnie and Selena are congenial to
appreciation by high school students; Franklin is twenty-
four and Eric is in his early thirties. Students like to
feel that they are capable of understanding their peers, or
even their superiors, for that matter, hence an easy
rapport between student and story-characters can be reached
quickly in this story. The story, unprepossessing at
first, takes on significance as one examines it closely;
students can be led to see this during their study. As a
result, they will recognize that the story is not light and
trivial but a thoughtful treatment of a meaningful theme.
"The Laughing Man"

"The Laughing Man" is a difficult story to explain because it is a story both about John Gedsudski, a young man in his early twenties who is the recreation leader and Chief of the Comanches, twenty-five pre-teenage boys, and it is also the serial story told by Gedsudski to the boys about the imaginary Laughing Man. The narrator is an adult who remembers his experiences as of age nine when he was one of the Comanches.

Gedsudski, though an outstanding athlete, is not particularly prepossessing in either appearance or in family background; however, to the boys he is their beloved and respected ideal. He picks up the boys at their school and takes them to one of the public parks in New York for an afternoon of baseball, football, or soccer; on rainy afternoons he takes the boys to the Museum of Natural History or to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Regularly, the Chief quiets or entertains the boys by telling them another installment of his story about the Laughing Man.

The only son of a wealthy missionary couple, the Laughing Man was kidnapped in infancy by Chinese bandits. When the wealthy missionary couple refused (from a religious conviction) to pay the ransom for their son, the bandits, signally piqued, placed the little fellow's head in a carpenter's vise and gave the appropriate lever several turns to the right.26

26Salinger, loc. cit., pp. 45-46.
The hideous Laughing Man had to wear a mask to cover his face; he appeared always to be laughing because of the "enormous oval cavity below the nose." He befriended the animals of the forest and learned their languages; they did not think of him as ugly even when he removed his mask while talking to them. The Laughing Man became the wealthiest person in the world as a result of his career of crime. He extended his theater of operations by crossing over the Chinese border into Paris, France, where he was soon matching wits with the famous detective, Marcel Dufarge, and with his exquisite daughter, Mile. Dufarge.

The Laughing Man's four fast friends and confederates were Black Wing, a timber wolf; Omba, a lovable dwarf; Hong, a giant tongueless Mongolian; and a gorgeous, nameless Eurasian girl who is in love with the Laughing Man.

In February, Mary Hudson, a Wellesley girl in a beaver coat, joins the Comanche group and successfully plays baseball with them; she is, the boys perceive, evidently a special friend of the Chief's. In April, the Laughing Man is captured by the Dufarges and at the same time something has happened to the relationship between Mary and John.

The last good look I had at Mary Hudson, she was over near third base crying. The Chief had hold of the sleeve of her beaver coat but she got away from him. She ran off the field onto the cement
path and kept running till I couldn't see her any-
more. The Chief didn't go after her. He just
stood watching her disappear.27

When the Laughing Man shows his face to Mile. Dufarge she
faints and her father shoots him. The Laughing Man manages
to survive the shooting by regurgitation of the bullets;
this feat so astonishes the Dufarges that they drop dead on
the spot. Here is where the story of the Laughing Man
could have ended—he could have survived, always successful,
ever to die, but Gedsudski, in narrating the last install-
ment, has the Laughing Man, still barbwired to the tree,
refuse from Omba, the vial of eagles' blood which is the
only sustenance capable of reviving him, and then pull off
his mask and die. The Laughing Man has been the boys' hero
for months; his sudden death has a traumatic effect upon
the boys: Billy Walsh bursts into tears and the narrator
goes home with knees shaking and teeth chattering.

It is difficult to establish a one-to-one relation-
ship between all of the characters of both stories;
Salinger, certainly, did not wish, in a story so fantastic
as Gedsudski's narrative to the boys, to establish obvious
parallels to persons in real life. The parallels also are
blurred because the narrator, an adult, is recounting his
experience of childhood when he was a Comanche.

27Ibid., p. 54.
I had no idea what was going on between the Chief and Mary Hudson (and still haven't, in any but a fairly low, intuitive sense)...

At nine years of age the narrator was more interested in the adventures of the Laughing Man than he was in the adventures of John Gedusdski; however, Gedusdski is explained by the adventures of the Laughing Man, for his story is extravagantly autobiographical: Gedusdski is the Laughing Man. He is not handsome; he may have been illegitimate; he has learned from his foster parents, the bandits, how to be prosperous. In crossing the Chinese border he has left the ranks of faceless humanity and has come to Paris where he meets antagonists such as the Dufarges who are worthy of his expenditure of genius and cleverness. Mlle. Dufarge is Mary Hudson, at first an adversary because she is from Wellesley, wears a beaver coat, and is beautiful, and John attends N.Y.U., wears a leather jacket, has no gloves, and is ugly. Later John and Mary are in love, but finally, because of her social-status-conscious father who, as Dufarge, relentlessly hunts down the Laughing Man, Mary and John are forced apart and "die" to each other.

When the Laughing Man discovers that the Dufarge's have killed Black Wing, his best friend--symbolically the

\[28\text{Ibid., p. 54.}\]
love he is anxious to give—there is no further point to his continuing to live. Gedsudski and the Laughing Man expire together; Gedsudski's aspiration to love Mary has been killed off by Mary and by her father (or family); this tragic reduction of a lover to an unloved mortal is symbolized by the reduction, of his own volition through despair, of the omnipotent Laughing Man to the unmasked corpse. The boys only vaguely understand that John has lost Mary as a sweetheart but they feel deeply the irreparable loss of their hero, the Laughing Man. Their trauma over the loss is as great as John's trauma over the loss of Mary. The Laughing Man can never exist for John again because failure is tantamount to death.

The story of the Laughing Man was John's projection of himself as a successful person, overcoming all obstacles of humble birth, low social status, ordinary appearance, and evident poverty. When he experienced the final crushing defeat of rejection by the girl he loved, he could no longer project himself as a success by holding to the image of the Laughing Man. The death of the Laughing Man is inevitable from John's point of view; however, for the boys, it is catastrophic, demolishing at one blow their world of innocence and pushing them ruthlessly into a new insecure world of experience: if their ideal immortal hero can die, who will take his place? Is the journey from
fantasy to reality, from innocence to experience, from faith to disillusionment, worth the price one has to pay in shock and trauma? Gedusdski evidently felt that the answer must be yes; he loved the Comanches; he was their good shepherd for he found them when they were lost and he sympathetically doctored them when they were hurt. He would not sadistically disillusion them if it were not time, in his opinion, that they be weaned away from fantasy. Someone sometime has to inform the child that his ideas of Santa Claus need revising. In Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, a similar idea is presented: Holden Caulfield observes that if children riding the carrousel want to reach for the brass ring, they must be allowed to do so, and if they fall off, this too must be permitted to happen; one cannot protect children eternally from the pit-falls they will encounter in living. Through experience of learning what is good or bad for them they will order their actions. Gedusdski, forced to return to reality upon losing the love of Mary Hudson, can no longer honestly protect the Comanches from reality by continuing his fantasy of the Laughing Man. The cost for the Comanches was high but when has the loss of innocence ever been completely pleasant and free of concomitant anxieties and misgivings?
Because of the story's intricacy and sophistication, even able senior high school English students will have a difficult time developing a suitable interpretation. These students, so far, have had very little help from the critics; Gwynn and Blotner have allotted only two and one-half pages to the story in their short monograph. Once the students are helped to identify the Laughing Man with John Gedsudski, however, the story will begin to take on meaning for them. Subtleties, though, in the story are so rampant that careful reading will be required to discover them. Cannot the animals which the Laughing Man befriended and who did not think him ugly be equated with the Comanches themselves? Does not the narrator mingle adult narration and childish reactions so skilfully that the reader retains the perspective of realizing that "The Laughing Man" is a child's story told by an adult? Does not Mary's joining the Comanche bus, on Fifth Avenue around the Sixties, and always after a dental appointment, suggest that she must use a ruse to see John? Against whom is the ruse directed—her father? Does her insistence upon using a catcher's mitt as a fielder's glove help to characterize her? If the Chinese bandits can be equated with John's contemporary society,

29 Gwynn and Blotner, loc. cit., pp. 24-27.
what reasons might he have to fight them, to subdue them, but not to kill them? If the English teacher would like to live with the story a bit longer himself before suggesting it as a student reading assignment, the desire is understandable, for to be satisfied with a level beyond the simplest level requires study.

"Down at the Dinghy"

Once again in a Salinger story, a child, this time four-year-old Lionel Tannenbaum, the son of Boo Boo Tannenbaum, née Glass, holds the center of the stage. When the story begins, Sandra, Boo Boo's maid and cook, and Mrs. Snell, a cleaning lady who comes to work at the Tannenbaum summer residence at the lake periodically, are talking about what is worrying Sandra very much, even though she says that she is not worried: Lionel has overheard Sandra make a derogatory remark about his father. The reader does not know what this remark is until close to the end of the story; Salinger most effectively holds the suspense intact throughout.

But Boo Boo is trying to get Lionel to tell her why he has run away again. This time he has isolated himself in the dinghy tied to the dock. At age three he ran away
because a child in New York Central Park, Boo Boo says, told him, "You stink, kid." At the age of two-and-a-half, Lionel ran away "down in the laundry" of their apartment building. "Down in the laundry," and "down at the dinghy" mean depression for Lionel; his mother is having great difficulty getting him to tell her what is the matter. She tries to play childish games with him but he will not allow himself to become amused; he is the little lion his name connotes. He shows his rebellion by flipping a pair of underwater goggles belonging to his Uncle Webb—before that to his Uncle Seymour—overboard into the lake. His mother has prepared a prettily wrapped package containing a key chain with more keys on it than even his father had; he wants this very much, but this also he throws into the lake. Throwing the keys into the lake, though, is too much for him; he starts to cry, allows Boo Boo to comfort him, and tells her, "Sandra—told Mrs. Smell—that Daddy's a big sloppy—kike."

Just perceptibly, Boo Boo flinched. . . . "Well, that isn't too terrible. . . . Do you know what a kike is, baby?"

. . . . his answer was delivered muffled but intelligible, into the warmth of Boo Boo's neck. "It's one of those things that go up in the air," he said. "With string you hold."30

30 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 65.
Perhaps one can say that this is a story of anti-semitism, but anti-semitism is just another manifestation of a deeper malady of the human race: the inability to love. The quotation from Dostoevski which Sergeant "X" wrote in the story, "For Esme--with Love and Squalor," is again a major theme in "Down at the Dinghy":

"Fathers and teachers, I ponder "What is Hell?"
I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love.

The little Lionel has met the enemy of love in Sandra, and his childish action has been to retreat, even from his mother, rejecting his mother's love by throwing her gift of the key chain overboard; then perceiving that this is wrong, that love should be returned with love, he is contrite and he desires to make amends by accepting his mother's advances and by acceding to her wishes that he tell her what is wrong. Lionel comes from isolation to fraternity with his mother, from hell to heaven; this same course of action will probably never be duplicated by Sandra since her prejudice precludes being able to love. Lionel, at age four, was Sandra when he threw away the goggles and the keys, but he learns and repairs the damage to his mother's heart. Sandra has not learned, nor is she prepared to make amends. She insists that she will not worry about her remark---and Mrs. Snell also offers her the recurrent advice not to worry---but Sandra does worry and
she is probably anxious that her remark might jeopardize her employment. Her anxiety does not appear to derive from any feeling of remorse; talking to Mrs. Snell, she makes a second derogatory remark, this time about Lionel: "He's gonna have a nose just like the father."  

Since the story concerns inability to love, it is easy and perhaps necessary to apply a larger meaning to the story. The story starts at "a little after four o'clock on an Indian Summer afternoon." It is late in man's history for the enormity of prejudice and hate to be abroad. Mrs. Snell takes pride in her hand-me-down hat with the Hattie Carnegie label, her folder of matches filched not from the Stork Club but from a lady for whom she cleans house, and her custom of having tea; she is unconcerned about the feelings of a small boy or the airing of her friend's prejudice. Sandra is seen with her mouth set tight and having an enormous waistline. She is not appreciative of the natural setting of the summer home. To her, the Tannenbaum's boat represents a waste of money. She does not see that love abounds in this household; her callousness toward the feelings of others is the cause of her own

31Ibid., p. 58.

32Ibid., p. 57.
selfish anxiety and the misery of others. The Sandras and the Mrs. Snells—naively but significantly Mrs. Smell to Lionel—are still keeping the earth in an uproar.

When Lionel says that a kike goes up in the air with a string, it is a wonderful moment for Boo Boo. Her child has not yet lost his innocence; he is safe a while longer from the excruciating experiences yet to be undergone with the Sandras and the Snells of this world—experiences loaded with anti-semitism, anti-understanding, anti-communication, anti-brotherhood, anti-freedom, all subsumed under the designation of "hate." It is a time for celebration for Boo Boo and her son. They will get pickles and eat them in the car, get Daddy, bring him home, and make him take them for a sail. They will race across the surface of the water, just as they now race back to the house. Of course Lionel wins. He, the child, is always the winner when he is loved and can return that love; he is innocent and not yet completely aware of the terror, madness, and insanity to be found when he leaves the security of love to enter a broad and alien world. Boo Boo seems passionately to be grasping the Eternal Now. The Past and the Future are both dreams, of which there have been and will continue to be nightmares. But Now, all is happiness and love; it must be enjoyed to the fullest.
Some of the above ideas, used in discussion with students about this story, will help the students to appreciate Salinger's concern, through his characters, for the feelings of others and his concern that delinquents in the art of loving the human race somehow, sometime, learn to correct the error of their ways before irreparable damage is done to the innocent. The innocent, in a larger sense, may be so by virtue of birth, race, or creed, or they may be innocent merely because they are existent as human or animal. There should be reverence, not contempt for life: Lionel was threatened because his little friend, Naomi, held captive a worm in her thermos bottle. Teachers who like a didactic, ethically instructive story can find much to teach in this story.

But there is art in the story, also. The four characters perceptibly grow more individualistic. So innocent an observation as Lionel's, "You aren't an admiral. You're a lady,"\(^{33}\) accrues several different meanings. It is a child's remark which means that Boo Boo cannot be an admiral because admirals are men or that Sandra and Mrs. Snell are not genuine ladies but Boo Boo is, or that Boo Boo can love and thus is placed in a different category for

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 61.
Lionel from Sandra and Mrs. Snell. The student may take his choice or discover new meanings for the line, but the advancement of the characterization process of both Lionel and Boo Boo, and perhaps even of Sandra and Snell, does not lapse. Holding in suspense until the end of the story the actual remark of Sandra about Lionel's Daddy provides increased tension which, when finally broken, allows a swift and satisfying denouement. After the storm it is fine to be thinking of going sailing. The reader shares the happiness of mother and son.

This story about a little boy has no stronger language than the anti-semitism of Sandra. Out of deference to Lionel's innocence, no doubt, the language is chaste and free of passionate expletives. This consistent unity of purpose in a story is a Salinger hallmark. This unity is satisfying and instructive for the high school student and his teacher interested in studying a work of art.
"For Esmé - With Love and Squalor"

Gwynn and Blotner\(^3\) regard "For Esmé - With Love and Squalor" as Salinger's best story, calling it the high point in Salinger's art, his major fictional victory. It may or may not be the most excellent story in the Salinger canon, but it would seem to be ideal for study by senior high school students because of its clean, simple structure, its clear-cut theme, and its non-cryptic narrative style.

The narrator, an American ex-G.I., tells of an invitation he has received to attend a wedding in England. The bride is Esmé, whom he knew in England during the Second World War. She was thirteen years of age then and he had just completed a pre-Invasion training course in Devon. He had talked to her and to her little brother, Charles, in a tea-room after he had dropped in on her choir rehearsal at the church. She told him of herself, of the fact that her father and mother were both killed in the war, and she asked him to write a story for her--one that would be "extremely squalid and moving." He said that he would write the story, and "For Esmé-with Love and Squalor" is the result.

\(^3\)Gwynn and Blotner, loc. cit., p. 4.
In the second half of the story, in "the squalid, or moving part," the narration changes from the first-person point of view of the first half to that of the third person. Sergeant X is in Gaufurt, Bavaria, after V-E day trying to retain his sanity:

... he was a young man who had not come through the war with all his faculties intact. ... He took a cigarette from a pack on the table and lit it with fingers that bumped gently and incessantly against one another. ... he thought he felt his mind dislodge itself and teeter, like insecure baggage on an overhead rack. ... he pressed his hands hard against his temples. He held on tight for a moment. 35

That which Sergeant X has experienced in the war, the squalid, the evil, the sinful, the hateful and the inhumane, has been responsible for his breakdown, very nearly the loss of his life. He is well-qualified (reverting again to the first-person) to write about squalor for Esmé because he has lived it. The story, however, does not end with the triumph of squalor; the Sergeant receives a letter and her father's watch from Esmé and his appreciation of these tokens of love and affection is therapeutic--he will be able to sleep and

You take a really sleepy man, Esmé, and he always stands a chance of again becoming a man with all his fac--with all his f-a-c-u-l-t-i-e-s intact. 36

35 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 78.

36 Ibid., p. 85.
The narrator (and Sergeant X) wants to go to Esmé's wedding because she saved him from crack-up. This story about her and about himself, in lieu of his trip to England for the wedding, is besides being the fulfillment of his promise to her, a story as he calls it perhaps ironically, both edifying and instructive, which may be thought of as a gift not only to Esmé but also to others who may need love as desperately as he in 1945 needed it. In writing for Esmé, he is perpetuating for others the gift of love; he, in turn, is handing on Esmé's gift to him.

It is interesting to comb the story for examples of love and squalor. First, as to squalor, there are all shades of that, from the faintly visible to the starkly obvious and oppressive. The narrator's wife in 1950 helped him decide not to attend the wedding; this leans toward squalor, though mild, rather than toward love. In 1944 one of her letters mentioned that service at Schrafft's Eighty-eighth Street had fallen off; the sergeant remembers her letter for this loveless bit of news. When Esmé asked the sergeant in 1944 if he is very deeply in love with his wife, he does not answer her. Compare these loveless items with Esmé's conveyance in her letter of 1945 to Sergeant X of her warmest regards to his wife. The narrator's mother-in-law's visit to his home after the war will help prevent
his trip to the wedding; during the war she requests that he send her some cashmere yarn while he is overseas. This squalor is not serious, perhaps, but it can be compared significantly with Esmé’s love. The narrator’s comrades at Devon were letter-writers rather than good mixers; he had to go alone when he wished to visit the countryside or to go into the nearby town. The adult choir leader is faintly derisive of her young choir members; they respond by giving her "a steady, opaque look." Corporal Z (his name is also Clay), Sergeant X’s jeep partner during the war, is a phony, wearing the Combat Infantryman’s Badge when he is not authorized to do so. He asks Sergeant X to help write his letters home more intelligibly so he can make a better impression on his girl, Loretta, who is an amateur psychologist and who parrots inconsistent, shallow, and ready-made explanations for Sergeant X’s neuroses and for Corporal Z’s needless shooting of a cat. Sergeant X’s older brother in Albany requests that he send the kids a couple of bayonets or swastikas; the squalor of war and hate, not understood by this elder brother who has not lived through it, is complacently perpetuated by requesting bayonets and swastikas for his children.

