

# THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

J.D. SALINGER



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Who was J.D. Salinger?

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What is a coming-of-age story?

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In what ways is J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* similar to Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?

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How is the novel's title, "The Catcher in the Rye," important to the work as a whole?

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Fuck You

# The Truth about Lying

From big whoppers to little white lies, almost everyone fibs on occasion. Here, experts reveal why.

by Jenna McCarthy

Nearly any adult will tell you that lying is wrong. But when it comes to avoiding trouble, saving face in front of the boss, or sparing someone's feelings, many people find themselves doing it anyway. In fact, more than 80 percent of women admit to occasionally telling what they consider harmless half-truths, says Susan Shapiro Barash, author of *Little White Lies, Deep Dark Secrets: The Truth about Why Women Lie*. And 75 percent admit to lying to loved ones about money in particular. The tendency to tell tales is "a very natural human trait," explains David L. Smith, Ph.D., associate professor of philosophy at the University of New England, in Biddeford, Maine. "It lets you manipulate the way you want to be seen by others." To pinpoint how people stretch the truth from time to time and the potential fallout from it, learn the six most common ways that people mislead.

## Deception Points

Most lies aren't meant to be hurtful to others; rather, they're meant to help the one doing the fibbing. These are the six top ways people lie:

### 1. Lying to Save Face

What it sounds like: "Gosh, I never got the shower invitation!" "Sorry I'm late, but there was a huge pileup on the freeway."

Why people do it: For self-preservation. While it may be instinctual, people who frequently cover up innocent errors may start to feel as if they have permission to be irresponsible.

What's more, it can become grueling for them to keep track of those deceptions. ("Now, why did I tell her I couldn't co-chair that event?") Eventually those lies hinder people from having close connections, says Smith. "Of course, there are relationships in which it doesn't matter as much," he says.

How you can avoid it:

- Think long-term. When you're tempted to be less than truthful, consider your ultimate goal: to have a happy marriage, say, or a solid friendship. Then, when torn between fact and fiction, ask yourself, "Which will put me closer to my goal?" Usually the choice is clear.
- Keep it simple. Most of the time, a short apology is all that's needed, and you can omit some details without sacrificing the truth. Something like "Sorry that I didn't call you back sooner" is usually sufficient and effective.

### 2. Lying to Shift Blame

What it sounds like: “It’s my boss’s decision, not mine.” “My husband never told me you called.”

Why people do it: “To effectively give away power and control,” says Smith. “When done habitually, this can diminish a person’s ability to deal with life’s bigger problems.” When someone constantly saddles other people with his responsibilities, others can grow resentful of carrying this burden. Also, eternally passing the buck is downright exhausting. The deceiver keeps fielding requests but is only postponing the inevitable. Eventually the issue will have to be dealt with.

How you can avoid it:

- Dig deep. In some cases, blame shifting can signal difficulty with accepting responsibility for your actions, says Joseph S. Weiner, chief of consultation psychiatry at North Shore University Hospital, in Manhasset, New York. Maybe you were criticized for making mistakes as a child, for example, and so now you’re afraid to own up because of what other people may think of you. Once you realize this is a behavior that can be changed, however, you can start to regain the power you may feel you don’t have.
- Flip it around. Before using a colleague or a loved one as a decoy in a minor deception, think of how the other person would feel in the same scenario. If the deception puts other people in an unfavorable light, it’s best to leave them out of it.

### 3. Lying to Avoid Confrontation

What it sounds like: “That’s a wonderful idea, Mom. I’ll make sure to get to the airport three hours before my flight.” “You’re doing a great job, but we can’t afford a housekeeper anymore.”

