

May 2008



English  
Department

**Dear Sophomore English Student:**

This year Archbishop Mitty High School continues its Summer Reading Program for all levels. For the American Literature course, we have chosen a book that we think you will enjoy. Furthermore, this novel relates to the class in various ways. The book information is listed below, with a short synopsis following it.

***Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger**  
(Little Brown &; ISBN #978-0316769488)

Holden Caulfield, a teenager growing up in 1950s New York, has been expelled school for poor achievement once again. In an attempt to deal with this he leaves school a few days prior to the end of term, and goes to New York to 'take a vacation' before returning to his parents' inevitable wrath. Told as a monologue, the book describes Holden's thoughts and activities over these few days, during which he describes a developing nervous breakdown created by his bouts of unexplained depression, impulsive spending, and generally odd, erratic behavior.

Since this book connects with many of the issues in the American Literature course, it is important that you do close/active reading because **you will be tested on this book during the first week of classes in August, and you will be asked to write an essay related to the topics below.**

Chapter Summaries and/or comments on the top of each page should be done; these will provide you with notes to review before the test and during the writing process for the essay.

Semester one and two will explore two primary themes in American Literature: The American Dream and Community. Please consider these themes closely while close-reading *Catcher in the Rye* and, specifically, consider the following questions below:

- 1) **Community:** Is the community Holden lives in nurturing or detrimental to his development as an individual? Where and how does Holden fit within his designate communities (Pencey Prep., his family, etc.)? Do these mini-communities that Holden lives in hinder his individual development, or does he hinder his own development?

You will be given one of the above topics and told to write a two to three page essay.

Enjoy your summer vacation, and don't forget your summer reading!

**Sincerely,**  
**Junior English Teachers**