The squalor of the times is epitomized in the book by Joseph Goebbels, *Die Zeit Without Beispiel* which Sergeant X finds in his room. The hate against man that Goebbels, the
Nazi Minister of Propaganda, paraded before the world and forced upon the human race was proclaimed and defended in this book, *The Unprecedented Era*, a testament of vicious genocide and of psychotic contempt of the Church. The owner of the book, a woman whom Sergeant X himself has arrested because she was a minor official in the Nazi party, has written on the flyleaf in German, "Dear God, life is hell."

Alone on the page, and in the sickly stillness of the room, the words appeared to have the stature of an uncontestable, even classic indictment. X stared at the page for several minutes, trying, against heavy odds, not to be taken in. Then, with far more zeal than he had done anything in weeks, he picked up a pencil stub and wrote down under the inscription, in English, "Fathers and teachers, I ponder 'What is hell?' I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love." He started to write Dostoevski's name under the inscription, but saw--with fright that ran through his whole body--that what he had written was almost entirely illegible. He shut the book.37

The inability to love is responsible for the squalor in the story and also in the world. Sergeant X is the focal point of squalor; his suffering is a by-product of a world bent upon creating hell for itself. He himself is so crushed by the weight of unmitigated hate heaped upon him by an unloving universe that he, too, has almost capitulated to the social obligation to live in hell.

As counterpoint to his suffering of being unable to love and of being unloved, there are Esmé and her little brother, Charles. At the tea-room, prior to D-Day, the sergeant is lonely and Esmé and Charles dispel his loneliness by liking him and by conversing with him; they are his contact with dignified and civilized peace-loving society. Esmé in having Charles kiss the sergeant goodbye, expresses, by proxy, her regard for him. Charles' riddle, "What did one wall say to the other wall?" with the answer, "Meet you at the corner!" is symbolic of the contact that humans must maintain with each other if love rather than squalor is to prevail in the human situation. At the end of the story when Sergeant X most needs to feel contact with decent human society, Esmé sends him the package containing her father's watch and her letter. The watch was one of her closest physical links with the father she loved and respected; to give it to the sergeant is perhaps comparable to giving away a pearl of great price. Charles at the end of the letter has written "Hello" ten times; he is meeting the sergeant at the corner which now for the sergeant is the nexus of sanity and insanity; he is maintaining contact and communication and showing regard and love for the sergeant. As is quite usual in Salinger's fiction, children again have shown that the way out of squalor is through love. Adultism would seem to be the state of having grown away
from a child-like perception of life that sees clearly, perhaps understands intuitively, that evil is the opposite of love and it has to be combatted by the never-ending search for that which can be loved. Sergeant X is saved from either madness or suicide; he will overcome his adultism and become again a man with all of his facilities intact. When Sergeant X can now sleep, he has taken the first step toward leaving hell behind him, toward ending his suffering, toward achieving a temporary respite where, oblivious to evil for awhile, he can repair both mind and body. He can awaken as a hopeful soul now fortified to battle squalor with love. Esmé's love for him saved him from despairing of his recovery.

The tone of the story is mildly ironic, satiric and jocular. X makes fun of the army and of himself as a soldier. He is cognizant of Esmé's humorous attempts to talk and appear older than she is, and he is wryly kind toward her, but he realizes that her interest in him is a compliment to both him and to the whole category of persons passing as adults. Salinger nowhere appears to be talking over the shoulder of the narrator, forcing an opinion or suggesting a conclusion. The art of narration is beautifully

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integrated with characters to be developed, events which must transpire, and truths which must manifest themselves. Those persons who have spent time in military service of perhaps almost any type, will no doubt painfully remember the cafish, crude, and often detestable Corporal Z's of their own experience. High school students will not be able to appreciate fully the pain of having to remember these persons but they will not miss the squalor evidenced in Salinger's portrayal.

When Corporal Z enters X's room,

He sighed heavily and said, "Christ almighty."
It meant nothing; it was the Army.39

This one line carries a world of meaning which high school students could adequately develop: the trite recognition of a savior of mankind who loved selflessly, opposed by the callous personal refusal of the modern soldier to act, except selfishly; the implicit suggestion that love in a human being is merely a vestigial trait, inoperative now for some time; the explicit notification to all people that in an army there is no chance for spiritual discipleship of the great teacher; and the ironic implication that Christ is not almighty, at least in the Army where squalor abounds.

Like all of Salinger's Nine Stories, "For Esmé" extends a

39Salinger, loc. cit., p. 80.
challenge to the reader, and high school students should be included as his readers, to see if, as Salinger has said, it is all there in the story and there is no need for him to explain the story further by lecture or by critical written defense.

One writer on Salinger guesses that the narrator and Sergeant X is Buddy Glass, the second eldest of the Glass children. This conclusion seems untenable when it is recalled from the story that X's older brother in Albany wanted bayonets and swastikas for his kids. Buddy's only older brother was Seymour, who, like himself, was in the military service also in Germany and who, though married during the war, had no children. In any case one cannot imagine the sensitive Seymour requesting of his brother that he send him bayonets and swastikas. Seymour's request would more certainly have been for books, perhaps for more poetry like that of Rainer Maria Rilke; in "A Perfect Day for Banana Fish," Seymour sent to his wife from Germany a book written in German by the "only great poet of the century." It is true that Seymour's wife, Muriel, might have been more appreciative of a gown from Paris, perfume

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at one hundred dollars an ounce, or even German bayonets and swastikas, but Seymour's gift was a book of poetry because he was a poet himself.

As noted in Chapter I of this dissertation, Salinger's war-time experiences undoubtedly served to provide data in "For Esme - With Love and Squalor." His own counter-intelligence activities suggest the Sergeant's arrest of the female Nazi official in the story. His own attendance at Methodist choir rehearsals in Tiverton suggests the story narrator's first opportunity for seeing Esme. The Hemingway incident of shooting the chicken may be recorded in "For Esme" as Corporal Z's pointless shooting of the cat off the hood of the jeep. Salinger's own reaction to Hemingway's cruelty may also be suggested by the sickness of Sergeant X when Corporal Z reminds him of the cat-shooting incident. Although Salinger in his Glass family stories, for example, seems to develop his characters mainly out of his own vivid imagination, in "For Esme" there is evidence that his imagination has been prompted by personal experience.

High school students like to tie an author's life to his work, if possible. They feel, evidently, that the work gains in meaning if they can be sure that the author "lived" what he has written. Students should gradually be weaned away from dependence upon facts of the author's life.
to aid their appreciation of his work. They should learn
to judge the work strictly on its inherent merit. This is
asking a lot from high school students but it is preferable
to those approaches to literature which sometimes stress
study of the author's life to the neglect of his work.
Holden Caulfield's brother, Allie, in The Catcher in the Rye,
told their older brother, D. B., that Emily Dickinson was a
better war poet than Rupert Brooke. Allie shows the kind
of discrimination that English teachers must certainly want
to develop in their high school students. The poetry or
the fiction as it stands on the page should ordinarily be
enough for the students to study; this is of primary
importance to their learning to appreciate literature.
Later, perhaps, when more intensive study of a writer is
feasible or demanded, students can round out their know-
ledge by giving attention to the various facts and
influences of his life. The fact that Salinger studied Zen
Buddhism does not automatically make him sympathetic to the
Zen viewpoint; he may be most antagonistic toward it. It
is only in his fiction, since his total output is fiction,
that one has the opportunity to evaluate, through his
characters and their logic, Salinger's attitude toward Zen.
His life is no guarantee as to what one will find in his
work; likewise his work will not necessarily clue the
reader as to his life. Although this point is perhaps a
truism for students of more maturity than high school age, high school students are not so quickly aware of it; their teachers should aid them in their processes of honest appraisal and appreciation in the high school English course.

"Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes"

No doubt, some teachers, parents, and students will read pornography into this story, even though it is just not there. What ideas the reader may get about the relationship that exists between the older, gray-haired man, Lee, and his friend Arthur's wife, Joanie, he will supply for himself from the exceedingly chaste handling of the story by Salinger. One is nowhere told that Lee and Joanie are in bed together; the word, "bed," is not mentioned at all in this context. One derives knowledge of the relationship from actions such as "she raised up on her right forearm," and he

... slipped his left hand under the girl's supporting arm, above the elbow, working his fingers up, making room for them between the warm surfaces of her upper arm and chest wall.41

41 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 86.
This is about as close as the story gets to what some school critics might assume is pornography. The sensitive teacher, certainly, will have to take issue with this view and proceed to discuss the deeper meanings to be found in the story. Salinger has written a striking story in which the sex element is in excellent taste.

Arthur calls on the telephone to ask Lee if he knows what has happened to Joanie, explaining she has not yet come home from the party which they all had attended. Lee, of course, says that he knows nothing of her whereabouts. It is obvious from the anxious pace of Arthur's speech that he is quite intoxicated, but it is he who carries the weight of the long conversation. As the story develops, Arthur tells Lee all about his wife: she is promiscuous, she has no brains, she is an animal, she cannot be trusted, "she describes every man she sees as 'terribly attractive,'" and she is pathetically inadequate as a wife for Arthur. Lee, during this recital, becomes increasingly defensive because he has thought highly enough of Joanie to assume the sexual relationship with her; Arthur's remarks about his wife's shortcomings are really a reflection upon Lee's taste for women. Whereas in the first sentence of the story, Lee showed "quite some little deference" toward Joanie, by the last sentence of the story he is sick of her and "he told her to just sit still, for
Chrissake, and she pulled back her hand."\textsuperscript{42} As Lee, because of Arthur's talking, becomes more and more realistic about Joanie, Arthur grows less harsh and more mellow toward her; he remembers the tire he changed one night while she held the flashlight; the poem he sent her during their courtship: 'Rose my color is and white, Pretty mouth and green my eyes.'\textsuperscript{43} He remembers with tenderness that once she bought him a suit with her own money. Arthur remembers she has some nice traits; he is in love with her despite the anxiety she causes him.

Lee throughout the story insists upon wanting to help Arthur, but this is an impossibility because Lee's involvement with Joanie precludes any possibility of advising Arthur what to do about Joanie. Lee is a love-thief. How is he eligible to advise the lover as to what course of action to take concerning his beloved? Lee's ineffectiveness as a friend to Arthur is demonstrated by his recurrent admonition for Arthur to go to bed and relax. The irony of the story is heavy when Lee says, "I'd like to help you, boy!"

Typical of Arthur's rejection of practically every observation Lee makes throughout the story is the following

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 93.
bit of dialogue; Arthur speaks first, talking about Joanie, his wife:

"Brains! Are you kidding? She hasn't got any goddam brains! She's an animal!"

The gray-haired man, his nostrils dilating, appeared to take a fairly deep breath. "We're all animals," he said. "Basically, we're all animals."

"Like hell we are. I'm no goddam animal. I may be a stupid, fouled-up twentieth-century son of a bitch, but I'm no animal. Don't gimme that. I'm no animal."

And Arthur is no animal because he can love those who smite him on the cheek and those who transgress against him. Lee's observation that we are all animals is his defense against his transgression against his "friend." He wishes to make everyone appear as he is, then he has a sense of security which it is necessary to feel in order to bolster his own weak character. Arthur insists that he is a weak husband. He should just walk over to Joanie once in a while and knock her out cold and then go back to reading his newspaper. In fact, Arthur is not weak at all, for he can forgive Joanie her trespasses against him. His actual words should not confuse the high school student as to his actual meaning.

It is inevitable that after the first of the two conversations between Arthur and Lee has ended, Joanie

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 89.\]
should say, "God I feel like an absolute dog!" So she,
too, along with Lee, is an animal by her own admission.
Arthur's love is encompassing to the degree that it
includes animals.

Almost immediately, Arthur calls Lee back to tell
him that Joanie has just come home. Lee's explosive
"Christi" before he picks up the phone unwittingly de-
scribes the qualities of Arthur. Arthur, in his love for
his wife will go even so far as to lie in order to defend
her reputation, even when she is in the process of
destroying that reputation. This is the ultimate in love,
honor, and forgiveness. The story is superb.

The story is not teachy; it is not a sermon on the
essence of love. It is an art form, developing characters
who come alive in the space of twelve pages. Arthur's
second call is a surprise to Lee, Joanie, and to the
reader, but it is not a tour de force, something especially
arranged to give the reader a jolt. Arthur's conversation
during his first telephone call has prepared the way for
this second call. In fact, one wonders whether Arthur then
suspected that Joanie was with Lee. When Arthur suggests
coming over to Lee's apartment for a drink, promising to
stay for only a minute, Lee's offers of help are suddenly

45Ibid., p. 95.
abandoned and he becomes solicitous that Arthur should be sure to be home when Joanie comes in. It is an open question as to whether Arthur suspects that Joanie and Lee are together. One is inclined to think that Arthur does suspect if only because then his forgiveness includes Lee as well as Joanie. Of course, if Arthur has succeeded in deliberately causing Lee to think less of Joanie, then this, too, is a clever way for Arthur to get his wife back—almost too clever because the story dialogue does not seem to carry enough natural clues to support this latter interpretation.

A student's first impression of the story probably will be that a wife is unfaithful to her husband and he is suffering because of her behavior. This impression is pitched to a level lower than the interpretation relative to Arthur's love and forgiveness. Salinger's depth of thought when discovered makes for happy surprise and enjoyment which can be experienced by the senior high school student with the thoughtful guidance of his English teacher. Both the English teacher and the student may need to help parents and educators to see that in a story such as "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," an almost transcendent morality is thematic and of far more importance in its artistic function than the immoral situation over which the morality prevails. What is immoral becomes cheap and
tawdry beside the moral behavior of love and forgiveness. A reputable writer like Salinger does not exploit the sensational and tabloid per se. This type of writing leads to a disappointing fictional dead-end; his emphasis is upon the finally aesthetic in life as well as in art. When the high school reader of Salinger is taught to see the author's larger purpose in writing, he will not be led astray in his appreciation and evaluation by a story-situation which is essentially contributory, of minor emphasis and meaning, and not at all the supreme *raison d'être* of the story.

"De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period"

Explication of a Salinger story can usually take several directions. The explicator, if steeped in Freudianism, can find much to support the view that the protagonist, because of his love for his mother, must hate his father and all other father-images. The story, "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period," provides a rich vein for this type of mining if one is convinced that a Freudian approach provides the best method of extracting the wealth of meaning. Gwynn and Blotner favor the Freudian approach

to this story, replete with castration imagery and Oedipal complexity. Even the nun, Sister Irma, whom De Daumier-Smith imagines as a shy beautiful girl of eighteen, is called by these writers a mother-image, and it is for this reason, they say, that De Daumier-Smith, a boy of nineteen minimizes the sexual side of his feeling toward her. The fact that De Daumier-Smith knows she is a nun and respects the life she has chosen to lead does not weigh with Gwynn and Blotner as to his reason for soft-pedalling the sexual aspects of his regard for her. As Malcolm Cowley has stated, it is a very bad habit to try to explain all types of social behavior in terms of sexual aberrations. Does the fact that Madame Yoshoto who in the story offers an egg for breakfast on two different occasions to Daumier-Smith mean to the Freudian aficionado that she is making sexual advances, or that she is guilt-ridden because she may have denied the breast to her baby son and wishes to make restitution the rest of her life by serving eggs for breakfast? For this story, there is a better method of explication.

Josephine Jacobsen, writing in Commonweal magazine states that Salinger's objective is the pursuit of wisdom


and the core of this pursuit is essentially religious. This approach is the one that will be utilized in the explication of "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period."

From the age of ten until the age of nineteen the narrator (nameless at this time in the story) lived in Paris; his stepfather was an agent-appraiser for a society of independent American art galleries and fine arts museums. Back in New York at age nineteen he lived with his stepfather and attended art school; his mother had died nine years and three months previously. He successfully applied for the position of instructor at Les Amis Des Vieux Maîtres, a correspondence art school in Montreal after having fabricated a fantastic background for himself as a friend of Picasso, a holder of a small estate in the South of France, a widower aged twenty-nine, and an eminently successful painter by the name of Jean de Daumier-Smith. Proceeding to the school in June, 1939, he is given the work of three students to evaluate and correct: Bambi Kramer, a Toronto housewife; a Windsor, Ontario, "society

\[49\] Dates are consistent throughout the story except in one instance: on page 98 the date of May, 1940, is given as the time the narrator sees the want-ad for an instructor to the correspondence art school; this date is the month before he takes up his duties in June, 1939. J. D. Salinger, *Nine Stories* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1954).
photographer," R. Howard Ridgefield; and a nun of the order of Sisters of St. Joseph, Sister Irma. He sees real talent in the work of Sister Irma and in his excitement to help her in her art and to become friends with her, he writes a letter to her which is frowned upon by her superior, Father Zimmerman, to the extent that he immediately cancels her enrollment in the art course. Shortly, De Daumier-Smith has his extraordinary psychological insightful experience, the school closes because it is not licensed, and "Jean" returns to his stepfather, who is now in Rhode Island, whom he visits for six or eight weeks before re-enrolling as a student in an art school in New York.

For the sake of simplicity we shall call the narrator, Jean, from now on. The name Jean (John) Smith, in its widest application, might refer to Everyman; in the story Jean proceeds from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge, from a state of innocence to a state of experience, from an initial state of hostility and isolation to a state of love, and then finally to a state of fraternity with his stepfather and to a state of normal gregariousness with the American Girl in Shorts as his companion and object of interest.

Early in the story, when Jean comes to New York, his desire is to be alone. Of eighteen paintings completed in one month in 1939, seventeen were self-portraits;
"throughout the voyage to America I used our stateroom mirror to note my uncanny physical resemblance to El Greco."\(^50\) Jean's narcissistic pre-occupation is patently prevalent throughout the story until his transcendent experience matures him beyond such selfishness. In his efforts to impress the Yoshotos, the owners of the correspondence art school, his fantasy is boundless; he insists that the floor-cushions in his room are adequate in lieu of chairs because he is a Buddhist and he needs practice in keeping his back straight. His narcissism continues to be evident for at the school he strives desperately to please the Yoshotos by augmenting his fabulous background as the magnificent Jean De Daumier-Smith. The irony is that the school is located in a tenement district; Monsieur and Madame Yoshoto are not great artists themselves and they cannot teach others "to draw a beautiful pig in a beautiful sty." They at first give him an assignment of translating from French to English rather than allow him to criticize the students' art work. They are practically uncommunicative and inscrutable, not at all impressed by his frantic efforts to carry off the monstrous farce that his name represents. He is trying to trade his earlier isolation for comradeship with the Yoshotos but they do not give more

\(^{50}\) Salinger, loc. cit., p. 98.
than token response. His elaborate preparation to assume the instructorship is like earning a Ph.D. to teach a child how to whittle a whistle. He has stepped forth into the world on his own, over-prepared, over-dressed, and over-anxious to be successful and he has found the world drab, mediocre, and almost completely unartistic, except for the fact of Sister Irma.