Why people do it: A believable excuse may help someone avoid an uncomfortable talk or keep that person from feeling guilty. But relying on nonconfrontation too often eventually does relationships—both personal and professional—a disservice. With people to whom one is deeply tied, it’s important to remember that “closeness is not always pleasant, and that interpersonal dealings, by their very nature, have highs and lows,” says Smith. “When you try to avoid the lows at all cost, it can have an overall deadening effect on these connections.” Even if the person on the receiving end of a lie isn’t closely tied to the fibber, the one deceiving still has to keep track of—and live by—those lies. What’s more, she may have to deal with the consequences of the lie anyway (for example, if the housekeeper finds out someone else was hired in her place).

How you can avoid it:

- Consider the options. Before you tell a fib, it helps to make a list of all the ways you could handle the situation—from delivering a total fairy tale to telling the stark truth. If, after thinking it through, you still decide a fabrication is the best choice, “it may signal that you don’t value having an honest relationship, and that in itself is worth pondering more,” says Marlene Chism, a relationship expert in Springfield,

Missouri, and the author of *Success Is a Given*. On the other hand, maybe there is an option that will allow you to tell the truth but that will still provide your desired outcome.

- Pair it with the positive. Look for the bright, true spot buried within the lie. Saying to your mother, “Your ideas are always appreciated—I called that tutor you recommended last week!—but this time I just don’t agree,” makes the truth easier to swallow for both of you.

#### 4. Lying to Get One’s Way

What it sounds like: “I won’t be at work today. I caught that bug that’s going around.”

“Officer, my speedometer must be broken.”

Why people do it: For personal gain. But when a lie like this is uncovered, the recipient is unlikely to be charitable. And the more hurtful the lie is to the person on the receiving end, the less it’s likely to be forgiven. “When getting what a person wants drives his every word and action, he will not earn people’s trust or love,” says Weiner.

How you can avoid it:

- Stop justifying. Maybe you think you deserved that day off. Or you figured it was late and there was no one on the road when you were speeding. While both rationalizations may be true, “that doesn’t make the lie any more acceptable in the end,” says Smith. If you have to convince yourself the lie is OK, chances are it’s not.
- Think of the alternative. Consider if honesty could still bring about a positive result. Example: “I know I don’t have any vacation left, but I’d be willing to come in Saturday or stay late every day next week if I could have Friday off.” Or admit to the police officer that you lost your concentration going down the hill and apologize. That may result in a warning instead of a ticket. You never really know until you try.

#### 5. Lying to Be Nice

What it sounds like: “That dress looks fantastic on you.” “This is the best meat loaf I’ve ever tasted.”

Why people do it: In some cases, the little white lie is altruistic, says Smith, but when used excessively, it can make interactions with people less authentic. At its worst, others may feel that a person isn’t being genuine or trustworthy.

How you can avoid it:

- Walk in the other person’s shoes. People often underestimate the information that others can tolerate and even benefit from, particularly when the words are said out of friendship, says Weiner. For example, you would generally want someone to mention it if you had a piece of spinach stuck in your teeth, if your blouse had a stain, or if your pot roast could use a pinch of salt.
- Tone it down. If you feel that a certain amount of truth stretching is a vital social lubricant, the best thing to do is to avoid gushing. “That’s a great color on you” is a

lot more plausible than “That’s the most stunning sweater I have ever seen in my entire life.”

- Track it. Keeping a tally of the tales you tell for a day or a week can help you distinguish between the instances where being truthful matters and where it doesn’t. Maybe you didn’t need to tell the supermarket checkout gal that you loved her (hideous) earrings. But it made you feel better to say it, plus you got a pleasant reaction from her. Most experts say there’s no huge harm in that.

## 6. Lying to Make Oneself Feel Better

What it sounds like: “Eating my kids’ French fries doesn’t count.” “I’ll charge this stuff now because I’m going to pay off the credit-card bill as soon as I get my bonus.” “I never watch television.”

