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EPISODE TWO

HOLDEN CAULFIELD GOES TO WAR

SYLLABUS

Episode Two: Holden Caulfield Goes to War Syllabus



OVERVIEW:

J.D. Salinger, who was born on January 1, 1919, in New York, was an influential but reclusive writer whose classic novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, inspired generations of American youth. Before *Catcher* vaulted Salinger to literary fame, he was a sergeant in the Second World War, one whose experiences of combat left an indelible impression on his life and art. In the years after *Catcher's* publication in 1951, Salinger would retreat from the world and cease publishing his writings altogether in 1965, and up until his death in 2010. But Salinger's reclusiveness only enhanced his legend.

EPISODE SUMMARY:

The angst of the classic American novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, which would influence millions of readers, including Mark David Chapman, may not have been the words of a young, alienated misanthrope trying to make his way in the world so much as a grown man trying to hold his together. In this episode, we examine the impact of combat on the life and works of *Catcher* author J.D. Salinger, who witnessed firsthand some of the worst atrocities of World War II, from D-Day to Dachau. We also explore some of the inspirations for Salinger's masterpiece, including the beautiful young woman Oona O'Neill, who broke his heart before he left for war.

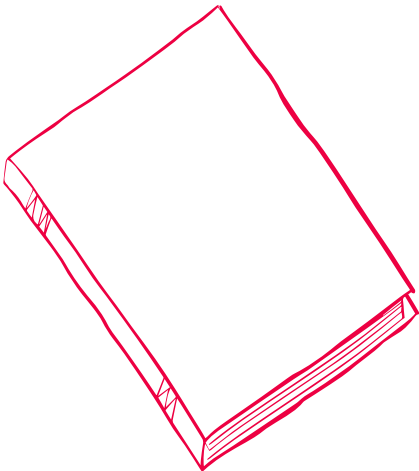
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions based solely on material discussed in the podcast.

- 1 What factors contributed to J.D. Salinger's retreat into the woods of New Hampshire?
- 2 How did Oona O'Neill help influence the writing of *The Catcher in the Rye*?
- 3 Why did Holden Caulfield despise "phonies"?

BONUS QUESTIONS (for college listeners)

- 1 How did Salinger's wartime experiences shape his writing?
- 2 What do you think would have happened if Salinger and O'Neill had remained together?



EPISODE QUIZ (with answers)

Questions based solely on material discussed in the podcast. **Correct answers in bold.**

1 What was the name of the beach that J.D. Salinger's division stormed at D-Day in June 1944?

- a. **Utah Beach**
- b. The Gulf of Tonkin
- c. Venice Beach

2 Which one of the following events did J.D. Salinger not witness during World War II?

- a. The Battle of the Bulge
- b. The invasion of Normandy on D-Day
- c. **The firebombing of Dresden**

3 Which unfinished book was J.D. Salinger carrying on his person when he stormed the beaches at Normandy?

- a. **The Catcher in the Rye**
- b. Franny and Zooey
- c. A Farewell to Arms

4 What was Oona O'Neill dubbed in April 1942?

- a. Playmate of the Month
- b. **Debutante of the Year**
- c. Queen of the Stork Club

5 Which famous film legend did Oona O'Neill marry in 1943?

- a. Clark Gable
- b. Cary Grant
- c. **Charlie Chaplin**



PRIMARY SOURCES:

- *The Thread with OZY*, Episode Two, “Holden Caulfield Goes to War.” Available at: www.ozy.com/thethread
- *The Thread with OZY*’s immersive story page. Available at: www.ozy.com/thethread
- *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

- *J.D. Salinger: A Life (2011)*, by Kenneth Slawenski
- *Salinger (2013)*, by David Shields and Shane Salerno
- “Holden at Fifty,” by Louis Menand. Read at [The New Yorker](http://www.newyorker.com).
- *J.D. Salinger Doesn’t Want to Talk (1999)*, a documentary film. Watch on [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com).
- The Dead Caulfields, a website dedicated to the life and works of J.D. Salinger, by biographer Kenneth Slawenski. Available at: <http://www.deadcaulfields.com/>
- When J.D. Salinger Lost the Girl and Went to War. Read at: <http://www.ozy.com/flashback/when-jd-salinger-lost-the-girl-and-went-to-war/69752>