In one of Sister Irma's paintings there is a figure whom Jean assumes to be Mary Magdalene. The figure is evidently more secularly painted than the rest of the figures, for Jean writes to Sister Irma, "you were using your incipient genius somewhat more than your religious inclinations, I am afraid." In the same letter, he also writes:

If you will pardon my saying so, I believe you are too passionate to paint just in watercolors and never in oils indefinitely. I say that quite impersonally and do not mean to be obnoxious; actually, it is intended as a compliment.

Clearly, Jean is in love with Sister Irma; he wants to visit her at the convent and to talk to her about her religion and about her art. He sees that she is a potential genius and he wonders if being a nun and being an artist cannot

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51 Ibid., p. 113.

52 Ibid., pp. 113-114.
fail to conflict. After she has been required to resign from the art course, his next letter to her is never mailed, but he tells her, having resolved the problem for himself, that her art

... would not interfere with your being a nun. .. The worst that being an artist could do to you would be that it would make you slightly unhappy constantly. However, this is not a tragic situation, in my opinion.53

He never hears from Sister Irma. He has lost her both as his student and as his friend; her talented art and the excitement of wanting to teach her and befriend her had given his life a purpose and a direction; the loss of her is a tragedy for Jean.

Beneath the rooms of the art school is an orthopedic appliances shop. Jean looking in the lighted window of the shop one evening experiences a frightening realization.

The thought was forced on me that no matter how coolly or sensibly or gracefully I might one day learn to live my life, I would always at best be a visitor in a garden of enamel urinals and bed-pans, with a sightless wooden dummy-deity standing by in a marked-down rupture truss.54

This is his dark night of the soul. Life is drab and without meaning for Jean. His agnosticism is not a

53 Ibid., p. 118.

54 Ibid., p. 116.
satisfying religious position for him to be in. He sees the cosmos as quite a tawdry place in which to wait out an existence. He is deeply depressed and he attempts to relieve his distress by thinking of his star pupil, Sister Irma, and of his love for her. She is his security against an isolation that he no longer desires; he clings to an image of her and of his love for her to escape the meaningless of life.

The night that Jean loses Sister Irma he has his second experience while looking into the same lighted orthopedic display window. A girl is changing the truss on the wooden dummy. She becomes flustered when she sees Jean watching her, blushes, steps back and her feet go out from under her; she gets to her feet and resumes "lacing up the truss on the dummy."

It was just then that I had my Experience. Suddenly (and I say this, I believe, with all due self-consciousness), the sun came up and sped toward the bridge of my nose at the rate of ninety-three million miles a second. Blinded and very frightened—I had to put my hand on the glass to keep my balance. The thing lasted for no more than a few seconds. When I got my sight back, the girl had gone from the window, leaving behind her a shimmering field of exquisite, twice-blessed, enamel flowers.

That night, after Jean's knees stop buckling, he writes in his diary:

55Ibid., p. 121.
I am giving Sister Irma her freedom to follow her own destiny. Everybody is a nun.  

From the dark night of the soul Jean emerges into enlightenment. His Experience—and it should be spelled with a capital letter—is transcendental. Jean refuses to call the Experience "mystical," but it has not been without precedent in the history of mysticism. Salinger has Jean achieve wisdom suddenly; the only obvious preparation for the Experience consists of a desperate need for it. To explain logically the Experience is difficult, if not impossible. Mystics of many schools practice entire lifetimes to achieve similar experiences. Some are successful, and some, according to Buddhist thinking, will have to wait until a later incarnation for these experiences to be accomplished. A Zen Buddhist calling his experience satori, practices specialized techniques to bring it about; a yogi strives for samadhi. Or the experience may come as Salinger seems to suggest, to anyone, to any John Smith at any time, sometimes regardless of formal or prescribed preparation. Salinger, no doubt has hesitated to call Jean's Experience mystical because the true mystical experience will often change the person radically. Jean has evolved steadily in the story from adolescence to

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56 Ibid., p. 121.
maturity but he has not dramatically changed to become a person dedicated, for example, to duplicating the Experience. Jean has settled down to normality and so will not have desperate need again for the kind of enlightenment which his Experience gave him. The change in him which a true mystical experience could be expected to make is not apparent.

To some readers, more important in this story than the Experience is the result of the Experience. When Jean releases Sister Irma to follow her own destiny, he has outgrown his original narcissism and has matured beyond a selfish desire to make personal demands upon others. This is tantamount to loving his neighbor as himself. It can be called a religious advancement for Jean to have arrived at this insight but he does not designate either the Experience or his new insight as particularly religious. He realizes that Sister Irma must be allowed to shape her life as she wishes; this may mean her neglecting the development of her artistic genius in order to remain a nun. If Jean should continue to hold that being an artist is preferable to being a nun he would be guilty of sin (in religious language) or its equivalent because in Sister Irma's case he would be jeopardizing the possibility of her spiritual advancement. When Jean makes the statement that everybody is a nun he broadens the application of his principle to
all persons: everyone has the possibility of achieving spiritually. To interfere in any way with this process is to meddle dangerously with a destiny which each person himself is best qualified to judge and to follow.

Jean, too, comes to understand that the urinals, trusses, and bedpans are not sordid and disgusting as he has earlier thought them to be; they along with the girl in the window, become the instruments by which a flash of spirit is revealed to him. He sees them now as beautiful enamel flowers; his conception of them has changed as significantly as his conception of the need for his emancipation of Sister Irma.

Back in Rhode Island after the closing of the school, Jean does not seem to be jeopardizing the spiritual destiny of anyone by "investigating that most interesting of all summer-active animals, the American Girl in Shorts." Jean has adopted the pattern of life which is expected of him, and to which he probably will be congenial. He, too, is a nun following his destiny as surely as Sister Irma is following hers.

A mark of maturity in Jean is his laconic suggestion in the first paragraph of the story that he dedicate it to his stepfather. During most of his life with his stepfather Jean shows for him grudging respect or undisguised disapproval. He grows in the story before the
eyes of the reader from a humorous but calculating and unsure adolescent, to a sympathetic, well-intentioned, and poised young man. His dedication of the story to his step-father is the supreme act of forgiveness; he has matured sufficiently not to let his parent's faults obscure the virtues which he undoubtedly possessed.

This story will be one of the most difficult of Salinger's stories for the senior high school student to understand. But here again, as in the other difficult stories, if the theme can be grasped the story immediately becomes plain. When the student understands what Jean means by his releasing Sister Irma to follow her own destiny, then the student has the germ, the essence, and thoughtful study will show how the story was structured to support this essence. There is enough in this story for the class to spend in study, three or four days with it. Initially very difficult, the story though has keys; when the keys are used, the doors will open and what at first seemed like an obstacle course becomes an exciting walk through the rooms and passages of an art gallery.
"Teddy"

Teddy McArdle is ten years of age, a genius, clairvoyant, or true mystic, and a subject of study for university professors who are curious about his esoteric knowledge. He is able to lose consciousness during his periods of meditation, but out of consideration for his father, who regards his meditating as freakish activity, he must be careful as to when and where he meditates.

He is traveling on a ship back to New York with his father, mother, and six-year old sister, Booper, after a trip through Europe. He has spent most of his time in Edinburgh, Scotland, and in Oxford, England, being interviewed. Tapes were made of his interviews and many people, including the young educator, Bob Nicholson, hear them with varying reactions, mostly "kittenish" as Teddy says.

While one reads the story, the question persists: "Why has Salinger written this story?" Teddy is closer to being a god than a human being. He shows only love and compassion for all members of the human race and for animals. He achieved his first mystical experience at six years of age. His views of life and death are uncommon in America and Europe but known widely in the East. He is able to predict the time and place of his death. He is without a doubt a very advanced human being, having powers
of concentration and clairvoyance which seem hardly credible to his contemporaries. If, because of his supernormality, he is not real, why does Salinger still consider him to be worthy of the hero's role in a story which even features him in the title? And furthermore, to show more of Salinger's persistence, "Teddy" is a nickname for "Theodore," which derives from the Greek theos, god, and doron, gift. We can not argue against Salinger's intention to write the story--it is there to read, and it is a good story but why, really, write about a little god? Teddy, of course, can do anything divine or god-like, but can the reader identify with him?

Salinger is giving his readers in Teddy another view of what humanity can become again sometime. The Glass children are superior; they see potentialities for man which are as yet unrealized. Teddy, too, but to a much greater degree, is superior to those who by the world's standards are judged to be very wise, but who by Teddy's standards are really very stupid. Salinger, knowing very much about Zen Buddhism, yoga, and the teachings of great mystics and teachers, has found a daring new vein which he is compelled to mine in his fiction. His excitement at his discovery of the East is evident. Man can be so much more than he is; he can feel and show universal love for his fellows; he can strike through phenomenal appearances to
noumenal reality; he can learn who he is so that he does not feel so helplessly lost in an unfriendly universe; and he can know God or His Equivalent. This is what "Teddy" seems to be saying, and this seems to be his *raison d'être*. Of course, like many prophets in an unsympathetic world, he has to die; the world is not ready for him yet. It is significant that he meets death at the hands of his sister, Booper (the name suggests her wrong thinking and erring ways), who "hasn't been a human being for very many lives, and she doesn't like me very much."57 This also suggests that even the American people because they do not understand Teddy, have not been human beings for very many lives either. One theory of reincarnation (also called metempsychosis) has it that humans earn their humanity after apprenticing as animals; hence the shorter amount of time they have been human the closer they are to the animal nature. Booper demonstrates her viciousness most adequately as she talks to her little playmate, Myron, and to her brother, Teddy, about Myron's parents:

"... Move your carcass ... his father's dead. He was killed in Korea .... Now if his mother dies, he'll be an orphan .... (the giants) could kill your parents .... You could put some poison on some marshmallows and make them eat it ...." She suddenly struck Myron's hand ....

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57 Ibid., p. 141.
and to Teddy: "I hate you! I hate everybody in this ocean!"

There is also a deck steward whom Booper despises. Her preoccupation with hate and death makes her eligible as a murderess.

It is not clear why some critics are confused by what they refer to as an ambiguous ending to the story. Salinger, during the story, prepares the reader with ample clues for Teddy's death. As he leaves his parents in their stateroom, Teddy says, "After I go out this door, I may exist only in the minds of all my acquaintances." Writing in his diary, Teddy says, "It will either happen today or February 14, 1958 when I am sixteen." Later, while in the company of Nicholson, Teddy says, "Nothing in the voice of the cicada intimates how soon it will die." Teddy is not very happy about being an American. In a previous life he met a lady and stopped meditating, thus arresting his spiritual growth; because of this he had to get incarnated in an American body. "I mean it's very hard to meditate

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58Ibid., pp. 129-130.
59Ibid., p. 127.
60Ibid., p. 133.
61Ibid., p. 135.
and live a spiritual life in America."62 He will not be sorry to leave his American body; he wants to advance spiritually so he can get off the wheel of life and death and not need to incarnate again. As for death--it is no problem:

"All you do is get the heck out of your body when you die. My gosh, everybody's done it thousands and thousands of times. Just because they don't remember it doesn't mean they haven't done it. It's so silly."63

Then Teddy tells Nicholson exactly how he might be pushed into the waterless swimming pool by his sister, fracturing his skull and dying instantly. He is quite interested in this happening; in his diary he has also written: "Life is a gift horse in my opinion."64 Life can appear to be a fine gift to a human being but upon closer examination it can prove to be a liability in spiritual advancement.

The ending is not ambiguous in the least; Salinger has taken care throughout the story to provide clues which will enable the reader to accept the ending.

He Nicholson was little more than halfway down the staircase when he heard an all-piercing, sustained scream--clearly coming from a small,

62Ibid., p. 138.
63Ibid., p. 141.
64Ibid., p. 133.
female child. It was highly acoustical, as though it were reverberating within four tiled walls.\(^{65}\)

The reader is astonished and shocked with the ending; suddenly, previous unconnected events loom large with meaning and he sees the ending as logical and inevitable.

When people do not want to see things as they are, they get into much difficulty and they hold themselves back from spiritual advancement. For example, Teddy says of poets, "They're always sticking their emotions in things that have no emotions."\(^{66}\)

"I wish I knew why people think it's so important to be emotional," Teddy said. "My mother and father don't think a person's human unless he thinks a lot of things are very sad or very annoying or very very unjust, sort of. My father, gets very emotional when he reads the newspaper. He thinks I'm inhuman."\(^{67}\)

God, likewise, for Teddy, does not need to be loved emotionally or sentimentally.

"If I were God, I certainly wouldn't want people to love me sentimentally. It's too unreliable."\(^{68}\)

This love is too personally involved, too attached, and this is not the way to love because it is hypocritical.

\(^{65}\)Ibid., p. 144.

\(^{66}\)Ibid., p. 135

\(^{67}\)Ibid., p. 136.

\(^{68}\)Ibid., p. 136.
Teddy is advocating the practice of non-attachment.69

Speaking of his parent's regard for his sister and himself, Teddy says.

"They don't seem able to love us unless they can keep changing us a little bit. They love their reasons for loving us almost as much as they love us, and most of the time more. It's not so good, that way."70

Teddy, certainly, is saying that since the world, for the most part, does not know how to love, it is fated for suffering and destruction. People have to keep coming back to earth until they learn the lessons, in this case, love, which they need to learn in order to free themselves from their karmic obligations. When they are sufficiently advanced, "people" can then proceed to a higher plane of existence, "with God, where it's really nice."

When Teddy talks to Nicholson he must place his ideas in a context which Nicholson can understand. Even so, Nicholson has difficulty determining what Teddy means. Teddy uses the term "God" in contexts which appear contradictory, but this signifies lack of communication between Teddy and Nicholson because they do not have a common background of experience.

69 The principle of non-attachment is discussed at some length in the chapter on "Zooey" in this dissertation.

70 Ibid., p. 137.
"I was six when I saw that everything was God, and my hair stood up, and all that," Teddy said. "It was on a Sunday, I remember. My sister was only a tiny child then, and she was drinking her milk, and all of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God, if you know what I mean." Nicholson didn't say anything.71

Christians often accuse Buddhists of paying too little attention to the concept of God. The purest Buddhism stresses the practical aspects of life: ethical conduct in society and meditation for self-analysis. Since Buddhism is a philosophy of life, metaphysical questions which are incapable of immediate testing and thus are devoid of practical utility are not of primary interest to the Buddhist. Since much metaphysical speculation is purely conjectural and ethically unprofitable, the good Buddhist sets such speculation aside in his thinking until the time that he is prepared, through knowledge of Self, to experience God and to know Him as something more than as a pleasant religious metaphysical theory. Teddy laments the time wasted by his contemporaries in logical and intellectual thinking, which will help one neither to find Self nor God; this is what is wrong he says with our system of education. Salinger used the same idea in Franny and Zooey: students educated to learn the names of things and to

71Ibid., p. 138.
accept others' views of the world forfeit the opportunity to find out who they are and what are their reasons for living; this is tragic and very discouraging to an advanced soul such as Teddy. Man is not using the opportunities offered by life for overcoming both life and death. Of course, there is plenty of time, and eventually each soul, or Self, will have achieved enlightenment, self-realization, and freedom from incarnation. There is no reason for panic, or even, for Teddy, the slightest degree of anxiety.

How will high school students react to this story? Most of Teddy's ideas will be new to them and they will find the concepts difficult to comprehend, but the very uniqueness of the ideas will provoke the students into interesting discussion. In teaching high school students the teacher may occasionally discover that some students have had semi-mystical experiences which they are reluctant to relate because, as Teddy says, someone "will think you're a freak." "Teddy" may cause some of these students to analyze their mental states more sympathetically, now that they know that a reputable writer has brought some of these ideas out into the open.

With one word, Salinger can create significant meaning. Teddy asks Nicholson if he is a poet.

The word, "alas," suggests that Nicholson would like to be a poet because being a poet carries prestige. Teddy's view is that poets, particularly, are engaged in wrong thinking. The word "alas" places Teddy and Nicholson on widely separated planes of thought and subtly underscores the contrast between them. Students studying the story very carefully will discover several similar examples of Salinger's artistry in the writing of fiction. Thoughtful re-reading of the story is necessary to uncover further examples; this is a criterion of a good story, as all high school English teachers know from their own training. As long as the current system of education will probably not be revolutionized according to the changes suggested by Teddy, the high school English teacher could do much worse than recommend "Teddy" as worthy of study by his classes.

72 Ibid., p. 135.
CHAPTER IV

"FRANNY"

The first story in Franny and Zooey (1961), "Franny," was initially published in the New Yorker magazine, January 29, 1955. The fact that Salinger could re-publish the story in book form, along with "Zooey" after both stories had been read widely and discussed exhaustively while yet uncollected is unusual in the publication of fiction. Salinger's success with his two stories attests to the hold he has had over his reading public; English departments in higher education have not neglected to read him and to argue at length about the stories. At first there were those who were sure of Franny's pregnancy; it must have come as an embarrassing shock for those persons to read "Franny" again to discover that this interpretation of Franny's difficulty was groundless in view of Salinger's higher purposes in writing. Pregnancy has had its quota of success in fiction; it is somewhat of a relief and a pleasant surprise to find that Franny and her Jesus Prayer in the fifties can rouse so much interest and be discussed so readily.
Salinger's unsentimental approach to his characters and to his themes is appealing; the reader senses his concern for honest writing. Where is he guilty of "middle-brow bathos" as Leslie Fiedler has suggested? In "Franny"? The Glass family children are generally conceded to be superior persons; their superiority would seem to be tenuous indeed if they are guilty of bathos in their search for love and wisdom. It would appear to be just this lack of bathos and sentimentality that readers enjoy in Salinger's stories. "Franny" is completed by "Zooey"; students should be sure to read "Franny" first.

Franny, the youngest of the five Glass children, is a college student about to arrive on the train, to be met by her friend, Lane Coutell, who has invited her to attend a Yale football week-end. Except for the brief meeting on the station platform, the story's setting is Sickler's, a French restaurant where Franny and Lane go for lunch. The planned attendance after lunch at a cocktail party and game never comes off because Franny becomes ill.

In the first paragraph of the story, Salinger foreshadows Lane's collegiate milieu. The college boys on the platform waiting for their dates,

Almost without exception, sounded collegiately dogmatic, as though each young man, in his strident, controversial turn, was clearing up, once and for all, some highly controversial issue,
one that the outside, non-matriculating world had been bungling, provocatively or not, for centuries.\(^1\)

The irony in the situation is that Lane, as representative of this confident collegiate group, cannot be successful even on his date with Franny, but rather, he bungles it miserably, and most provocatively, and drives Franny to the brink of serious collapse.