Why people do it: To reassure themselves. But when people start to believe their self-deceptions, it can snowball, which is especially dangerous. A clean-your-plate habit can lead to an extra 10 pounds. One shopping spree can trigger can’t-pay-the-mortgage debt. And while denying hours spent in front of the TV isn’t a crime, it might cause a person to wonder where all her time is going—or get busted humming the *Law & Order* theme song. How you can avoid it:

- Plan honesty ahead. Because self-deception can become almost automatic, “stopping isn’t simply a matter of just saying in the moment, ‘Hey, should I lie to myself right now?’” says Smith. Instead, pledging to face reality in the situations where you’re most likely to deceive yourself is a smarter tactic.
- Keep your goals in sight. Whatever you want to accomplish, from sticking to a healthy diet to keeping your bank account in the black to cutting down on those television marathons, lying about what’s really going on puts you one step farther from that objective. Instead, it’s a good idea to visualize, in full detail, what it will look, feel, sound, smell, or taste like when you attain your goal. “Painting a detailed picture in your mind will help you maintain your motivation, even in the face of temptation to sabotage yourself with deception,” says Weiner.
- Help others be accountable. When people who tend to deceive themselves spend too much time with frequent fibbers or even others who tolerate that type of mendacity, their destructive habits won’t be challenged or corrected. In the most serious situations, where lying is causing someone serious damage, it helps to be a particularly truth-conscious friend and lend support as well as a gentle, watchful eye.

Assignment: In your groups, summarize your assigned reason for lying, give examples from your own life and *The Catcher in the Rye* or *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and then tell us what we can do to avoid this type of lying in the future. Make sure that all of your group members’ names are on the summary that you hand in.



“THE LAST AND BEST OF THE PETER PANS” is an unpublished work much sought after by *Catcher in the Rye* fans. This short story is a heated conversation between Vincent (DB) Caulfield and his mother. It takes place after the death of Vincent’s brother Kenneth (Allie) Caulfield. The first of three stories authored by Vincent, it is narrated in the first person.

The story opens with Vincent’s description of his mother, Mary Moriarity, who is an actress. Vincent’s portrayal of her presents us with a woman in possession of a strong personality, consummate acting ability, and striking red hair. He emphasizes that rather than simply being his or Holden or Phoebe’s mother, Mary was an enveloping presence in the house. When, at fifteen, his parents’ agent, Leon Werblin, drove him from school to see his parents play in *Romeo and Juliet*, Vincent was taken by his mother’s role of “Juliet,” relating that, while although she was thirty-eight at the time, he could “feel” her role and “was watching a young girl in love.”

Taking place in the early days of World War II, Vincent has received his draft board questionnaire in the mail. But he is unaware that his mother has intercepted it and hidden it away from him. Mary, after considering the United States Army as a possible interlude in her older son’s life, has determined the possibility as being “unsuitable.” Five days after its arrival, Vincent discovers the questionnaire on the floor of the spoon compartment of the silverware chest. Extremely upset, he confronts his mother.

The bulk of this story is the argument between Mary and Vincent over the questionnaire and the army. Mary defends her actions, stating that Vincent wouldn’t be happy in the army. She compares him to her brother Walter, who was called up to serve in World War I. Although Walter served willingly, he was unsuited to it. His unsuitability was displayed in the fact that, no matter what he did, his “leggings” were always coming undone and his “overseas cap” was always askew.

In an attempt to distract Vincent, soften his mood, and gain the upper hand, Mary calls Vincent’s attention to his young sister Phoebe. Phoebe, who is playing outside, comes into view through the window, wearing a new coat that Mary has recently bought her. Vincent looks at his sister “in her short darling coat.” Then he turns away.

Jumping back to the subject, Vincent tries to impress upon his mother the trouble that he could get into for failing to return the questionnaire within twenty-four hours. He doesn’t think that his mother realizes the significance of what she has done. But his mother gives him a piercing look that knifes him with the comprehension that she had not hid the questionnaire in the spoon compartment “for the unintentional sake of a laugh line.”

