

Jerome david salinger

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Jerome David Salinger was one of the most prominent writers of the 20th century. His crowning achievement was *The Catcher and The Rye*. Along with this he also boasted A “ Perfect Day for Bananafish”, *For Esme – with Love and Squalor*, and the Glass family novellas, to name a few. Most of his works involved adolescent youths growing up and loss of innocence in harsh times. This is probably to his rough early years, his involvement in WWII, and the myriad of his relationship and religious changes. J. D. Salinger was born in Manhattan, New York, on New Year's Day, 1919.

His mother, Marie (nee Jillich), was born in Atlantic, Iowa, of Scottish, German and Irish descent. His paternal grandfather, Simon, born in Lithuania, was at one time the rabbi for the Adath Jeshurun congregation in Louisville, Kentucky. His father, Sol Salinger, was a prominent importer of kosher cheeses. To pass in a Jewish society, his mother changed her name to Miriam. Salinger did not learn that his mother was not Jewish until just after his bar mitzvah. J. D. struggled in the school setting of the 20-30s, due to the anti-Semitism present.

He went by his first name, instead of his Jewish name, to reduce this. All the while he went by Sonny around the house and immediate family. J. D. excelled in extra-curricular activities, but failed to keep up with academics, therefore getting kicked out of multiple schools. Salinger aspired to become an actor or a playwright, yet his father discouraged him from the fine arts, and pushed the meat-importing business. From his father's urgings, Salinger went to Vienna, Austria in the fall of 1937 to study and work at just such a company.

He got out of Austria only a month before it was annexed by Nazi Germany on March 12, 1938. In the spring of 1942, several months after the United States entered World War II, Salinger was drafted into the Army. He saw combat with the 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. He played an active role at Utah Beach on D-Day and in the Battle of the Bulge as well as the Huertgen Forest campaign. Salinger was assigned to a counter-intelligence division, where he used his proficiency in French and German to interrogate prisoners of war.

He was also among the first soldiers to enter a liberated concentration camp. Salinger's experiences in the war affected him emotionally. He was hospitalized for a few weeks for combat stress reaction after Germany was defeated. After Germany's defeat, Salinger signed up for a six-month period of "Denazification" duty in Germany for the Counterintelligence Corps. He later told his daughter: "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose entirely, no matter how long you live." These experiences probably directly influence his writing of *For Esme*, which is narrated by a traumatized soldier.

Salinger's marriages might just well be the most under documented, underestimated events which shaped his life, and therefore his writings. In June 1955, at the age of 36, Salinger married Claire Douglas, a Radcliffe student. They had two children, Margaret and Matthew. Salinger insisted that Claire drop out of school and live with him, only four months shy of graduation, which she did. Certain elements of the story "Franny", published in January 1955, are based on his relationship with Claire, including her ownership of the book *The Way of the Pilgrim*.

<https://assignbuster.com/jerome-david-salinger/>

Claire became frustrated by Salinger's ever-changing religious beliefs.

Though she committed herself to Kriya yoga, she remembered that Salinger would chronically leave Cornish to work on a story " for several weeks only to return with the piece he was supposed to be finishing all undone or destroyed and some new 'ism' we had to follow. " She believed " it was to cover the fact that Jerry had just destroyed or junked or couldn't face the quality of, or couldn't face publishing, what he had created.

After abandoning Kriya yoga, Salinger tried Dianetics (the forerunner of Scientology), even meeting its founder L. Ron Hubbard, but according to Claire he was quickly disenchanted with it. This was followed by adherence to a number of spiritual, medical, and nutritional belief systems including Christian Science, homeopathy, acupuncture, macrobiotics, the teachings of Edgar Cayce, fasting, vomiting to remove impurities, megadoses of Vitamin C, urine therapy, " speaking in tongues" (or Charismatic glossolalia), and sitting in a Reichian " orgone box" to bathe in " orgone energy.

After living together for many years and Salinger's oppression of her, Claire had grown tired of the isolation from friends and relatives and being—in the words of Margaret Salinger, " a virtual prisoner. " Claire separated from him in September 1966; their divorce was finalized on October 3, 1967. In 1972, at the age of 53, Salinger had a relationship with 18-year-old Joyce Maynard that lasted for nine months. As one can see from just a small look at Salinger's life, it is quite apparent that the hardships he endured influenced his writing style.

It is harsh to wish such a life on any person, but, in a way, his suffering has allowed millions of teens to connect their angst with *The Catcher and the Rye*, one of the biggest contributions in the 20th century. His masterpiece has had such an impact on youths he was considered a cult leader at one point, yet as he said, that implies a negative connotation for his influence, which was quite the contrary. This type of influence transcends generations, and will continue to live on, for generations to come.