Lane is introduced with "his back against the free Christian Science literature rack,"\(^2\) a stance which suggests nonchalance as to religious or spiritual tenets; he is reading Franny's letter which by this time had a "handled, unfresh look," suggesting that what Lane handles he soils. In the letter, Franny is aware of his academic precosity and his assumed superiority. Her statement of love for him is a cliche, an expressed obligation, carrying no conviction nor elaboration; it was, as she states later over lunch, a strain to write. She would like to have a good time during the week-end but because of Lane's penchant for analyzing everything to death, especially her, there is a hint of doubt that this is possible. The reader already senses the incommunicability that persists in spite


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 4.
of their "love," between Franny and Lane. An echo of incommunicability is heard immediately when Sorenson a classmate and Lane do not discuss Rainer Maria Rilke, German poet and writer of fiction, even though the subject has been opened up by Sorenson; Lane's "categorical aversion to his face and manner" is partly to blame.

Salinger's use of the word "face" in the next two pages of text is significant because he begins to show, quite obviously, his profound disapproval of Lane. Lane is superficial, maneuvering his face to suit his purposes, not allowing his face to be an honest indication of himself. He first faces the incoming engine; he tries "to empty his face of all expression"; his arm shot up into the air, "whatever it was he was trying to do with his face"; and he walked "toward her quickly but with a slow face." Franny is Lane's opposite in that she "was not one for emptying her face of expression." She can communicate—if she has someone playing opposite who is sensitive and sympathetic to her honesty and genuineness.

A first failure of Lane's is his inability to get Franny into Croft House where she can stay for the weekend; an earlier failure, Franny remembered, was Lane's

3Ibid., p. 17.
4Ibid., p. 18.
letting a man in New York, on a rainy night, take a taxi away from him, for which he blamed her because, surfeited with ego, he projected his inadequacies upon her for the spot she had put him on: he was guilty of ineptness and he knew that she knew it, and he hated her for knowing.

Throughout the story, Lane's failures constitute the catalyst which drives Franny deeper into withdrawal from Lane's (and Franny's) society. But, like a pendulum, Franny swings between a forced acceptance and a weary repudiation of Lane and the world he represents until finally, he forces her into complete rejection. Until this point of no return is reached, Franny feels guilt whenever she rejects him too aggressively.

At Sickler's (a good place in which to become ill), Franny tries to listen to Lane's discussion of his paper on Flaubert, to his unsubtle insistence upon his subtlety, to his vapid name-dropping amounting to snobbery. In his search for the mot juste he finds the cliché. After trying to switch him off to innocuous discussion devoid of the pseudo-analysis which can ruin the week-end for her, she has to start to be honest and to tell him that he is talking like a phony section man, who is usually a graduate student and who is a poor substitute, in Franny's opinion, for the regular professor. Of course, Lane cannot sympathize with Franny because she is hitting at pedantry, and
he is a pedant, and she is castigating phoniness, and he is phony. Also, he is irritated because he sees signs of his not being able to make out sexually with Franny on this big week-end. The fact that "Lane couldn't let a controversy drop until it had been resolved in his favor" tells much about him; socially, emotionally, sexually, and perhaps academically, he is a thorough bore. When Lane even denies Franny the chance to take the blame for her own "crazy" ideas, escape for her is imminent: "Maybe there's a trap-door under my chair, and I'll just disappear."6

Part of the Franny-Lane argument relates to poets and their work. Franny feels that poets are "supposed to leave something beautiful after you get off the page and everything."7 She feels that Manlius and Esposito do not and for this she pities them; too much of what passes for poetry is merely "some kind of terribly fascinating, syntaxy droppings." Franny is superior, like all of the Glasses. She may like Manlius and Esposito but she feels that her desperate need is to respect them, and this is

5Ibid., p. 17.

6Ibid., p. 18.

7Ibid., p. 19.
impossible for her because they do not measure up to her standards for poets.

She becomes pale and leaves the dining room to go to the ladies' room, then into the farthest enclosure, locking the door. There she assumes an almost fetal position, and having physically retreated, in fact having physically regressed to a point as far removed as possible from the world, she achieves a mental regression and escape, a mental vacuity, from which state she can devise a new beginning, a rebirth, a new orientation, polarity, control, and non-attachment which will sustain her yet a while longer when returning to the tortures of an impossible environment. With love and affection she looks at her small pea-green clothbound book. Then Salinger's style reflects the abrupt decision which Franny makes, and after the decision there is a series of sharp, clean moves performed with a new dispatch:

After a moment, she picked up the book, raised it chest-high, and pressed it to her--firmly and quite briefly. Then she put it back into the handbag, stood up, and came out of the enclosure. She washed her face with cold water, dried it with a towel from an overhead rack, applied fresh lipstick, combed her hair, and left the room.  

"God. I'm sorry," Franny said. "Did you think I'd died?"  

8Ibid., pp. 22-23.  
9Ibid., p. 23.
Lane, oblivious to Franny's symbolism had not thought so; however, Franny recognizes the deadlines of the ordeal she has experienced and her answer, when Lane asks her if her trouble was her stomach, is an attempt at honesty: "No. Yes and no. I don't know."\(^{10}\)

Lane, under the control of his insufferable ego, despises the fact that Franny has ordered a chicken sandwich, yet it was he who had suggested that her trouble was her stomach. He would much rather she would eat the snails and frogs' legs that Sickler's is famous for. The difficulties begin again in earnest when Franny cannot immediately remember Wally Campbell, at whose place she and Lane are supposed to stop off for a drink at one-fifteen or one-thirty. Just as most poets to Franny are a series of Manliuses and Espositos, most persons are a series of Wally Campbells.

"I know when they're going to be charming. I know when they're going to start telling you some really nasty gossip about some girl that lives in your dorm. I know when they're going to ask me what I did over the summer, I know when they're going to pull up a chair and straddle it backward and start bragging in a terribly, terribly quiet voice—or name-dropping in a terribly quiet, \textit{casual} voice."\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.\)

\(^{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 25.\)
Franny knows that the destructively phony is without love and she feels waves of self-hatred for her perception of this fact and for her own participation in derogatory observation.

"It's everybody, I mean. Everything everybody does is so—I don't know—not wrong, or even mean, or even stupid necessarily. But just so tiny and meaningless and—sad-making."12

She has quit both the play for which she had been rehearsing and also the Theatre Department of her college as another manifestation of her withdrawal.

"Just because I'm so horribly conditioned to accept everybody else's values, and just because I like applause and people to rave about me, doesn't make it right. I'm ashamed of it. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody. I'm sick of myself and everybody else that wants to make some kind of a splash."13

So far in the story Franny has been predominantly negatively disposed toward Lane and toward her collegiate society. She has been in retreat before the terrible crassness of a society that rigidly conforms to inane values. She has tried to rally toward a more positive and hopeful attitude but Lane cannot help her, or even allow her this chance. He has no sympathy, no love for her; his ego is so completely in control that he has no consideration for her.

13Ibid., p. 30.
Even in the following conversation where Lane would like to be sympathetic, he undercuts his sympathy in order to suggest propriety, for girls should not sweat:

"You want to use this a second?" Lane said abruptly. He was holding out a folded, white handkerchief. His voice sounded sympathetic, kind, in spite of some perverse attempt to make it sound matter-of-fact.

"Why? Do I need it?"
"You're sweating. Not sweating, but I mean your forehead's perspiring quite a bit."
"It is? How horrible! I'm sorry...."

Of course, with Franny, the retreat has become a forced rout, causing her nervous panic in mind and body. She is ill and her symptoms are those of suffocation (not pregnancy!). She is striving for balance but this cannot be achieved as long as a destructive negativism is in control. The major change in Franny's attitude does not come until Zooey helps her, as recounted in the story, "Zooey."

After stalling repeatedly when Lane asks her about the book she has with her, Franny finally admits that it is The Way of a Pilgrim.15 It is the story of a peasant and

14 Ibid., pp. 30-31.

pilgrim who is a nobody, and who is, consequently, a model for Franny in her present state of mind. She earnestly relates the story while staring intently at Lane's dismembering of his frogs' legs; she is absorbed in recounting the pilgrim's spiritual experience. Lane's orientation is entirely that of materialism and concern for the body; in these scenes he is a kind of cannibal devouring a fellow creature. Franny never does eat the sandwich, a fact which suggests perhaps an attempt, though hardly conscious, at atonement; for her previous destruction of persons, she now through the practice of Ahimsa, the doctrine of non-injury, cannot bring herself to eat the flesh of an animal that, in turn, has been destroyed. Her distance from Lane is thus reinforced. As she tells the story, Franny is seen to be happily affirmative in her regard for the book. She loves the married couple in the story who love beggars. She loves the central figure in the tale, the pilgrim. She wants Lane to share the book with her; if he would, they could communicate again with each

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16"Of the Pilgrim's identity nothing is known. In some way his manuscript, or a copy of it, came into the hands of a monk on Mount Athos, in whose possession it was found by the Abbot of St. Michael's Monastery at Kazan. The Abbot copied the manuscript, and from his copy the book was printed at Kazan in 1884." From The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way, above, p. viii.
other. But Lane slouches in his chair, the bore who is bored whenever his own ego is non-assertive.

Franny, following the book's teaching, is fascinated by the technique of repeating the Jesus Prayer until something happens. She has not proved to herself yet that anything will happen, but she has enough of the spirit of adventure to hold a kind of intuitive acceptance of this possibility and to believe that the results will be exciting. She feels that the religious persons in the book are entirely unphony and she knows that meditation on the word "Om" has been practiced in India for centuries. Christians have used The Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, or the name of God in the same way. She cannot understand how anyone, even Lane, cannot see that something might happen as a result of practicing the hesychast or quietist prayer. She is faced with a standard reaction in Lane toward certain types of psychic phenomena: he feels that they are not "reasonable" and "all those religious experiences have a very obvious psychological background—you know what I mean..."17 But she does not know what he means, because he has said nothing in refutation against her enthusiastic account.

17 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 40.
Lane's rejection of Franny and of her pilgrim causes her symbolically to die by fainting while she is on the way back to her enclosure in the ladies' room. She is unconscious for almost five minutes. Her recovery leads to a renewal of purpose and resolution. "Franny looked thoughtfully, without blinking, at the ceiling." Looking without blinking is an Eastern technique of concentration called "tratakam"; it is also called meditation-with-eyes-open. According to yoga tradition, the practice of tratakam will help control mental waves, check the restless mind, and enable one to strengthen his will power. In this practice, "the central nervous system and the autonomic nervous system are awakened through different associations of cranial nerves, especially those nerves which innervate the nose, eyes, face and neck." An eminent contemporary Yogi, presently in the United States, describes thus the sensations that are experienced and the techniques employed:

Gradually you will begin to lose all sense of feeling in your body. The muscles of the body will be anesthetized, and muscles of your mouth will sag. You will enter the world of samprajñata samadhi (that samadhi in which the individual mind


unites with universal mind but is not absorbed to such a degree as to gain ultimate enlightenment). In a short time you will be unable to move your limbs and you will pass into deep yoga *samadhi*. Never forget to repeat *dharana, dhyana, and samadhi* (fixation, suggestion, and sensation). Repeat as long as you have no identity with supreme consciousness. As time goes on and you practice and become expert, you will develop will power to dominate your subconscious mind to the extent that it will obey your conscious commands.

Yoga is the system to instruct you in the various methods used to control the waves of the mind and to bring about *samadhi* (the state of supreme consciousness). These methods have been proved and perfected by innumerable students of Yoga through their experimentation.

The ceiling may or may not be the actual object of concentration for Franny; she may have selected a point thereon for intense concentration, symbolically substituting supreme consciousness and supreme nature for that point selected, or she may be engaged in looking through her immediate environment to points beyond. In either case, Salinger depicts her steadfast concentration, for twice more before the end of the story he has her looking at the ceiling.

Lane advises her to get some rest—so she will be ready for him when he sneaks up the back stairs. Lane laments how long it has been since he and Franny have had

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sexual relations; his love for her seems to extend only as far as the act itself. When she asks him for a drink of water, he does not immediately comply with her request but arranges for someone else to bring it to her while he goes for a cab, an activity in which his ego was hurt before, and which he is intent upon now performing successfully, regardless of Franny's desires. Before he leaves, Lane issues an order to Franny: "Don't move."22 This injunction may be interpreted as being, in effect, an edict of the world, Franny's contemporary world, not to follow her great desire to repeat the Jesus prayer. More than that, it is an admonition for Franny to conform to contemporary orthodox patterns of thought and religion, and not for her to try to see God, according to her best knowledge of how this is to be done.

The last paragraph of the story is intensely meaningful as to the course of action Franny intends to follow. The way of the pilgrim is open to her, as is the way of the college girl. Her aloneness at the end of the story suggests that a pilgrimage is about to begin, toward the unknown, the heavens, the beyond, or toward the mysterious areas of personal spiritual experience. "Her lips began to move, forming soundless words, and they

22 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 43.
continued to move." Franny has ignored Lane's edict, not now with defiance or rancor, but calmly, because she is motivated to act in an affirmative manner in order to gain self-knowledge. She has fulminated against a phony world and this has forced unhappiness and withdrawal upon her. She must now seek for a new world which is found through perseverance in love. This is love in its highest sense: a reaching for spiritual perfection, a longing for creative progress. As the pilgrim in the book says:

The trouble is that we live far from ourselves and have but little wish to get any nearer to ourselves. Indeed we are running away all the time to avoid coming face to face with our real selves, and we barter the truth for trifles.\(^2^4\)

The experiment of the Jesus prayer has to be performed, for at the moment it is the only course of action open to Franny which makes sense.

Franny finally, at the end of this turbulent story, is quietly optimistic, hopeful of richer experience, and temporarily at peace with herself and with her societal environment. She has laid aside her destructively negativistic attitudes for what she believes will be a more mature

\(^{2^3}\)Ibid., p. 43.

life of contemplation and hesychast experiment. Her book has given her a vision of what can happen if she becomes dedicated to pursuit of this vision. It now remains for her to test the theory to see if it, too, will turn out to be phony. She thinks not, and this intuitive faith is motivation enough for her to get underway. Franny is no naive sentimentalist, anxious to be gulled in religious matters. Nor is she a cultist, prepared to sacrifice her own integrity of intellect upon some obscure altar of orientalism. She is a wise child of the twentieth century Western World who having been shown by the mystic Hesychasts, a way toward spiritual experience, is anxious to prove or disprove the way for herself.

For some sensitive persons the hostile world imposes search for mystical techniques of withdrawal from it in order to find a better and more meaningful world; Franny's technique may or may not be, currently, a popular one in the West, but not even Lane must be allowed to proclaim that it is not efficacious without trying it. In "Zooey," the outcome of Franny's practice is discussed more fully. The two stories should be read together, inasmuch as "Zooey" elaborates the experience of Franny. The last sentence of Zooey is, significantly,
For some minutes, before she fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, she just lay quiet, smiling at the ceiling.\footnote{25}{Salinger, loc. cit., p. 201.}

The word "smiling" is meaningful; whereas in "Franny" she merely "looked," in "Zooey" she has found something: perhaps an epiphany or enlightenment made recognizable by James Joyce, maybe a Zenist satori, or a Yogic samadhi--at least something possibly profound, quite incommunicable, and certainly significant.

As we come to suspect early in "Franny," the story will relate eventually to the little book in Franny's bag, The Way of a Pilgrim. This book describes the hesychast method of praying which the Russian pilgrim learned from the Philokalia. This technique of mystical contemplation has a long history of use in the Christian church. The technique is similar to Eastern techniques of concentration and meditation, which had been practiced thousands of years before Christ. Saint Basil (330?-379?), Cappadocian church father and Bishop of Caesarea, deals in Great Rule 37, of the Rule of St. Basil, with this form of prayer. Kassian the Roman (350?-435), who wrote some twelve volumes on the monastic life, also describes it. It is not found in the works of all early Christian theological writers, possibly because this technique of contemplation was regarded as
part of a secret tradition. Saint Benedict (480?-543?), for example, does not include it in his rules for his monastic order.

Franny understands the method of praying the Jesus Prayer. Jacques-Albert Cuttat, Swiss writer, lecturer and diplomat quotes from the Philokalia to explain the method of using the Prayer and the results to be expected from its use.

"Where the body is, there also should be the intellect." "A Hesychast is an incorporeal being . . . who strives to confine his soul in its corporeal abode" by "making the intelligence descend into the heart." Now, "breathing is the natural way to the heart; having gathered your intellect within yourself . . . force it, together with the air you inhale, to descend into your heart, and remain there. . . . You are to understand, moreover, that once your intelligence is firmly established in your heart, it is not to remain silent and inactive, but must unceasingly repeat the prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me!'" "At first one experiences nothing but grief and darkness, but before long one perceives a kind of light." Thereafter, as soon as an evil thought arises, and even before being completed and fully taking shape, it is expelled and annihilated through the invocation of the Name of Jesus. Light, warmth, sweetness, tears and peace are the "tokens" that the Name called upon has entered into one's heart.26

Man, created in the image of God is then also potentially a temple of the Holy Spirit; the hesychast method of prayer

is designed to realize this potentiality and make this idea an actuality so that Saint Paul's words, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me" become real in experience. Breathing is analogous to the inhaling or inspiration of Spirit. The heart is considered the physical repository of God, the "sun" of the body. Intellect, or concentrated consciousness, as different from, yet inclusive of, and still transcendent of mere psychic activity, is a spiritual agency which can unify total consciousness in the person. Through proper use of the mysterious intellect, Christ-consciousness, according to Saint Simeon, can be summoned to change the physical body into the spiritual body. The heart, forced by intellect to repeat the name of the Lord with every beat, even during sleep, eventually causes the Lord to be present continuously and man returns to God's presence capable, in the words of Saint Paul, of attaining "the full stature of Christ."

The method of the Hesychasts goes beyond mere speculation; it attempts to make operative, through interiorization of consciousness, the realization that the Kingdom of Heaven lies within us. Emptying the field of consciousness of all extraneous objects apart from the point or thought to be concentrated upon causes all awareness of ego to disappear. Since intensity of effort simply defeats ability to concentrate, a profound relaxation of
mind and body has to be effected to eliminate distractions. Distractions are eliminated as a result of much dedicated practice. As Watts says,

... the act of concentration becomes almost automatic, and the object takes entire possession of consciousness. In other words, the Self identifies itself with the object of concentration instead of the ego. It ceases to let itself be fascinated by sense-impressions, feelings and thoughts, and instead becomes totally absorbed in one single and simple object. During this time physical actions are continued more or less automatically, as one walks in a dream, and the difficulty of this entire exercise is that it is quite dangerous to become so deeply absorbed unless under the supervision of an experienced director and in the protected surroundings of a monastery.

During this process

... in one intense moment of vision the pure consciousness of the Self, without any object of identification left in the field of awareness, knows itself alone and immediately.