Mary then treads on the tenderest of territory – Kenneth’s death. Vincent mentions that while his mother looked slightly afraid to approach the subject, “she came equipped, as

always, to get there.” Mary, after having suffered the loss of one son, is reluctant to introduce another to the prospect of death. Despite her own pain, she is intent upon relieving the pain of Vincent, who feels tremendous guilt over the death of Kenneth. She assures Vincent that he gave Kenneth the best but Vincent retorts that while Kenneth needed a top-line (Bernstein) best, he instead got Vincent, a second-rate best.

Vincent then harshly critiques his mother. He tells her that while in a rush to attend a charity, she asks a blind man for the time. He says that in an attempt to catch a child from crawling off a cliff, she asks a man with no legs to catch the child in time. While she doesn’t want to see her son be a soldier, she will open fire on him before he’s ever in uniform. At first he accuses his mother of being “all heart and instinct and no brains” but reconsiders, adding that while being smart, she doesn’t always think.

Vincent then retreats to his room. There, he contemplates what has just happened, profoundly sorry. He is sorry for all the people in their ivory towers, sorry for all the soldiers who can’t keep their caps on right, sorry for all of the second-bests in the world. But most of all, Vincent is sorry that he almost compared his mother to Svengali, when in actuality she is the last and best of the Peter Pans.

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

What does Vincent (D.B.) mean when he calls his mother “the last and best of the Peter Pans”?

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How does J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* relate to J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*? Consider plot, characters, and themes in your analysis.

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If you could escape to Neverland with Peter would you? Give reasons for your decision. Remember that while you may stay young forever, you will also gradually forget about your friends and loved-ones in the real world.

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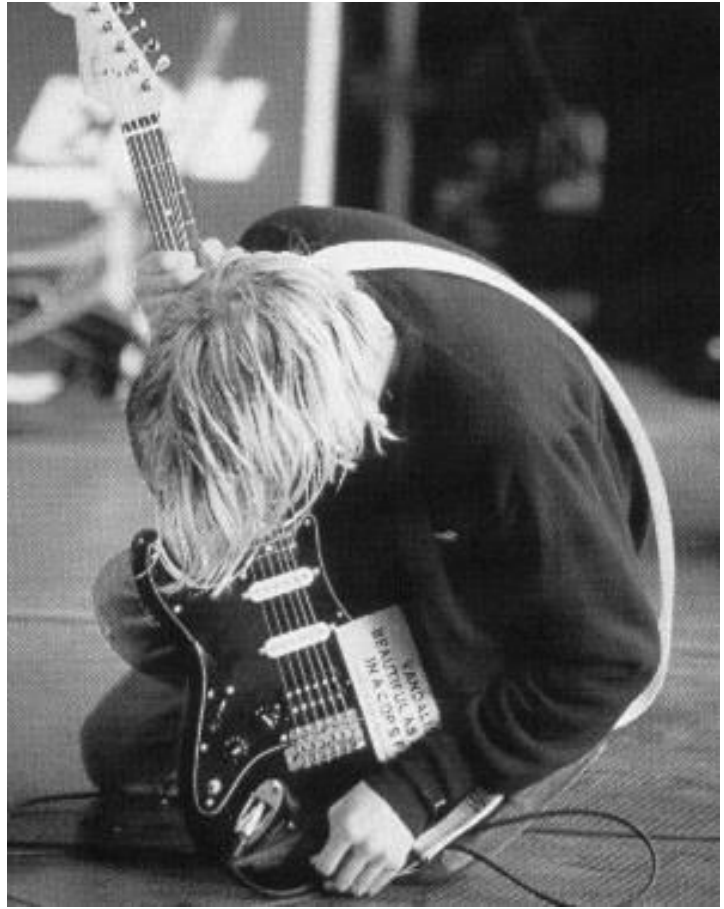
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# SERVE THE SERVANTS

