

Things in *Catcher* that are “In Need of Explanation”

- Allusions to historical figures like Benedict Arnold, Wilhelm Stekel, etc.
- History/cultural significance of World War II
- Allusions to various books and authors: at least one biblical reference (?), *Romeo and Juliet*, Robert Burns and “Comin’ Through the Rye,” *David Copperfield*, Ring Lardner, etc.
- Allusions to mid-century American movies, movie genres, and movie actors
- Allusions to popular songs and records, incl. “Little Shirley Beans” and Estelle Parsons (even if the latter are made-up, we’d still want to understand the styles they supposedly represent)
- Allusions to artifacts like baseball gloves and carousels
- Mid-century American English vernacular/slang; various New York accents & “dialects”
- Typical mid-century incomes, prices of goods & services, etc.
- Mid-century American social stratification by race & class (different in New York/on East Coast?); the state of the economy in general; prevailing ideas of material/financial “success”
- Northeastern/Mid-Atlantic U.S. geography
- New York City/Manhattan geography (uptown vs. midtown vs. downtown; neighborhoods like Greenwich Village & the Upper West Side; knowledge of landmarks like Central Park, the Museum of Natural History, 5th Avenue, etc.)
- Cultural connotations of “Manhattan” and of different neighborhoods of Manhattan (glamour, urbanity, cultural sophistication, bohemianism, etc.)
- The cultural significance of Hollywood; the trope of Hollywood glitz and superficiality
- High-society references: the theater & theater-going, “The Lunts,” hotels & cocktail bars, etc.
- The culture of boarding/prep/private schools; “The Ivy League,” etc.
- Conventions of dorm living, roommates, etc.
- The cultural significance of “flunking out” of school
- Norms/customs of mid-century (white, upper-middle class) “dating,” relations between the sexes, heterosexual attraction, assumptions about/understanding of opposite sex, etc.
- Norms of/discourse surrounding (white?) masculinity, sexuality, and sexual/gender identity in mid-century America
- Dominant and/or oppositional social/cultural attitudes towards homosexuality and alternative sexualities, incl. the “Homophile” Movement of the 1950s
- Norms of (white?) teenage independence & mobility
- The trope of “the teenager” (and associated ideas like “raging hormones,” “sexual awkwardness,” “identity crisis,” “teenage angst,” etc.)
- Typical familial dynamics of the white upper-middle class
- Prevailing social/cultural attitudes towards smoking, drinking, “cocktail culture,” etc.
- Prevailing social/cultural attitudes towards/stigmas about mental illness, psychiatry, & psychoanalysis; psychoanalysis in popular culture; etc.
- The trope of “protection of innocence”
- The tropes of “phoniness” and “authenticity”
- The trope of the “spoiled rich kid”

Thinking about “alienation from the mainstream” or deviation from a norm requires some understanding of what “the mainstream” *is* (and in what contexts it’s mainstream). For instance, we might need/want to explain the implicit framing of *whiteness* as normal/universal—and note the almost total absence of people of color in this narrative...