... the important point to remember is that the entire process of the exercise is willed by the Self rather than the ego. If one cannot, or does not want to, perform it, the Self does not will it.27

In this chapter terms such as "intellect," Self, "ego," "supreme nature," "supreme consciousness," "God," "Spirit," et al., have been scattered rather promiscuously across the pages. Because of the difficulty of definition, it is hoped that their meanings are suggested by the

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context in which they are used. Salinger shows a wide acquaintance with the religious cultures of many lands. One does not get definitions from "Franny"; rather, one senses that the basic terms can be understood only after one has had a spiritual experience as a result of practice of this technique of contemplation. It is impossible to define what most of us know only by analogy. Language used to describe direct experience becomes ineffective and perhaps almost meaningless when employed to define abstractions which require modes of definition such as feeling, for example, which cannot be put into words. Language defining God, for example, has the curious trick of creating more problems of definition. A scholar once asked a teacher of Zen, "Who is the Buddha (or the Self)?" The answer, after much irrelevant discussion by the scholar, was, "Ping-ting comes for fire." For those who know the Buddha, the answer probably is satisfactory, but how can those who do not know evaluate the answer without an experience comparable to that of the teacher? The reader of "Franny" can sympathize with Franny's difficulties in her attempts to communicate with Lane.

28 Ibid., pp. 192-193.
"Franny" is a story that may be read with profit by older high school students. The teacher, in his study of the story, has a rich source of character delineation, techniques in the use of language, and basic ideas. There are uses of "goddam" and "the hell with it," but these should not deter the discriminating teacher from noting that in this story at least, clichés are used by an un-admirable character. Of course some student with insight will come up with the observation that admirable characters such as Holden Caulfield and Zooey use the same kind of language as Lane. But the teacher then has good opportunity to show that language per se, and out of relation to a character, can be a trap for the unwary. A "goddam" by Lane can cause revulsion; a "goddam" by Zooey or by Holden can be humorous and provoke empathy.

A serious objection to the story that might be raised is the fact that Lane and Franny have had sexual relations and that Lane has further plans in this area. Salinger does not elaborate on the sexual situation; there is hardly more than a statement. Sex in "Franny" is so unobtrusive that it is probably almost overlooked by the average reader; but it is there and it might present a problem for some high school classes. Generally, there would seem to be no need for the class to discuss the pros and cons of sex as practiced in either college or
high school. There are some topics which are better left to the home, or church, or to specially designed groups for discussion. The teacher of a high school English class should know that his subject area rarely, if ever, includes any aspect of sex education. The teacher could comment, depending upon his class, as to whether it was necessary for Salinger to include in "Franny" the reference to Lane's and Franny's intimacy; here the teacher is concerned with principles of good writing and this is clearly in his subject area. He might, in fact, show students Salinger's discreet handling of the situation, in view of the obtrusiveness of sex and the bad taste shown relative to it by the mass media. Salinger's discretion might, in fact, be appreciated by the class.

Discussions of appearance and reality could arise in the class from Lane's suggestion that Franny is afraid of competing with others in her college life. What is reality to Lane is appearance to Franny; this is the cause of most of their friction. Her reality is that she is not afraid to compete; she is afraid that she will compete and so conform to everybody else's values to the neglect of her own. She sees the world's values as phony: the fact that an actor received terrific reviews does not insure his having given the perfect, or for her, even the adequate performance. The actor may appear good to the best
critics; for Franny, the reality is that the actor had
talent but had no genius, and so the performance was a dis-
appointment. Lane also appears to love Franny but he
undercuts her on every page, so in reality he loves only
his own ego; he is revealed as an egotist, paranoid, bore,
caf, bully, and anti-lover. Franny evolves to a position
independent of Lane and with complete control of herself;
she is, at the end, in command of her own destiny. She
will no longer try to please Lane at the expense of her
own integrity. She grows away from a divided personality,
which has resulted from her attempts at loyalty toward
Lane, toward an integrated self. She knows that she cannot
die, actually, like her brother, Seymour, so she must re-
orient herself so that she will not continue to die,
symbolically, as she has done twice in this story. This
finding oneself is a healthy sign in literature today and
high school students should not be deprived of discovering
it, whenever possible, when advanced by reputable writers.
Judging by the popularity of Salinger with teen-agers,
adolescents, and college students, teachers and professors,
the message is coming through loud and clear.

When Franny was a sophomore, a "very corny boy"
gave her a gold-plated swizzle stick, a stick or rod for
stirring mixed drinks, which she can not throw away or get
rid of. The boy may have been corny but he was not a phony
and so Franny respects his gift and says she will go to her grave with it. Salinger’s ability to depict love without nauseous sentimentality or obvious nonchalance is something the teacher would do well to call to the attention of his students—if they do not first call it to his attention. The love motif is prominent throughout Salinger. Franny wants to love her contemporaries and she feels guilt when she is unable to do so. So she prepares to love God, not with blind faith based upon sentimental obligation, but with an intuitive suspicion that God can be found, known, and inevitably loved through use of techniques of concentration which she knows have been employed for centuries by men intent upon achieving this end. In an age of scientific discovery, Franny feels that this thrill of discovery can extend to realms of Self and God. She sees the possibility of lifting this endeavor out of the limbo of mysticism into the light of practicality, where, supported by a technique cognizant of psycho-physical laws of cause and effect, she can experiment until she can duplicate the experiences of great mystics in their search for meaning of existence. "Franny" is both a religious love story and a story of science: Self and God is a goal for unstinting investigation. Lane is neither religious nor a scientist; his mind is closed to possibilities of slashing through the mask of societal appearances. His world of the cliché
admits of no experimentation in unaccepted fields; he has
not attempted to transcend the status quo of life, and he
ridicules the possibility that transcendence is worthwhile.
Salinger's revelation of Lane's closed mind is merciless.

High school students reading "Franny" should not
fail to catch the scientific and religious implications.
The mind performs miracles in engineering space programs; it
just might be able to perform miracles in investigating
itself, revealing the huge bulk of itself buried below the
surface of waking consciousness. Scientific inquiry should
open up this tremendous area which for the West is a
frontier, but which for the more enlightened in the East
has been explored for thousands of years. Opening up the
area might advance man in his quest for his identity; if he
ultimately finds and proves his identity to be somewhat
analogous to Supreme Identity, some will prefer to call
this discovery a religious one, others a scientific one.
The problem in "Franny" is not with terminology but with
the basis on which life is to be lived. She thinks she has
found the How which will show the What. Is more of Man's
spiritual potential to be realized, or is it not? Franny
says yes; Lane says no. Prophets throughout time have
preached the perfectibility of man; it is refreshing to
read a writer of modern fiction who wants us to listen to
them again for just a minute. High school students may be faced with this question sometime in their lives; they, too, then, may be compelled to find an answer. Careful reading of "Franny" will introduce them to one set of arguments, which can be as provocative for them as Franny's The Way of a Pilgrim is for her.
CHAPTER V

"ZOOEY"

The story, "Zooey," was first published in the May 4, 1957, issue of The New Yorker magazine, over two years after the publication of "Franny," also in The New Yorker. The two stories together comprise the book, Franny and Zooey, published in 1960 by Little, Brown and Company, Boston. "Zooey," which is a Glass family nickname for Zachary Martin Glass, next to Franny the youngest child in the family, is almost four times as long as "Franny." It will be remembered in "Franny" that it was on the day of the Yale game on a Saturday in November of 1955 that Franny went to visit Lane Coutell. "Zooey" begins two days later on Monday in the Glass apartment in New York City; Franny has come here and is continuing to practice the Jesus Prayer and to have, as Zooey says, a "tenth-rate nervous breakdown."

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Reasons for Franny's condition are obvious: she is unhappy with the collegiate world in which she lives, believing it to be phony, complacent, and imperfect. Confused as to the role she should play in this world, she feels that she must withdraw from it. She desires spiritual advancement and her method to achieve this advancement is to practice the Jesus Prayer, an ancient orison technique designed to cause the human soul to be suffused with Christ-consciousness. Since the preceding Saturday, however, she has not eaten regularly; hence her physical and mental health is not supporting her efforts to practice the Jesus Prayer. However worthy her intentions toward gaining spiritual insight, her efforts neglect the coordination of mind and body. In "Franny" the reader does not become so completely aware of Franny's unbalanced approach to her spiritual problem; in "Zooey" the reader realizes that Franny must travel a long journey from partial collapse to the joy of a spiritual enlightenment.

Gwynn and Blotner say of "Zooey":

One may guess—without caring to check the fact—that "Zooey" must be the longest (29,000 words) and dullest "short story" ever to appear in The New Yorker in its thirty years of surprises.2

Longest? Perhaps. Dullest? This judgment depends upon what the reader brings with him to the story. Of course, if one has no taste for philosophic dialogues, for example, then it is difficult to point out their poignancy and mounting force. Management of these dialogues appears to this writer to have been beautifully accomplished. The dialogues proceed to establish serenity out of chaos, affirmation out of confusion, love out of hate, logic out of irrationality, all the while developing character with humor, sympathy, and artistry. Of course there is verbiage—Gwynn and Blotner think the verbiage in "Zooey" is excessive—but even the listing of the fifty-five items of the Glass medicine cabinet serves the purpose of suggesting past family activities and anxieties over health or appearance. The items, for use by male and female and child and adult, are all stored in the same place, which suggests close family living and the concern of parents for children. The listing serves as a program note for the "prose home movie" that Salinger is writing. It may be that Sal Hepatica or Aspergum should not be a part of the twentieth century setting for a story or closet drama, but there will be readers, perhaps even high school English teachers, who will note every item, smiling here and there, and responding to the remembrance that, yes, they have some of that stuff at home in their twentieth century medicine
cabinets, too. They may even think of the time that Dave clouted Tommy with a baseball bat and they had to put that stingy iodine on the wound because there was no non-stingy mercuriochrome, and Salinger will have gained some more empathy for his beloved family of Glasses. It is hard to combat a charge of "dullness," especially when one is not given the reasons why the charge was made in the first place.

Salinger has divided "Zooey" into eight parts. The parts are not numbered but they are indicated by additional spacing in the text. With each new part, the story either takes a new direction in thought or action, or changes the setting. In this chapter, for convenience, the parts of the story will be numbered. In the high school English class, discussion of the story will be facilitated if the eight parts are designated early in the study. This division will help the student to anatomize the story as to structure and it will provide him with an air of orientation to the story which otherwise might be lacking.

Part I of "Zooey" is what Gwynn and Blotner call "a totally unnecessary first-person introduction by Buddy Glass, whose stylistic master is S. J. Perelman." However unnecessary these authors believe the introduction to be,

3Ibid., p. 44.
Salinger does explain to the reader what he is doing in the story. "To get straight to the worst, what I'm about to offer isn't really a short story at all but a sort of prose home movie." Some readers will say that the story is too long. Salinger himself says that the Glasses speak a kind of esoteric, family language, a sort of semantic geometry in which the shortest distance between any two points is a fullish circle.

Zooey is worried about the mysticism but Salinger says,

I say that my current offering isn't a mystical story, or a religiously mystifying story, at all. I say it's a compound, or multiple, love story, pure and complicated.

The author, with his knack for the incisive phrase, briefly introduces the principals of the drama: Franny, Zooey, and Bessie Glass, their mother. He forthrightly overrides objections to his story as inapplicable, for he knows the difference between a mystical story and a love story, and the Glass family, being the Glass family, will not admit of their personalities not coming through in the movie. This introduction neatly undercuts the critic who later echoes the objections which Salinger has already anticipated.

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5Ibid., p. 49.

6Ibid., p. 49.
The story's unconventional structure seems to validate the use of this three and one-half page introduction.

Part II has Zooey, the youngest boy of the seven Glass children seated in a bathtub reading a four-year-old letter written to him by his brother, Buddy. This section is fully descriptive of Zooey's physical appearance and mental genius. All of the Glass children were precocious enough to claim national attention for sixteen years on the radio quiz show, "It's a Wise Child." Zooey, after the eldest son, Seymour, seems to have been preferred most widely by the radio audience, and to have been, next to Seymour, the most consistently "rewarding." This augurs well for the rest of the story where Zooey's wit, fancy, and wisdom will have ample opportunity to display their pyrotechnics. Again, though, Salinger leaves an escape hatch open in suggesting that not all listeners were agreed as to the Glass children's performance: there were those who held that the Glasses were a bunch of insufferably "superior" little bastards that should have been drowned or gassed at birth, and those who held that they were bona-fide underage wits and savants, of an uncommon, if unenviable, order.7

Of course, being "superior" to their peers, the Glass children were subjected to the probing and testing of

7Ibid., p. 54.
the kind of child psychologist or professional educator who examines extra-precocious children. Zooey, particularly, was "fair game," "voraciously" examined and "poked at," and one result, in addition to the danger to his health was that he was found to have, at age twelve, "an English vocabulary on an exact par with Mary Baker Eddy's, if he could be urged to use it." Throughout this story, Salinger has shown intense distrust and obvious contempt for the psychoanalyst and for certain types of educators: psychoanalysis for Seymour, for example, did not save him from suicide, and it is a young educator who cannot accept because he cannot understand the views of ten-year-old Teddy. This is certainly one reason for the appeal which Salinger has for the high school student and for the college undergraduate; the adult educator provides an "enemy" for the rebellious spirit of the adolescent and maturing student. When the young reader discerns the thinly veiled disapproval of Salinger he experiences the shock of recognition and identifies quickly, happily, and inevitably with a situation which he has experienced, perhaps often in his school life.

Part II contains a footnote which is a history in miniature of the Glass children. "The aesthetic evil of a

8Ibid., p. 55.
footnote seems in order just here, I'm afraid."9 The evil
is admitted and immediately perpetrated. Salinger places
the critic in an unenviable position, for he has denied the
critic the personal discovery that the footnote is artis-
tically evil. Salinger's trick of anticipating objections
does grant to him a kind of omniscience but, of course, it
does not immunize him from the evil of the deed he has
committed, if, indeed, it is evil. In "Zooey" the Glass
children need to be placed in perspective; the footnote
performs this function quickly, giving their order of
seniority, and describing their activities as of November,
1955, the time "Zooey" takes place. All of these children
have roles in the story, of which some are extremely minor,
and all readers have not read the earlier short stories
which elaborate on their careers. "Zooey" is indeed a
family love story, and since there are the seven children
for the reader to keep account of, the footnote, though
perhaps an unconventional and even an awkward device,
nevertheless serves as a useful program note which aids the
audience to gain the background necessary for a more ade-
quate understanding of the characters of the play.

One has the growing conviction while reading
"Zooey" that Salinger relishes the flouting of conventions

9Ibid., p. 52.
of form and structure. In the second paragraph of the story, when he expresses mild tongue-in-cheek doubt as to whether "Zooey" is a short story, he says that "those who have seen the footage have strongly advised me against nurturing any elaborate distribution plans for it." Distribution has been excellent and form and length have seemingly not inhibited it.

Part III is a letter from Buddy to Zooey, written on the third anniversary of their brother Seymour's suicide, and four years prior to November, 1955,

"... endless in length, overwritten, teaching, repetitious, opinionated, remonstrative, condescending, embarrassing--and filled, to a surfeit, with affection." Bessie, their mother, cannot understand why Buddy, who lives alone in upper New York state while teaching at a girls' junior college, will not have his phone removed in the room formerly occupied by both Buddy and Seymour in the Glass family apartment in New York City. It is this phone

10Ibid., p. 47.


12Salinger, loc. cit., p. 56.
which Zooey will use later in the story to "save" Franny.

Then, too, the phone, when Buddy comes to New York, is his material link with Seymour; also he can use it, as he says, to chat with Yama, the God of Death (about Seymour?). Buddy does not have an academic degree and he does not agree with Bessie that Zooey, even though an actor, should have his Ph.D. The formally taught person, according to Buddy, does not automatically attain an education, any more than the students of Buddy's Advanced Writing Class, 24-A, are capable of something more artistic than the garishly Freudian and the impossibly hopeless. Buddy seems to be thinking of two different kinds of knowledge: the higher knowledge of the Supreme Brahman and the lower knowledge of the empirical world. His mention of the Mundaka Upanishad in his letter is significant because this Upanishad states the difference between these two types of knowledge. One cannot hope to reach the highest knowledge unless he has set aside the empirical knowledge he has gained as a result of his formal education. Since Buddy helped train Zooey

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\text{Avidya is apara-vidya concerned with things perishable and vidya is para vidya dealing with Imperishable Being. Higher knowledge is concerned with the understanding of the nature of the supreme good, nihsreyasa, and the lower knowledge deals with the disciplines relating to instrumental values.}^{*}\text{S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), The Principal Upanishads (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 671.}\]
(and Franny) for the higher knowledge, that leading toward spiritual perfection, he is worried as to how Zooey (and Franny) will be able to live in a society which is satisfied, indeed happy, to be on the lower plane; this society, in forcing conformity to it, is hostile to anyone who is dissatisfied with its shortcomings and complacent incompetency. There is small wonder that Buddy counsels Zooey: "For Heaven's sake, be careful." He does not want Zooey to end up like Seymour—a suicide.

A most interesting incident is told by Buddy of his encounter with a little four-year-old girl at a supermarket.

I told her she was about the prettiest little girl I'd seen all day. Which made sense to her; she nodded. I said I'd bet she had a lot of boy friends. I got the same nod again. I asked her how many boy friends she had. She held up two fingers. "Two!" I said. "That's a lot of boy friends. What are their names, sweetheart?" She said she, in a piercing voice, "Bobby and Dorothy." This incident is so exciting for Buddy because the little girl had expressed a profound spiritual insight. An explanation comes later in the letter:

Seymour once said to me—in a crosstown bus, of all places—that all legitimate religious study must lead to unlearning the differences, the

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14Salinger, loc. cit., p. 61.

15Ibid., pp. 63-64.
illusory differences, between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold. That suddenly hit me at the meat counter, and it seemed a matter of life and death to drive home at seventy miles an hour to get a letter off to you.16

This religious study would be education which

. . . didn't begin with a quest for knowledge at all but with a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge. Dr. Suzuki says somewhere that to be in a state of pure consciousness—satori—is to be with God before he said, Let there be light.17

For Zen, man and God are not separate; "before Abraham was I am." The little girl is expressing a state of seeing basically, not superficially; she is expressing a fundamental concept of Being which is transcendental to the worldly way of seeing things. Zen calls this a state of "no-knowledge." Dr. Suzuki explains in detail this term, which figures so significantly in "Zooey":

In the traditional terminology of Buddhism, self-nature is Buddha-nature, that which makes up Buddha-hood; it is absolute Emptiness, Sunyata, it is absolute Suchness, Tathata. May it be called Pure Being, the term used in Western philosophy? While it has nothing to do yet with a dualistic world of subject and object, I will for convenience' sake call it Mind, with the capital initial letter, and also the Unconscious. As Buddhist phraseology is saturated with psychological terms, and as religion is principally concerned with the philosophy of life, these terms, Mind and the Unconscious, are here used as synonymous with Self-nature, but the utmost care is to be taken not to confuse them with

16Ibid., p. 67.

17Ibid., p. 65.
those of empirical psychology; for we have not yet come to this; we are speaking of a transcendental world where no such shadows are yet traceable.

In this self-nature there is a movement, an awakening, and the Unconscious becomes conscious of itself. This is not the region where the question "Why?" or "How?" can be asked. The awakening or movement or whatever it may be called is to be taken as a fact which goes beyond refutation. The bell rings, and I hear its vibrations as transmitted through the air. This is a plain fact of perception. In the same way, the rise of consciousness in the Unconscious is a matter of experience; no mystery is connected with it, but, logically stated, there is an apparent contradiction, which once started goes on contradicting itself eternally. Whatever this is, we have now a self-conscious Unconscious or a self-reflecting Mind. Thus transformed, Self-nature is known as Prajna.