1993 performed by Nirvana—lyrics and music by Kurt Cobain

Teenage angst has paid off well  
Now I'm bored and old  
Self-appointed judges judge  
More than they have sold  
If she floats than she is not  
A Witch what we had thought  
A down payment on another  
One at Salem's lot  
Serve the Servants - oh no  
That legendary divorce is such a bore  
As my bones grew they did hurt  
They hurt really bad  
I tried hard to have a father  
But instead I had a dad  
I just want you to know that I  
Don't hate you anymore  
There is nothing I could say  
That I haven't thought before  
Serve the Servants - oh no  
That legendary divorce is such a bore



In April of 1994, Kurt Cobain, the lead singer of the immensely popular rock group Nirvana, committed suicide. His suicide came at a time when he and his band were seemingly on top of the world. Like Bob Dylan before him, Cobain had been labeled the spokesman for a new, disaffected generation by media outlets. Most kids of the so-called Generation X were devastated when the news of Cobain's death was fervently broadcast on MTV and radio stations across the country. His death left many unanswered questions. Why did he do it? And, what does it say about a generation if its spokesman kills himself? He left a suicide note which may have some clues to help answer these questions. As you read through it, consider the song that we just listened to as well as the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Are Cobain's feelings of phoniness similar to Holden's? What does Cobain say about growing-up and of the innocence of his daughter, Frances?

To Boddah

Speaking from the tongue of an experienced simpleton who obviously would rather be an emasculated, infantile complain-ee. This note should be pretty easy to understand.

All the warnings from the punk rock 101 courses over the years, since my first introduction to the, shall we say, ethics involved with independence and the embracement of your community has proven to be very true. I haven't felt the excitement of listening to as well as creating music along with reading and writing for too many years now. I feel guilty beyond words about these things.

For example when we're back stage and the lights go out and the manic roar of the crowds begins., it doesn't affect me the way in which it did for Freddie Mercury, who seemed to love, relish in the love and adoration from the crowd which is something I totally admire and envy. The fact is, I can't fool you, any one of you. It simply isn't fair to you or me. The worst crime I can think of would be to rip people off by faking it and pretending as if I'm having 100% fun. Sometimes I feel as if I should have a punch-in time clock before I walk out on stage. I've tried everything within my power to appreciate it (and I do, God, believe me I do, but it's not enough). I appreciate the fact that I and we have affected and entertained a lot of people. I must be one of those narcissists who only appreciate things when they're gone. I'm too sensitive. I need to be slightly numb in order to regain the enthusiasms I once had as a child.

On our last 3 tours, I've had a much better appreciation for all the people I've known personally, and as fans of our music, but I still can't get over the frustration, the guilt and empathy I have for everyone. There's good in all of us and I think I simply love people too much, so much that it makes me feel too fucking sad. The sad little, sensitive, unappreciative, Pisces, Jesus man. Why don't you just enjoy it? I don't know!

I have a goddess of a wife who sweats ambition and empathy and a daughter who reminds me too much of what I used to be, full of love and joy, kissing every person she meets because everyone is good and will do her no harm. And that terrifies me to the point to where I can barely function. I can't stand the thought of Frances becoming the miserable, self-destructive, death rocker that I've become.

I have it good, very good, and I'm grateful, but since the age of seven, I've become hateful towards all humans in general. Only because it seems so easy for people to get along that have empathy. Only because I love and feel sorry for people too much I guess.

Thank you all from the pit of my burning, nauseous stomach for your letters and concern during the past years. I'm too much of an erratic, moody baby! I don't have the passion anymore, and so remember, it's better to burn out than to fade away.

Peace, love, empathy.

Kurt Cobain

Frances and Courtney, I'll be at your altar.

Please keep going Courtney, for Frances.

For her life, which will be so much happier without me.

I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU!