Prajna, which is the awakening of consciousness in the Unconscious, functions in a twofold direction. The one is towards the Unconscious and the other towards the conscious. The Prajna which is oriented to the Unconscious is Prajna properly so called, while the Prajna of consciousness is now called mind with the small initial letter. From this mind a dualistic world takes its rise: subject and object, the inner self and the external world, and so on. In the Mind, therefore, two aspects are also distinguishable: Prajna-mind of non-discrimination and dualistic mind. The mind of the first aspect belongs to this world, but so long as it is linked with Prajna it is in direct communication with the Unconscious, it is the Mind; whereas the mind of the second aspect is wholly of this world, and delighted with it, and mixes itself with all its multiplicities.

The mind of the second aspect is called by Hui-neng "thought", nen pien. Here, mind is thought, and thought mind; pien (nen) is hsien (shin) and hsien nien. From the relative point of view, the mind of the first aspect may be designated "no-mind" in contradistinction to the mind of the second aspect. As the latter belongs to this side of our ordinary experience, so called, the former is a transcendental one and in terms of Zen philosophy is "that which is not the mind", or "no-mind", or "no-thought".
To repeat, Prajna is a double-edged sword, one side of which cuts the Unconscious and the other the conscious. The first is also called Mind, which corresponds to "no-mind." The "no-mind" is the unconscious phase of the mind which is the conscious side of Prajna. 18

The little girl in seeing no difference in Bobby and Dorothy is expressing "no-mind" and "no-knowledge," a very wonderful thing in the philosophy of Zen. The differences between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold are illusory when viewed from the vantage point of the infinite no-mind. After Seymour's death, Buddy found a haiku-style poem written by Seymour which testified to a similar experience: "The little girl on the plane/ Who turned her doll's head around/ To look at me." 19

When one understands the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, he has advanced far in no-knowledge and then he is well qualified to place the phenomenal world in the proper perspective. Buddy and Seymour hoped to educate Franny and Zooey in this manner. It is interesting to note that Salinger's story "Teddy" has Teddy McArdle advocating the same kind of education for young children.

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19 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 64.
Maxwell Geismar makes the following remarks about Salinger’s writing:

In the Zen quest for "No-Knowledge" (as Buddy Glass tells his split-half Zooey), is it true that all legitimate religious study must lead to unlearning "the illusory differences between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold"? Then indeed Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us—and perhaps we should also invoke the practical, hardheaded, wrathful Jehovah whom Salinger has always repudiated. For the universe surely has a final transcendent unity. But meanwhile, here on earth, it is the legitimate business of the writer, in his mortal and un-Zenish career, to make clear just what those "illusory" differences are between boys and girls, day and night, animals and stones.20

Geismar's remarks show lack of understanding and naiveté relative to Salinger's use of Zen Buddhism. If he had read Salinger carefully, Geismar should have been able to answer his question himself. Yes, to some, legitimate religious study must lead to unlearning illusory differences noted, and here on earth is where Buddy suggests that this should be done. And Salinger's Glass children are not un-Zenish persons. Zooey's habit of calling Bessie and Franny "buddy" suggests his attempt to destroy the illusory differences between the sexes. And it may be the legitimate business of the writer in his mortal career to know and write Zen which cannot be done void of some of its philosophy. And, really, what conflict is there between Buddy's

suggestion as to where illusory differences lie, and
Salinger's technique of writing, which, with careful compe-
tence develops the characters of Lane, Franny, Zooey,
Buddy, and Bessie so that even the most cursory reading by
uncritical high school adolescents can tell the Glasses and
Coutell one from the other? Salinger is striking much
deeper than Geismar knows, or if he knows, is willing to
admit.

Of course, Buddy's letter to Zooey ends with an
expression of the fear that knowledge of Jesus, Gautama,
Lao-tse, Shankaracharya, Hui-neng and Sri Ramakrishna may
hamper the acting careers of Franny and Zooey, for the life
of the contemplative and the life of the actor would appear
to be incompatible. Hence, Buddy counsels Zooey, *Act, with
all your might*. This is not very exciting advice on the
surface of things, but when Zooey, impersonating Buddy to
Franny, later offers the same advice to Franny with a
philosophical and religious basis for it, the advice
assumes great importance and it dramatically "saves" Franny
from possible physical disintegration and from possible
mental breakdown.

In Part IV, Zooey has finished reading Buddy's
letter; he takes the letter and places it securely in the
middle pages of a TV play manuscript. This action may
suggest his intention to take Buddy's advice to act with all his might even in the soggy and insipid drama which he is reading while seated still in the bathtub. Shortly after Bessie, his mother, comes into the bathroom we are aware that she is there to coax Zooey to talk to Franny, who is currently experimenting with the Jesus Prayer. One of the reasons Bessie laments the phone in Buddy's and Seymour's old room is that it cannot be used to contact Buddy at his isolated house in the woods so that he, too, can talk to Franny. According to Buddy, Zooey treats his mother with "the doting brutality of an apache dancer," but she loves it. All of the Glasses love and respect each other; this is one reason why "Zooey" is called a love story. Franny has had trouble respecting many of her contemporaries because so high a standard for respect and love has been established and maintained in the Glass family that those outside it can very seldom measure up to it.

Gwynn and Blotner state that Part IV

. . . is a prolix causaria between Zooey and his mother that serves only to characterize Zooey and his mother—something the classic Salinger could have done in a phrase (e.g. "my wife, a breath-takingly level-headed girl," or "Poor Uncle Wiggily").

21 Gwynn and Blotner, loc. cit., p. 49.
Part IV characterizes Zooey, Bessie, and Les Glass, the father. Also, the problems of the family stand out in sharp relief: Bessie and Les do not know what to do about Franny. Zooey's part in the play, The Heart Is An Autumn Wanderer, is obviously distasteful to him. Franny will not even take the "nice cup of chicken broth" which Bessie has prepared for her. And the apartment is upside down because of the painters. This fact sets the stage nicely for chaos. Also the Part injects humor into the story after the more serious letter of Part III and before the more analytical Part V. The charge of mere prolixity does not seem just, in view of the purposes of characterization and humor served by this section. Gwynn and Blotner also note:

(Could there be any significance in the fact that one of the links among these last three Salinger stories is the fact that in "Roof Beam"22 Buddy reads Seymour's diary in the bathroom, in "Zooey" Zooey reads Buddy's letter in the bathroom, and in "Franny" Franny reads The Way of a Pilgrim, in a ladies room? An answer might be that it signifies the family shyness carried to an extreme in Seymour's agoraphobia.)23

The above answer is not acceptable because it does not consider the facts. In sixteen years of "It's a Wise Child"

22Reference is to J. D. Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," New Yorker, XXXI (November 19, 1955), p. 51 foll.

23Gwynn and Blotner, loc. cit., p. 49.
programs, there is little to indicate that the Glass children were shy; on the contrary, there were those in the radio audience who thought of them as "insufferable 'superior' little bastards," or worse. Les and Bessie were vaudeville actors; Franny is an actress; Zooey is an actor; Buddy is a teacher; Waker is a Roman Catholic priest—strange occupations for those afflicted with a family shyness. In each of the above "readings" suggested by Gwynn and Blotner there is intimacy and affection, even though it may be disguised, by the reader for the writer. Privacy and solitude are hardly in any place so guaranteed as in the bathroom where the reader, without interruption, can give utmost attention to a diary, a letter, or a book. It is, in Salinger, a compliment to a writer to be read in this place. Franny, while she is with Lane, cannot read her little book in any place other than the ladies' room; it is an ironic and devastating indictment of Lane, for the ladies' room, of all places, to offer a haven for Franny when Lane's company becomes unbearable. In "Zooey," Salinger does not permit Bessie to intrude upon Zooey's bathroom privacy until after he has read Buddy's letter; she has not presumed to come between Buddy and Zooey during their intimate causerie. As to Seymour's morbid fear of being in open or public places, Gwynn and Blotner make him sound like a helpless psychotic who has lost command of his
senses in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish." And what place could be more open, and public if need be, than the Florida beach where we first meet him?

Gwynn and Blotner also say:

Part 5 at least gets Zooey out of the bathroom and into the living-room, where he and Franny converse, also at length. This is where the story should have begun for herein Franny and her arrogant brother touch on not only Franny's crisis but Zooey's, both of which, in terms of their education by Seymour and Buddy, could be described as the dark night of the soul.214

Part V, pages 91-115,25 however, does not get Zooey into the living room; he is still talking to Bessie while shaving in the bathroom. Hence the judgment as to where the story should have begun is somewhat out of focus. As to the dark night of the soul, that falls in Parts VI and VII.

Part V opens with props arranged and explained for the set; stage directions are given for the next scene of the "movie."

A pre-shaving ritual had already been put into effect. The window blind had been raised halfway; the bathroom door had been set ajar to let the steam escape and clear the mirrors; a cigarette had been lit, dragged on, and placed within easy reach on the frosted-glass ledge under the

\[24\text{Tbid.}, \text{p. 49.}\]

\[25\text{J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961).}\]
Then the action of the scene begins immediately. Zooey "put the tube of lather, without re-capping it, somewhere into the enamel background, out of his way."

Zooey's reference to the bathroom as "our little chapel" suggests that the talk between him and his mother will have religious overtones. If Franny's trouble were Catholic, Bessie herself thinks she might be able to help Franny, but Zooey says Franny's trouble is strictly non-sectarian. Bessie knows about the little book that Franny is carrying around with her, having heard from Lane Coutell about it. When Zooey hears Lane mentioned he asks, "Who in hell is Lane?" His reaction recalls Franny's similar comment when Lane mentioned Wally Campbell. The two incidents underline again the Glass children's superiority; they are impatient of persons such as the Wallys and the Lanes. Zooey is emphatic in condemning Lane to Bessie when he says:

"Phooey, I say, on all white-shoe college boys who edit their campus literary magazines. Give me an honest con man any day." 27

26Tbid., p. 91.

27Tbid., p. 98.
The reader may wonder at this point if Salinger might not be speaking along with Zooey. Bessie pulls Zooey up short and, with unusual insight, diagnoses the problem that both Franny and Zooey will have to solve.

"You either take to somebody or you don't. . . . Neither you nor Buddy know how to talk to people you don't like. . . . Don't love, really. . . . It's not right. . . . You can't live in the world with such strong likes and dislikes."28

This long story has as its theme: how to love. A superiority of sorts has privileges, but if one is to get along and live in the world, he must also accept responsibilities; Bessie suggests the responsibility of love. Zooey listens to Bessie's suggestions "with admiration, affection, and, not least, gratitude." Bessie's suggestion will be carried through Zooey to Franny, so it will be the mother, after all, who will help her children with universal, non-sectarian advice, given, however indirectly, in the smoky-religious atmosphere of a chapel-bathroom.

It was out of Buddy's and Seymour's room that Franny took the two books, *The Way of a Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim Continues His Way*. Bessie does not know this until Zooey tells her; Bessie is quite unaware of how far advanced her children are in metaphysical knowledge and

esoteric thought, yet, although lacking this knowledge herself, she is able to pinpoint a failure which is basic to their difficulties in living: the lack of love for all their fellow human beings. When this lack is seen and remedied, the story becomes the more "compound, or multiple, love story" that was promised by the narrator in the beginning.

Zooey blames Seymour and Buddy for the training he and Franny have both received.

"We're freaks, the two of us, Franny and I," he announced, standing up. "I'm a twenty-five-year-old freak and she's a twenty-year-old freak, and both those bastards are responsible." . . . "The great teachers. The great emancipators. My God. I can't even sit down to lunch with a man anymore and hold up my end of a decent conversation. I either get so bored or so goddam preachy that if the son of a bitch had any sense, he'd break his chair over my head." 29

This training has given them a view of life which is incompatible with life as it is lived all around them. The discrepancy between life as it should be lived according to Zooey's Buddhistic Four Great Vows and life as it is lived in New York, for example, provides an unresolved conflict which is devastating to peace of mind. The extra dimension of wisdom provided by knowledge of metaphysical teachings of Gautama, the Buddha, in this instance, makes a person a

29Ibid., p. 103.
freak, according to Zooey, in a society which has lesser things than spiritual development to occupy it. While ranting against his personal freakishness, Zooey is still proud of the knowledge that made him a freak. Salinger has depicted a problem which is universal to those embracing a new philosophy but not dedicated as yet to action in accordance with its precepts. One is reminded immediately of Christ and the rich young ruler. To forsake everything to follow the Master was too much of a sacrifice for him; the young man had an investment in wealth, luxury, and status which had to be safeguarded at all costs, even at the cost of increased wisdom and perception of truth.

Zooey rejects psychoanalysis as a remedy for Franny's ills; he tells Bessie:

"You just call in some analyst who's experienced in adjusting people to the joys of television, and Life magazine every Wednesday, and European travel, and the H-Bomb, and Presidential elections, and the front page of the Times, and the responsibilities of the Westport and Oyster Bay Parent-Teacher Association, and God knows what else that's gloriously normal--you just do that, and I swear to you, in not more than a year Franny'll either be in a nut ward or she'll be wandering off into some goddam desert with a burning-cross in her hands." 30

Franny, striving for a super-normal spiritual experience, cannot be induced into patterns of strictly "normal" behavior without creating havoc. For someone to be any good

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30 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
for her, "He'd have to believe that it's through the grace of God that he has the native intelligence to be able to help his goddam patients at all." This is worth remembering when we come to Part VIII of the story; in effect, Zooey does play God to Franny, and she hears and knows what he says to be The Word.

Zooey understands the two books which Franny is carrying around with her and he explains them to Bessie. He shows superior knowledge to that of Franny of the process of the Jesus Prayer. He has knowledge of the activation of the ajna chakram, a psychic center anatomically located in the center of the head. Eastern philosophy is precise as to the function of this chakram of which the pineal gland is a part. This chakram is often called the third eye because through it man is made to see his own true form and the true form of the universe around him. It is interesting to note that in Western English dictionaries, the following entry is rather typical: the pineal gland "has no known function, but is believed to be a vestigial sensory organ." The American College Dictionary calls it the "pineal body"

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31 Ibid., p. 109.

and says it is "a body of unknown function present in the brain of all vertebrates having a cranium, believed to be a vestigial sense organ."33 (The writer once saw a medical journal which stated the function of the pineal body was unknown except that it definitely did not have anything to do with what mystics refer to as the "third eye." This statement would be regarded by some as a curious bit of "scientific" opinionation, a piece of medical flotsam, a worthy example of "no-knowledge"--but Western style, in this case, rather than Eastern.)

When Bessie asks how long Franny will have to say the prayer, Zooey responds with a panning of popular, commercial, social-club, Christianity-in-10-easy-lessons:

"As soon as we get out of the chapel here, I hope you'll accept from me a little volume I've always admired. I believe it touches on some of the fine points we've discussed this morning. 'God is My Hobby.' By Dr. Homer Vincent Claude Pierson, Jr. In this little book, I think you'll find, Dr. Pierson tells us very clearly how when he was twenty-one years of age he started putting aside a little time each day--two minutes in the morning and two minutes at night, if I remember correctly--and at the end of the first year, just by these little informal visits with God, he increased his annual income seventy-four per cent. I believe I have an extra copy, and if you'll be good enough--."34


Zooey again is lampooning the normal, and he is convincing as he appeals to the reader's sense of humor to appreciate the ridiculousness of the idea of gaining a spiritual enlightenment without cost, without preparation, and without dedication to the task.

Bessie's admiration of Zooey's unclothed back is a gesture of love which Zooey rejects almost automatically. For all his perspicacity as to the tenets of metaphysical lore, he does not know how to give and accept without stint, the simple gift of love. This is the only time in the story that Bessie has felt hurt and insulted. She is here wiser than her wise child, Zooey; she understands intuitively, without the benefit of books on the subject, her son's shortcomings.

"In the old radio days, when you were all little and all, you all used to be so--smart and happy and--just lovely. . . . I don't know what good it is to know so much and be smart as whips and all if it doesn't make you happy."35

Her intuitive insight is still in evidence.

Part VI opens with as meticulous an inventory of the living-room as that given for the medicine chest in the bathroom. Both inventories suggest the lives that have been lived in the apartment. Franny is asleep on the couch

with the flea-ridden cat, Bloomberg, when Zooey enters to try to do what he can to help Franny; this is the first of the dark-night-of-the-soul scenes of Franny and Zooey. When Zooey wakes Franny she tells him of the spidery dream she has just had.

The preliminary conversational fencing between Franny and Zooey displays a wide variety of loves and antipathies. Franny loves the old fat smelly cat Bloomberg, Zooey's producer Le Sage, Epictetus, and the members of her family, all because they are nice and unphony, or as in the case of the girl with the awful name, Sharmon Sherman, because she feels sorry for her. Zooey feels responsible for out-of-towners in New York.

"I'm always afraid they're going to get run over, or beaten up, while they're busy discovering some little Armenian restaurant on Second Avenue. Or some damn thing."36

He loves his black mollies, Hess, the writer ("when he's not shoving his artistic poverty down my throat"), Le Sage (because the producer loves his rather blowzy wife), and the spot in the apartment where he used to keep his rabbits. Zooey's hates are similar to the hates stated by Franny to Lane in "Franny." He dislikes the fact that he and Franny are the Tattooed Lady, "and we're never going to have a

36Ibid., p. 131.
minute's peace, the rest of our lives, till everybody else is tattooed, too."37

Franny has come to the point of believing that almost all of the rest of the world is wrong. An incident on the street five stories below gives Zooey insight into this fallacious opinion of Franny's. A little girl is hiding from her dachshund; he is searching frantically to discover where she has gone.

The anguish of separation was scarcely bearable for him, and when at last he picked up his mistress's scent, it wasn't a second too soon. The joy of reunion for both, was immense.38

Zooey's re-affirmation of faith is:

"God damn it ... there are nice things in the world--and I mean nice things. We're all such morons to get so sidetracked. Always, always, always referring every goddam thing that happens right back to our lousy little egos."39

He sees the happiness which comes from the harmony of friendship between the girl and her dog. Love for each other makes them happy. Some of the world is not wrong.

Both Franny and Zooey, under the instruction of Buddy and Seymour, have been exposed to wisdom; when Franny

37 Ibid., p. 139.
38 Ibid., p. 151.
39 Ibid., p. 151.
has failed to find wisdom on her college campus, she is
discouraged: the world of formal education is all wrong in
Franny's opinion, and she reviews this gripe in the current
discussion.

"You never even hear any hints dropped on a campus
that wisdom is supposed to be the goal of knowledge.
You hardly ever even hear the word 'wisdom' men-
tioned!"40

She is attempting to use some of this wisdom in her experi-
ment with the Jesus Prayer but Zooey gets to the point,
cruelly, but yet mercifully for he loves Franny and wants
to help her, that whereas the Prayer may be worthwhile, she
does not understand the Jesus to whom she is praying.
Zooey's growing insight into their problems does not come
suddenly; it is a gradual development through digression
and false starts, which nevertheless carry their quota of
humor, character development, and mounting tension. While
saying the prayer she is not loving. Zooey says,

"It's rough on Bessie, it's rough on Les and if
you don't know it yet, you're beginning to give
off a little stink of piousness. God damn it,
there isn't any prayer in any religion in the
world that justifies piousness."41

(When Zooey says "God damn it" instead of "goddam it," he
means for it literally and seriously to carry its full

40 Ibid., p. 146.
41 Ibid., pp. 158-159.
complement of meaning.) She would not accept Les' tangerine, which was offered to her with love; she will not accept Bessie's chicken soup which is consecrated because it, too, is offered with love. Her nefarious crusade against everybody, even against Jesus when she was younger, has been a personal crusade, as if as Zooey says, all these people are personal enemies. This is the evil; this is where Franny is making her big mistake. Zooey picked up his ulcer because he let his feelings about television and everything else get personal.

Of course this is a lack of love but it is violation of a deeper principle which constitutes a central tenet of Buddhist psychology: non-attachment, vairagya, detachment, renunciation or relinquishment. There is a difference between renunciation and relinquishment and this difference is noted, later in this chapter, in the quotation of Verse 2, Chapter XVIII, of The Bhagavadgītā.

Non-attachment must still be performed with impersonal attachment. For example, a mother may love her child, doing every possible thing for the child's well-being, providing food, shelter, education, and security. The child may be a moron; this fact should not cause the mother to grieve. The mother's duty is to love the child, but feeling grief is not a part of her duty. She should be so oriented to this child that even her love for it does
not touch her personally. The mother has a large investment in the child of time, money, and attention, but only by remaining personally unattached to the child can she be of best service to the child. She can not be responsible for the child's retarded mental condition; she is responsible only for herself. She is not God and so she is not responsible for the whole universe. If she grieves for the child's condition she forfeits the balance of emotion and the perspective of intellect necessary to perform her duty toward the child. Her grief is an expression of personal selfishness; she is on her way to spoiling the child's life. Buddhistic scriptures teach that no one in this world is given to another individual for his personal use. In effect, the mother is using the child for her personal use as an object for her grief. Non-attachment does not mean to pay no attention to others; one must have sympathy always, but without the involvement of Self. When a person has done all he can to help others in distress, he should not then continue to feel sorry for them. If he has done his duty, then it is easier for him to achieve non-attachment; if he has not done his duty, then personal attachment will be a way he will try to make up for his neglect.

Of course, non-attachment is regarded as related to Self-realization. To realize the Self, the mind must be free of all entangling alliances of body disturbances,
emotions, or mental diseases which preempt control. One cannot understand who he is if he cannot examine, without the prejudice of mental and physical distraction, this mysterious, basic, part of himself, the Self. If either body or mind continues to clamor for attention, there is no chance for effective Self-analysis. This clamor is attachment, accrued through lack of practice in Self-analysis. When a person can "stand aside" and watch what he is doing and thinking, without personal involvement, then he is like the lotus plant; his roots go much deeper than the immediate environment which appears to sustain him. He moves with the various environmental currents according to their whims and stays beautiful and poised withal. It is not without reason that the lotus is a meaningful symbol of Buddhistic thought; attachment to anything except the quest for spiritual identity brings suffering and destruction; non-attachment will eliminate suffering and provide a congenial state of mind for realization of Self, which, when accomplished, eliminates the word "destruction" from the experiential field of this person.

Franny has come to feel an intense dislike for Professor Tupper, as well as for the writers, Manlius and Esposito. Zooey says, "I mean you just don't despise what
they represent—you despise them. It's too damn personal, Franny, I mean it."

"No matter what I say, I sound as though I'm undermining your Jesus Prayer. And I'm not, God damn it. All I am is against why and how and where you're using it. I'd like to be convinced—I'd love to be convinced—that you're not using it as a substitute for doing whatever the hell your duty is in life, or just your daily duty. Worse than that, though, I can't see—I swear to God I can't—how you can pray to a Jesus you don't even understand."

Zooey's regard for Jesus is extremely high; he is trying to help Franny to see what he sees in Jesus.

"My God! He's the only the most intelligent man in the Bible, that's all! Who isn't he head and shoulders over? Who? Both Testaments are full of pundits, prophets, disciples, favorite sons, Solomons, Isaias, Davids, Pauls—but, my God, who besides Jesus really knew which end was up? Nobody. Not Moses. Don't tell me Moses. He was a nice man, and he kept in beautiful touch with his God, and all that—but that's exactly the point. He had to keep in touch. . . .

"Oh, my God, what a mind!" he said, "Who else, for example, would have kept his mouth shut when Pilate asked for an explanation?"

Both Salinger and Zooey must have known, of course, that the Buddha also kept calmly silent when he was questioned about the nature of reality and nirvana. Making this point,
though, would have detracted from the effectiveness of
Zoeey's polemic on behalf of Jesus.

"Jesus realized there is no separation from God
. . . knew--knew--that we're carrying the
Kingdom of Heaven around with us, inside, where
we're all too goddam stupid and sentimental and
unimaginative to look. . . ." 45

Immediately after Zoeey's saying, "'Jesus realized
there is no separation from God,'" he "clapped his hands
together--only once, and not loud, and very probably in
spite of himself." On the dedication page of Nine Stories,
Salinger gives a Zen koan:

We know the sound of two hands clapping.
But what is the sound of one hand clapping?
Zoeey's action, most certainly, is suggested by this koan.
To try to explain a koan is difficult because koans are
given by Zen teachers in sanzen or in personal guidance for
the purpose of stopping mind-wandering so that the student
can achieve an enlightening vision, or satori. Long thought
on a koan ideally will supply the meaning. Whatever
Salinger's answer to this particular koan might be, or
whatever Zoeey's clapping might mean, one explanation is
that when one enters deep meditation, he transcends all
sensuous sounds and hears the soundless sound of the
cosmos, the anahata nadam (an, not; ahata, instrument;

nadam, sound) described in yoga techniques, then he can
comprehend the sound of one hand clapping. He has then
arrived at the source of all sounds and understands their
genesis. Then one, also, like Jesus, realizes that he is
not separated from God. This is the quest of the person
dedicated to true spiritual advancement and wisdom. Zooey's
action of clapping, seemingly trivial, is no longer cryptic
when related to the context from which it was derived.

Zooey insists that if Franny does not understand
Jesus, her use of the prayer is mere cant. She must under­
stand the meaning of Christ-consciousness before trying to
achieve it. This consciousness is described further in the
Bhagavadgita.

The Bhagavata makes out that the one Reality which
is of the nature of undivided consciousness is
called Brahman, the Supreme Self or God. He is
the ultimate principle the real self in us as well
as the God of worship. The Supreme is at once the
transcendental, the cosmic and the individual
reality. In its transcendental aspect, It is the
pure self unaffected by any action or experience,
detached, unconcerned. In Its dynamic cosmic
aspect, It not only supports but governs the whole
cosmic action and this very Self which is one in
all and above all is present in the individual. 46

Franny's lack of understanding is not, certainly, uncommon.

The reality of the Supreme is not a question to
be solved by a dialectic which the vast majority
of the human race will be able to understand.

46The Bhagavadgītā, trans. S. Radhakrishnan
Dialectic in itself and without reference to personal experience cannot give us conviction. Only spiritual experience can provide us with proof of the existence of Spirit.47

Zooey's understanding of Jesus and Christ has been much greater than Franny's; she has not yet been led out of her confusion. This must happen if the tension is to be resolved and if the story is to achieve a satisfactory conclusion. In dealing with metaphysical problems, the writer will have to come up with a convincing solution if he is to be successful with his story; a platitude, even in a valid setting would be a let-down causing loss of effectiveness for thought, structure, and artistry of the story.

Part VII provides a short, ten-page, quiet interlude between the tumultuous Parts VI and VIII. Zooey has left Franny in the living-room and, shortly, for the first time in almost seven years he enters Seymour's and Buddy's old room. He reads some of the quotations printed by Buddy and Seymour on the beaverboard door. "Zooey sat at Seymour's old desk, inert, but not asleep, for a good twenty minutes."48 He read some of Seymour's writings on

47bid., p. 20.
the cardboards, which were returned in shirts from the laundry, after which "he leaned forward on his elbows and buried his face in his hands. This time he sat motionless for almost a half hour."\(^{49}\) Then he moved over to Seymour's and Buddy's phone and dialed a local number, "a very local number, indeed," because he is calling the apartment he is now in. No doubt, Zooey is practicing some form of meditation prior to his using the phone. He has come to Seymour's room for answers to Franny's problem. Although he has previously shown bitterness over the instruction which Buddy and Seymour gave him and Franny for so long, his coming back to their room suggests that they were right in their philosophy of life and he knows this to be so. Here in this room is wisdom on the walls, in the books, and in the atmosphere. In this secluded retreat, off the beaten path of worldly activity, one has a chance to discover his identity and to determine the best method of coping with life. Here, symbolically, Zooey has a chance to play God to Franny. When he picks up the phone, he is, in effect, underlining his previously stated belief that "Jesus realized there is no separation from God." He, too, has reaffirmed his faith in himself as potentially a divine messenger, fully qualified to discover and use his own

\(^{49}\text{Ibid.}, p. 181.\)
inherent wisdom. He will do his best to disguise his voice by holding a handkerchief over the mouthpiece and by trying to sound like Buddy who, in lieu of Seymour, might be able to help Franny.

Part VIII, the last Part of the story, is the climax. Zooey calls Franny on the phone, using Buddy's mannerisms. When Franny asks him where he is, Zooey answers:

"Where am I? I'm right in my element, Flopsy. I'm in a little haunted house down the road. Never mind. Just talk to me." 50

Zooey's answer has several meanings: it could, literally, be Buddy's answer and it also places Zooey in the room down the hall still haunted by memories of, and the spiritual presence of, Seymour. Zooey has accepted the mission of helping Franny regain her balance and health; he is presently in his element as missionary. He does not like this role, hence his answer is probably ironic.

While Franny still believes that the voice at the other end of the line is Buddy's, Zooey allows and encourages Franny to talk about her troubles. His questions strongly resemble those employed in non-directive psychotherapy technique to encourage mentally disturbed patients

50 Ibid., p. 187.
to "talk out" their problems and thus help heal themselves. Speaking of Zooey to "Buddy," Franny says: "He's just so erratic. I mean he goes around and around in such horrible circles." Each question or comment by Zooey draws Franny out more and more, and the conversation reveals other aspects of Zooey's character and gives further details of the Glass family history. In Part VI, Zooey did most of the talking; it is good narrative balance for Salinger to have Franny do most of the talking early in Part VIII before Zooey again takes over in the latter pages.

When she finds out "Buddy" is really Zooey talking, Franny says,

"All right, Zooey. Just stop, please. Enough's enough. You're not funny. . . . In case you're interested, I'm feeling absolutely lousy. So if there's anything special you have to say to me, please hurry up and say it and leave me alone." Franny no doubt suspects that the word, "alone," is not the one she should have used; the peculiar silence at the other end of the phone is disturbing to her. As Zooey will spell out clearly, being alone in this life is not Franny's role; she is an actress and is herself responsible for this desire to act. Furthermore:

\[51\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 189.}\]
\[52\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 192.}\]
"I'll tell you one thing, Franny. One thing I know. And don't get upset. It isn't anything bad. But if it's the religious life you want, you ought to know right now that you're missing out on every single goddam religious action that's going on around this house. You don't even have sense enough to drink when somebody brings you a cup of consecrated chicken soup—which is the only kind of chicken soup Bessie ever brings to anybody around this madhouse. So just tell me, just tell me, buddy. Even if you went out and searched the whole world for a master--some guru, some holy man--to tell you how to say your Jesus Prayer properly, what good would it do you? How in hell are you going to recognize a legitimate holy man when you see one if you don't even know a cup of consecrated chicken soup when it's right in front of your nose? Can you tell me that?"

Zooey suggests that Franny is in hell because she is not sensitive to the true religious atmosphere of even her own home. The idea of "home can be enlarged to include the world. Franny's Jesus Prayer is fine for her, if she has prepared herself properly to perform it. If she lacks preparation, if she does not know Jesus, if she cannot recognize love when it is offered to her, if she has not analyzed herself to know what her purpose is in life, then she is shooting at the wrong target in attempting to advance spiritually.

The climax is near when Zooey tells Franny that he and Buddy, unknown to Franny, saw her act last summer and that she was good. She had thought that the audience, and

53 Ibid., pp. 194-195.
this would include Buddy and Zooey, was stupid, laughing in
the wrong places, and that the acting profession was
"loaded with mercenaries and butchers." Zooey's logic
drives relentlessly forward; he accelerates the pace of his
"sermon" and will allow no interruption.

"If you've had a freakish education, at least use
it, use it. You can say the Jesus Prayer from now
till doomsday, but if you don't realize that the
only thing that counts in the religious life is
detachment, I don't see how you'll ever move an
inch. Detachment, buddy, and only detachment.
Desirelessness. 'Cessation from all hankerings.'"

Zooey might be drawing his sermon from Chapter XVIII of The
Bhagavadgītā. Verse 2, with comment is:

(2) The wise understand by "renunciation" the
giving up of works prompted by desire: the
abandonment of the fruits of all the works, the
learned declare, is relinquishment.
(Comment): Inertia or non-action is not the
ideal. Action without any selfish desire or expec-
tation of gain, performed in the spirit that
"I am not the doer, I am surrendering myself to
the Universal Self" is the ideal set before us.
The Gītā does not teach the complete renunciation
of works but the conversion of all works into
niskāma karma or desireless action.55

In effect, Franny is fighting the teaching of the Gītā: she
has renounced works, taking refuge in a program of non-
action, when this is not her duty. She is attached to the

54 Ibid., p. 196.

55 The Bhagavadgītā, trans. S. Radhakrishnan
Jesus Prayer, which as a spiritual exercise is permissible, but she is concerned with the fruits, the results of her practice, and this is of the nature of "passion." Zooey's next sentence is confusing at first because he appears to state a paradox: "It's this business of desiring, if you want to know the goddam truth, that makes an actor in the first place." But he explains the statement to Franny immediately:

"Somewhere along the line—in one damn incarnation or another, if you like—you not only had a hankering to be an actor or an actress but to be a good one. You're stuck with it now. You can't just walk out on the results of your own hankerings. Cause and effect, buddy, cause and effect. The only thing you can do now; the only religious thing you can do is act. Act for God, if you want to—be God's actress, if you want to. What could be prettier?"

Zooey's point regarding work may have derived from The Bhavadgītā:

(Verse 46) He from whom all beings arise and by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty does man attain perfection.
(Comment): Work is worship of the Supreme, man's homage to God. The Gītā holds that quality and capacity are the basis of functional divisions. Accepting the theory of rebirth, it holds that a man's inborn nature is determined by his own past lives. All forms of perfection do not lie in the

56 Salinger, loc. cit., p. 196.
57 Ibid., pp. 196-197.
same direction. Each one aims at something beyond himself, at self-transcendence whether he strives after personal perfection, or lives for art or works for one's fellow. 58

Since Franny and Zooey have prepared themselves for acting, through perhaps numerous incarnations, their duty now is to act, and on their own terms, trying for some kind of perfection. Complete desirelessness is not yet possible for Zooey: he hankers after an honorable skull like Yorick's. But he considers that being a good actor is actually a religious rite, so he allows himself some degree of attachment. But the stupidity of audiences, he insists, is none of Franny's business; her duty is to act.

The artist's job is not to try to please everybody. Non-attachment must be practiced here. Attachment to concern for what an audience thinks prostitutes the acting—one is no longer the artist performing on his own terms. Detachment from popular opinion allows the artist to concentrate on his religious duty: acting.

In acting, the actor serves himself and the audience. As a "Wise Child" on the radio program, Zooey, who did not wish to shine his shoes, was told by Seymour one night before the program that he should shine his shoes for The Fat Lady, and Zooey did just this all the rest of

58 *The Gita*, op. cit., p. 368.
the years he was on the program. Seymour never did tell
Zooey who the Fat Lady was, but for Zooey,

"This terribly clear, clear picture of the Fat
Lady formed in my mind. I had her sitting on
this porch all day, swatting flies, with her radio
going full-blast from morning till night. I
figured the heat was terrible, and she probably
had cancer, and--I don't know. Anyway, it seemed
goddam clear why Seymour wanted me to shine my
shoes when I went on the air. It made sense."59

Zooey did something nice for the Fat Lady merely by shining
his shoes for her. He took her into account; he considered
her as a symbol worth remembering. Now, when Zooey is
talking to Franny, the meaning of much becomes apparent: of
Seymour's suggestion, of Bessie's offering of chicken soup,
of Les' desire to give Franny a tangerine, of Zooey's
meditation in Franny's behalf, of any person's love for the
human race, for we are all actors in our separate, little,
individual, yet unified, huge, cosmic dramas:

"I don't care where an actor acts. It can be in
summer stock, it can be over a radio, it can be
over television, it can be in a goddam Broadway
theatre, complete with the most fashionable, most
well-fed, most sunburned-looking audience you can
imagine. But I'll tell you a terrible secret--
Are you listening to me? There isn't anyone out
there who isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. That includes
your Professor Tupper, buddy. And all his goddam
cousins by the dozens. There isn't anyone any-
where that isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. Don't you
know that? Don't you know that goddam secret yet?
And don't you know--listen to me, now--don't you

59Salinger, loc. cit., p. 199.
know who that Fat Lady really is? . . . Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy.  60

This is the climax of Franny and Zooey. Some readers may feel an impact similar to that experienced immediately by Franny who gains an almost satoriic vision or understanding. The impact is supported by both form and structure and by the sudden revelation of the culmination of thought which has been patterned as psychologically emotional, logically religious, and transcendentally spiritual. The threads of thought all seem to converge into a concentrated essence, so that when the pronouncement is made as to who the Fat Lady really is, the tension is broken, the mental release has been accomplished, and, because of her joy, Franny has all she can do to hold the phone. She falls into a deep dreamless sleep, lying quietly and smiling at the ceiling. In "Franny" she looked at the ceiling; in "Zooey" she has achieved more wisdom and more happiness, hence she smiles. Once again, but this time without saying it in the same words, Zooey has said, "Jesus realized there is no separation from God." All of humanity, potentially and actually, is divine, so in serving humanity, in fact all sentient beings, one is serving God. By loving humanity and by acting well in its behalf, one helps others along

60Or bid., p. 200.
the path toward Christ-consciousness, Brahma-knowledge, 
Buddahood—each religion has its appropriate designation.

(Verse 55) Through devotion he comes to know Me, 
what My measure is and who I am in truth; then, 
having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters 
into Me.