*Mr. Querino / Sophomore English 11*

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

What does Cobain mean when he says that he feels as though he is “faking it”? How does selling out and being phony factor into “Serve the Servants”? Compare the way Cobain talks about his daughter Frances to the way in which Holden talks about Phoebe. What might Holden do to prevent himself from seeing Phoebe grow up?

# “COMIN THRO’ THE RYE”

## Burns’s Original

Comin Thro’ The Rye.

Chorus.

O Jenny’s a’ weet, poor body,  
Jenny’s seldom dry:  
She draigl’t a’ her petticoatie,  
Comin thro’ the rye!

Comin thro’ the rye, poor body,  
Comin thro’ the rye,  
She draigl’t a’ her petticoatie,  
Comin thro’ the rye!

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro’ the rye,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need a body cry?

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro’ the glen,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
Need the warld ken?

Gin a body meet a body  
Comin thro’ the grain,  
Gin a body kiss a body,  
The thing’s a body’s ain.

## Standard English Translation

Coming Through The Rye.

Chorus.

O Jenny is all wet, poor body,  
Jenny is seldom dry:  
She draggled all her petticoats,  
Coming through the rye!

Coming through the rye, poor body,  
Coming through the rye,  
She draggled all her petticoats,  
Coming through the rye!

Should a body meet a body  
Coming through the rye,  
Should a body kiss a body,  
Need a body cry?

Should a body meet a body  
Coming through the glen,  
Should a body kiss a body,  
Need the world know?

Should a body meet a body  
Coming through the grain,  
Should a body kiss a body,  
The thing is a body’s own.

What is the meaning of this poem?

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How does its mistaken translation by Holden relate to the plot and title of the novel? What does it tell us about Holden?

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THESE WORDS WHICH appear in *The Catcher in the Rye* have been identified as words or derivatives of words that have appeared on past SAT tests. They are listed here in the order in which they appear in the novel.

1. Innumerable - too many to be counted.
2. Conceited - having or showing an excessively high opinion of your own qualities or abilities.
3. Unscrupulous - not restrained by moral or ethical principles.
4. Rile - to irritate somebody enough that it provokes anger.
5. Monotonous - uninteresting or boring as a result of being repetitive and unvaried.
6. Frivolous - lacking in intellectual substance and not worth serious consideration.
7. Pacifist - somebody who refuses to perform military service or take part in a war.
8. Adapt - to change something to suit different conditions or a different purpose, or be changed in this way.
9. Pore - a tiny opening in human skin, or in the skin or other outer covering of an animal, through which substances can pass.
10. Nonchalant - calm and unconcerned about things.
11. Dissipating - to fade or disappear, or make something do this.
12. Premature - occurring, existing, or developing earlier than is expected or normal.
13. Atheist - somebody who does not believe in God or deities.
14. Disciple - somebody who believes in and follows the teachings of a leader, a philosophy, or a religion.
15. Bourgeois - associated with affluent middle-class people, who are often characterized as conventional, conservative, or materialistic in outlook.
16. Mutinying - a rebellion against legal authority, especially by soldiers or sailors refusing to obey orders and, often, attacking their officers.
17. Complex - difficult to analyze, understand, or solve.
18. Homely - plain or less than pleasing in appearance.
19. Appreciate - to increase in value, especially over time.
20. Inane - irritatingly silly or time-wasting.
21. Spiritual - relating to the soul or spirit, usually in contrast to material things.
22. Boisterous - full of noisy enthusiasm and energy, and often roughness or wildness.
23. Repulsive - making somebody feel disgust or very strong dislike.
24. Spontaneous - arising from natural impulse or inclination, rather than from planning or in response to suggestions from others.
25. Histrionic - overdramatic in reaction or behavior.
26. Brazen - showing or expressing boldness and a complete lack of shame.
27. Exhausted - to use up all that is available of something.
28. Reciprocal - given or shown by each of two sides or people to the other.
29. Humility - the quality of being modest or respectful.
30. Mute - unwilling or unable to speak