(Comment): The knower, the devotee, becomes one 
with the Supreme Lord, the Perfect Person, in 
self-knowledge and self-experience. Jñāna, supreme 
wisdom, and bhakti, supreme devotion have the same 
goal. To become Brahman is to love God, to know 
Him fully and to enter into His being.61

Since "Zooey" is divided into eight parts, the high 
school student can break the story apart and see what each 
part contributes per se. His re-assembly of the parts into 
the whole may reveal to him an artistic unity. He can 
study whether a particular part constitutes an artistic 
triumph because it contributes toward forming an integrated 
whole.

If the story is read by the entire class, it is 
conceivable that most of the students will be involved in 
experiences of discovery which will be exciting. In all 
but the most capable classes, reliance upon the teacher for 
interpretive help will probably be necessary. The story 
might be read and discussion called for without any 
interpretation whatsoever by the teacher until it is 
necessary for him to clarify and to summarize. This method

has worked very well in the writer's classes with Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery"; students were forced by their own curiosity to derive some sort of meaning from the unconventional action in the story. When they were satisfied as to the meaning, it was found that these meanings very often could be associated with some event or situation which had profound significance in the students' lives. When the students had then personally identified with the story, it was a meaningful story for them; they were glad that they had been challenged to search out its meaning.

The objection may be raised by teachers and parents of high school students that the philosophy found in "Zooey" is too abstract or too complicated for assimilation by these students. Perhaps a good case could be made for the view that the story is one for aficionados of Zen or for cultists of various other types. This kind of argument can be met from several angles. First, the story is not essentially unChristian. Zooey's pronouncement that "Jesus realized that there is no separation from God" is a restatement of an idea that recurs many times in the New Testament. Salinger probably uses such works as The Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads as references because here the principle is more fully enunciated and developed. The practice of the highest yoga is directed toward realization of Self, a state in which the yogi will understand his own
Zooey refers to Jesus as an adept; Zooey felt that Jesus had achieved, no doubt through practice, a wisdom that others knew only by hearsay. His admiration for Jesus is almost boundless. In a sense, Zooey is emulating Christ by calling everybody "buddy" or "friend."

High school students usually are not unacquainted with the Judeo-Christian tradition; they are then not starting from scratch in exposure to the religious concepts that are present in "Zooey." The observation that the Fat Lady is Christ is another way of saying that the brotherhood of man should be a practical fact, not just a romantic ideal incapable of viable application. High school students these days are surely aware of humanity's eleventh-hour predicament relative to possible total annihilation, and education for survival should certainly include means of deliverance other than just the propagation of bigger-and-better-bombs. Franny was saved by Zooey's wisdom; it is hardly cultish for humanity to be helped, even through fiction, toward saving itself by examining again its basic identity.

Second, the philosophy found in "Zooey" is not difficult to understand on the level suggested above. It is difficult to understand only if the teacher is some sort of yogic aficionado himself who insists upon bringing to the class, without simplification, all of the spiritual, psychological, biological, and bio-chemical ramifications
of the various teachings; this approach might turn out to be very presumptuous, confusing, and dull, unless the teacher is skillful indeed. There are various levels of meaning in Salinger. When Zooey claps his hands, for example, this might be, on the simplest level, merely an action expressive of emphasis. For those students who see it thus, fine; not everyone reads *Moby Dick* with full attention to the psychological, moral, or mythic levels that the specialist discerns. One suspects that those critics who criticize Salinger as exhibiting a cheap Zen Buddhism, thus catering to a popular fad, are displaying adequately upon what level they are reading him. Zooey says to Franny,

"So if you look at it in a certain way, by rights you're only entitled to the low-grade spiritual counsel we're able to give you around here, and no more. At least you know there won't be any goddam ulterior motives in this madhouse. Whatever we are, we're not *fishy*, buddy."\(^{62}\)

One is inclined to agree with him. Salinger is no beatnik; he has thought deeply. One does not have to be versed in Buddhistic literature to appreciate "Zooey," although such knowledge helps to gain a fuller interpretation of it.

The high school student should be pushed by the story toward a dictionary for definition of such terms as

"adept," "guru," "reincarnation," "avatar," "pineal body," and "nirvana." His learning, of course, will be amplified, and possibly may take a direction which at some time, upon continued investigation, will prove both fascinating and enlightening.

The charge may be brought against Zooey that he is, finally, irreverent. This is an unjust charge. His expletives show an overweening desire not to be pious. For him, piety smacks of the phony. Actually, Zooey is intensely religious if only in his feeling the necessity for loving mankind, which for him, is also God. His views are non-sectarian because he has tried to get back past sectarianism to those areas of thought which are basic and common to all great religions. He resembles to some degree the Sri Ramakrishna, whom he, along with his brothers and sisters, has studied.

Ramakrishna experimented with different faiths, tested them in his own person to find out what is of enduring worth in them. He meditated on the Qur'ān and practiced the prescribed rites. He studied Christianity, and lived like a Christian anchorite. Buddha, Christ, and Kṛṣṇa, he declared, were forms of the Supreme and they are not all. The monks of the Ramakrishna order join in any worship which is pure and noble and celebrate the birthdays of Kṛṣṇa, Christ, and Buddha.⁶³

Zooey's concern not to be sentimental, or "reverent," does not negate his sincere drive to find some sort of truth; in busying himself with Self-analysis and investigation of man's purpose in the cosmic plan, he does not have time for such extraneous considerations as reverence, in the traditional sense. For him perhaps the truest religions he has studied are as much science as they are religion, for to obtain wisdom, which is the knowledge of primary causes, he had to develop a technique of knowing, which can be called scientific. Many great men of the West, of whom Emerson might be cited as an example, proceeded only so far in their speculations; then they appeared to become confused and disillusioned because they lacked a technique to further and to substantiate their investigation. Seers of the East say these techniques have been known for thousands of years and they will yield results proportionate to their practice.

When Buddy learned from one of his students, as stated in Part III, his letter to Zooey, that Zooey sometimes engaged in ten-hour meditation periods in college, he understood the meaning of Zooey's efforts. Whatever techniques Zooey used, whether the yoga of Patañjali or the practices of Zen, these techniques were intensely scientific in their efforts to study and analyze human psychological and biological states. Strict discipline of
mind and body must be observed to obtain fruitful concentration. Yogis following the sutras of Patañjali do not regard themselves as religionists but as scientists, but devoted to studying physics not separate from metaphysics and likewise not recognizing metaphysics as apart from physics. In their practice their observance of Nature's laws, whether physical or metaphysical, is necessary to their success.

This extensive universe perceived by our senses is only the one-fourth part of that universe which is hidden in the divine plane. The other three-fourths part of the divine universe is strange and very little understood by the average person. A discovery of the eternal and immortal world is certain if you practice faithfully.64

High school students would seem to be getting short-changed in their education if they do not know something about the thought of the East. If fiction helps to introduce new philosophical ideas to its readers, is it necessarily abrogating its traditional function as a work of art? There is certainly a danger that this can happen, but Salinger does not seem to have fallen into the trap. While the action is predominantly thought-action, it does not take place in an environmental void. The characters are individual people with vivid personalities, not just

robots mouthing eternal verities from a tape recorder that Salinger turned on inside of them. The story is now loud, now soft, now humorous, now serious, proceeding to a climax that is truly inevitable, after which there is a sense of relief, satisfaction and accomplishment. The fact that the reader also receives spiritual illumination does not lessen its artistry as a work of fiction. Both in *Franny and Zooey* and in "Teddy," Salinger is exploring significant topics such as Self-realization, a subject that psychologists are but probing timidly. It is a confusion of our times, certainly, that we are so oriented to the physical world that we blissfully ignore the metaphysical world. Our efforts to gain knowledge are rather like searching with a candle for the sun.

It is the opinion of this writer that the reading of "Zooey" can be a valuable experience for the senior high school English class. Salinger provokes discussion, and discussion is the life-current of a good high school class.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Intensive study of the fiction of J. D. Salinger has underlined the conviction that he is a talented writer worthy of study by senior high school students. Much of the criticism of Salinger by lay personnel has sprung from a lack of understanding of his purposes in writing. Holden Caulfield is not seen by these critics to be an adolescent suffering at the instigation of his society; rather, they see in him a rebel, a blasphemous, hard-drinking, chain-smoking threat to the established world of adultism. The question is asked: "What if all kids felt like that and acted that way?" It is entirely possible that many more adolescents act and feel like Holden than many adults suspect; this is one reason The Catcher has been so popular with the younger student readers. Young people can identify with him and with his problems. They can read many of his lines with fervor and with profound sympathy; Holden, in effect, sensitizes his readers to shortcomings in the seethe and moil (as Faulkner would say) of his society. Holden is not all right, but he is striving to
adjust what is wrong in himself so that he can live sanely and happily with others. He is not, ever, a nihilist, and he is not, finally, an iconoclast. Would that all of the above critics were as fair with him as he will eventually be with the adults with whom his life is cast.

Most of this dissertation has been concerned with the search for meaning in Salinger's fiction. Close study has revealed some ideas that lie buried beneath the surface. Further study would undoubtedly unearth additional subtleties and patterns of thought; of some of these the artist himself may not be fully aware. When an author lives with an idea or with a story for a long time, his unconscious mind plays a part in creation. Closer study of a good story should reveal some more of this barely discernible expression. But meaning of the fiction is important particularly for the high school teacher and student. The average high school student is more anxious to derive meaning from literature than he is to understand the technical elements contributing to the story's excellence. His reactions toward a story are primarily intuitive; he is not so concerned if his reactions are not technologically sound. Of course it is the teacher's responsibility to help guide the student's intuition but too much emphasis in this direction will be detrimental rather than helpful. A familiar reaction of many high
school English students is that they do not care for literature; on the contrary they dislike it. It is possible they have not been allowed to like it; they have been burdened too soon with terminology as to form, structure, and mechanics of writing which has obscured the enjoyment of reading and of considering the ideas inherent in literature. Salinger's fiction is full of ideas that need to be examined thoughtfully in the classroom. For the average high school student the hope of the teacher is that he will continue to read after he is graduated. If he can become fascinated by ideas in the classroom his hunger for them can be expected to continue after graduation. The student will get many ideas from Salinger's fiction that will provoke thought for a long time after reading him.

To read all three of Salinger's books treated in this dissertation is to get a taste of literature with overtones of Eastern philosophy and psychology. Most of the student readers will never have heard of Franny's Prayer of Jesus. Most of them know nothing of Zen Buddhism. Wisdom for them is obtained only by reading or by listening to teachers or by hearing what others have to say. These students know nothing of the techniques of concentration and meditation directed toward self-analysis. Searching their own unconscious minds for wisdom and for latent mental power is a method of intellectual growth
unrecognized, for the most part, in the Western half of the world. Our dependence is upon reason. We are fully conscious as we direct our thinking toward the logical solution of a problem. Seers in the East say that we are just scratching the surface when we proceed in this way; mind, since it is not limited by time or space, can operate much more rapidly and pertinently if we but learn how to use it, by studying the anatomy of mind and by understanding the Self which can have full control over the mind and can direct it. If we but know the Self and realize its tremendous power, we may be able to return to the Garden of Eden, as it were, and not have to work so hard as we do when we use our minds primarily according to the dictates of reason.

Seers also say, "The universe is yours--explore it!" If the mind is not limited by time or space, perhaps it can be more efficiently directed toward a thorough and systematic exploration of the universe; now, it is quite apparent that we are learning about the universe as if it were a multiverse, searching out a fragment here and another there and advancing but slowly compared to the rate at which we might advance if we were truly oriented with respect to the Self. Zooey tells Franny that everybody is Christ, a superman, a god; Zooey, if he is talking like an Eastern guru, has reference to man's potential, which, if
realized, makes him a god and, if unrealized, causes him to remain an animal.

A great oversight in our system of education may be our neglect of Self-knowledge techniques in the curriculum. The oracle at Delphi gave Socrates the advice: Know Thy Self; but only in comparatively few instances since the time of Socrates has the advice been seen as worthy of dedicated action. We have tried to know ourselves but we have not tried to know our Self; we have tried to analyze personality, a superficial manifestation of ourselves, but we have not tried to find, much less analyze, that which is basic to all that we are, the Self. Salinger makes a sly reference to the Self when in "Zooey" he mentions "the illusory differences between boys and girls, animals and stones, day and night, heat and cold." When the Self is known, then the differences which now are so important in our view of a multiverse will be seen as illusory and of small importance compared to the basic truth of a fundamental principle of unity.

One suspects that Salinger intends to go much farther in his use of Eastern precepts. Franny tried the Jesus Prayer and was on the road to becoming a mystic but she gave up the pursuit of mysticism because she was not ready for it. She finally saw a way to live in the world without it. Some readers, no doubt, will feel that she
sold out, but this criticism is not necessarily valid. When a person is not congenial to mysticism he probably will not, and he certainly should not, adopt it as a way of life: for him it will be a boring waste of time and any benefits derived will be negligible. At the proper time the need for becoming a mystic will not be denied. Salinger might conceivably develop Waker, the Roman Catholic priest, or Buddy, the college teacher, into the complete mystic; Seymour and Walt are dead, Franny and Zooey have committed themselves to acting, and Boo Boo is just not the type—at least as far as can be seen. By developing Buddy or Waker into the consummate mystic, Salinger could elaborate and augment the ideas of Teddy into a full-blown treatise on mysticism.

Eastern thought, as a source for ideas for fiction, is so unlimited in both depth and extent, and so original a body of thought in American literature, that it is hard to imagine that Salinger, having already tapped so successfully this vast, rich pool, would be content now to cap it, leave it, and go searching for new resources. He has the Glass family well documented at this time. They are a remarkable and interesting group. It is unthinkable that they would abandon their great capacity for love, their sensitive views of life, and their conscientious striving to make the best of things, to capitulate to the demands of
their society, or to degenerate to the commonplaces of lesser mortals. Teddy knew God, and Franny and Zooey discovered a divine principle by which they could order their lives. Certainly, sooner or later one of the Glass children will find God to the degree that the reader may very well wonder, as he no doubt has with *Franny and Zooey*, if this is fiction first and a theological treatise second or the other way around. Salinger has large numbers of readers looking forward to what he will next turn his hand to.

This dissertation has attempted to show that although the language that some of Salinger's characters use is not polite and genteel, the characters in whom Salinger is most interested are basically wholesome in spite of their language. Holden Caulfield is a good boy, and his constant use of "goddam," for example, should not automatically type him as a bad boy. Likewise, Zooey's swearing at his mother must not be taken at face value. He is not violating one of the Ten Commandments; he does love and respect his mother, and his language is not an automatic indication that he does not show her the proper amount of honor. He is honest with her; this honesty indicates more honor than many soft-spoken children may be capable of giving to their parents. When parents and school officials who are antagonistic to Salinger as a
writer for high school students see through the language screen to Salinger's basic themes, they will discover wholesomeness. The search for love and wisdom, appearance versus reality, the evolution of a human being from a state of innocence to a state of experience, the fight to remain in society instead of permanently withdrawing—these themes, as handled by Salinger, point toward man's dignity rather than toward his unmitigated degeneracy. Salinger does not depict man as destined to remain an animal; when man has solved his problems he can become a god. This optimism in a current writer of fiction should not be missed by the mature high school student. His elders should allow him, formally, to be exposed to it in school.

High school literature anthologies are scrupulously free of vulgar and obscene language. William Faulkner's use of "nigger" may be frowned upon by anthologists to the extent that they substitute for it the word "negro" in order not to offend those students who are colored. The tradition of inoffensive language in the anthologies has been praiseworthy even though it may not have been altogether honest. Those persons entrusted with the education of children and adolescents have seen fit to protect them in their reading from language which they may encounter outside the school walls—or as Holden Caulfield found, on the school wall. This attempt to ignore the speaking
habits of certain human beings is excellent and entirely commendable up to a certain point in a student's education, but beyond that point, when the student no doubt has heard outside of school all of the terms that are used in *The Catcher in the Rye*—and perhaps many others—and when the student has the maturity to recognize that school officials are notcondoning the use of vulgar language by suggesting *The Catcher* for class study, then it may be that the official school policy should be changed in favor of a more realistic one. The classroom is a controlled situation. The teacher in class can make sure that Salinger is properly interpreted. Control is lacking when the student surreptitiously reads the paperbacks, Salinger included, which he can easily pick up at the drugstore. Protection for the student is also involved in helping him to find basic values in literature. If he determines that vulgar language in Salinger is indicative of the value of Salinger as a writer, he is lacking the perspicacity which his superiors also lack who believe likewise.

However, the fact remains that those who are against Salinger because they regard him as a harmful influence will not immediately change their views and if they have anything to do with the education in the community they will admonish the teacher not to teach any "dirty" books. And the teacher should heed the warning. The teacher who loses
his job over his insistence upon teaching *The Catcher in the Rye* is teaching with more enthusiasm than knowledge. He may first have to conduct some adult education Salinger seminars before using Salinger in the classroom.

It is conceivable that although parents and school officials forbid the reading of Salinger by an entire class, if certain parents do not object, the teacher may recommend him to students in probably the eleventh or twelfth grades for book reports, or as part of their free reading program. Those students who have read *The Catcher*, for example, could compose a panel for discussion of the book before other members of the class. Questions by the class would be answered by the panel. The actual book would not be read by all members of the class and the teacher would be sure to refrain from making any recommendation. It is patently unfair that an author who is so much in the literary limelight and who has something to say in an artistic way to high school students should arbitrarily be banned in a high school; there should be opportunity for some more mature students to discuss together with the teacher the view of life presented by this author.

Some of Salinger's short stories, at first glance, appear to be over the heads of high school students. "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" is difficult to understand
until the core idea, "Everybody is a nun," becomes plain. When the student is helped to interpret the story in this light the narrative becomes intelligible to him. The average class that is puzzled by a story is anxious to unravel the mystery. Discussion can precede any effort on the teacher's part to step in to guide the students. Salinger's overtones of philosophy often constitute the meaning of the story, and although students may at first flounder, they will be provoked into a search for meaning in order to satisfy their curiosity. Many stories in high school anthologies do not stimulate thought to the extent that Salinger's stories do.

This dissertation, treating what is considered to be the best of Salinger's fiction, The Catcher in the Rye, Nine Stories, and Franny and Zooey, maintains that J. D. Salinger is a writer worthy of study by senior high school students. Since Salinger's fiction is controversial, it has been necessary to qualify the statement that high school students should study his fiction in English class. The controversy has concerned certain aspects of his writing, such as the language used by his characters, which are not so disturbing to more mature students as to others. Salinger has much to say to those high school students who are prepared, by reason of their maturity and capability, to listen. In the classroom the teacher can help students
to understand and to analyze Salinger's characters and their problems and thus develop student awareness of good contemporary literature, provoke discussion which will enhance learning, and broaden students' views of life.
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I, Joseph William Jordan, was born in Bradford, Ohio, February 7, 1916. I received my secondary-school education in the public schools of Bowling Green, Ohio, and my undergraduate training at Bowling Green State University, which granted me the Bachelor of Science degree in 1937. From The Ohio State University I received the Master of Arts degree in 1940. In September, 1961, I was appointed assistant instructor in the Department of English at The Ohio State University where I assisted Professors William Charvat and Eric Solomon for one year while completing the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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