

The Criteria Sheet

I read it over but I couldn't make any sense of it. It was really lousy, if you ask me. It really was. "Irrefutable"? Holden is an unreliable narrator for chrissakes! How do they expect me to imitate the guy while being irrefutable? And besides, only phonies claim to be irrefutable. A bunch of morons if you ask me. Everyone's got flaws. Anyways, I need to start this goddamn assignment. I do enjoy writing and all that, but I really don't know what to put down. How does someone write with "fine brush strokes" for chrissakes. I'll just get D.B. to do it for me, he's a terrific writer, he really is. He's out prostituting himself in Hollywood if you really want to know. It's embarrassing. I might give him a buzz when I'm done this assignment so he can make sure it's all right. We'll probably shoot the bull like we always do, he'll talk about some hot-shot he met out on set, a very big deal of course. It drove me crazy to tell you the truth. I wonder what he would think of the criteria for this assignment. I imagine him making a big stink about how crummy it is, he's real touchy about that kind of stuff. I'd write another couple pages but I don't really see the point. You really have to be in the mood for that stuff.

Ward Stradlousy
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My Roommate's Mitt

Before I get into it I want to be clear that while I may be a complete moron, and a corny one at that, I do in fact understand that in this assignment I'm meant to describe a room in great detail. But that would be a pretty lousy thing to read, it really would. I mean I wouldn't want you to go home and have to read thousands of lame descriptions about the grimy toenails that blanket the floors of all our rooms here at Pencey. Who knows what other horrors you'd come across, take that Ackley kid for example: he'd be going on and on about that repulsive stain in the corner of his room. He won't admit it but I'm convinced that it's the juice from all the pimples he's popped over the years. I start shivering whenever I think about that crummy sonuvabitch. What I'm trying to say is that I'm doing you a favour by writing about something other than an old, filthy room, so you should really be thanking me. Anyway I'd better stop shooting the bull and just get on with this goddam essay.

I'm gonna talk about this baseball mitt that my roommate Holden always carries around. But it ain't no ordinary left handed fielder's mitt; its size makes it look as though it belongs to a newborn baby, I'd do well just to fit my pinky in that thing. What's even more peculiar about the mitt is that it's covered in words; curling from the tips of the fingers to the center of the pocket, the deep green ink is beginning to fade from years of heavy reading, as if Holden's intense glare is slowly tearing down the ink's defenses layer by layer until eventually the words will no longer be visible. Holden is like a hound when it comes to protecting the mitt, so I've only ever seen it up close once, and I read enough to realize that what my stupid brain had thought to simply be words were in fact poems, but before I had the chance to read anymore Holden pounced on my chest and began raking my face with his razor sharp nails. Holden is a strong kid, he really is, and ever since that encounter I haven't dared to even glance in the direction of the baseball mitt for fear of getting my eyes ripped out by that bloody bastard. I'm content with only

knowing one of the lines on the glove; "If a body catch a body comin' thro' the rye". Besides, if I were to read any more of the poems I would have a hard time remembering them, I am quite moronic after all, it's nearly a daily routine that I forget my own damn name. Is it Stradlater or Stradlousy? Why did my parents have to pick such a goddam complicated name?

I'm starting to get off topic but that's just because I'm a terrible writer for Chrissake; if someone like Holden was writing this essay it would be a million times better, no kidding. The reason I'm so lousy at writing is because I spend every waking minute with girls, snowing hell out of them and giving them the time.

Anyway, it's been a helluva cold week — almost froze my ass off waiting for that Rose girl in the park, on account of how long I was sitting on this one bench smoking and all — in the middle of the goddam day too, but the days are short as hell now so it's pretty much cold no matter what. I had got the idea to take her to the museum or someplace, but I got to thinking how crumby of her it was to be so late — musta been 20, 35 minutes, for Chrissakes, and in the goddam cold too, and I bet I don't want to give a girl like that the time if she just shows up late to dates and all. I was halfway through my last cigarette and boy did I hate the idea of sitting on that goddam bench without a smoke, so I got my frozen ass off the frozen bench and started walking. Not even a minute down the path and I just about ran into her, she was so fast. I don't think I hurt her or anything because she started up smiling at me and was saying she was sorry for being so late and all, on account of her cat getting out of her apartment and her having to go find it. I never understood cats much — it seems awful to have the furry things running around your feet when you're trying to do anything in your own house, and anyways you have to clean up after them like babies, and who wants to do that? It's pretty phony to say that you can have a connection with a goddam animal when it can't even talk. I hoped Rose didn't care too much for her cat, but it woulda been fine if she had because she looked nice enough to make up for it — so nice it almost killed me. Her cheeks were all red and round, and there was snow in her hair, which was pretty much the nicest damn hair I'd seen. I stubbed my cigarette on the bottom of my shoe so I wasn't breathing smoke in her face or anything, and we kept walking to the museum, or in the general direction because I still wasn't sure what where I wanted us to go yet. She was talking fast as hell, and I thought if she keeps it up I wouldn't last through even the Indian floor, besides the Egyptian one, on account of all that talking she was doing. I wondered if anyone had given it to her and if she talked the whole time too, which was funny — imagine a babe just chattering while you're getting wise with her, what a thought. Wouldn't put it past her though, the talking was still going and I guess it mighta been because I hadn't said much yet, so I tried to get a word in by bringing up the weather — real phony thing to talk about, I know, but it was hard to think of anything else through all that chatter coming from her mouth right then.

Holden Caulfield Rants about Geography and Other Things

You know what I hate about the whole goddamn world? None of it makes any sense at all. I'm not even talking about people or society and all that crap — just the names are dumb enough. You have Arkansas, right, and you have Kansas, and you'd think they'd be pronounced the same, but they aren't. Some moron in 1837 or 1793 or 19-whatever-the-damn when he founded Kansas or Arkansas, whichever one was created first, wanted to make it a different name from all the other states. I'm pretty sure Kansas was made first but I don't really know. I never liked history and I still don't. All of the history teachers are old crusty geezers with high-pitched whiny voices that scrape at the inside of your skull and make you want to jump out the window like poor James Castle. Anyway, let's just say for now that Kansas was there first. So the founder person was trying to come up with an original name, right, and I guess he wasn't the most creative guy out there, because he just decided to slap on an 'Ar' to Kansas to make Arkansas. Or take off the 'Ar' to make Kansas. I still don't know. So anyway, that's all fine and dandy, until the absolute moron suddenly decides that his state had to be extra special for some reason, so he makes it so that you pronounce it 'ArkansAW' instead of 'ArkansAS', which may be one of the stupidest ideas that I have ever heard. Everything would be so much simpler if you had 'ArkansAS' and 'KansAS' or 'ArkansAW' and 'KansAW', but now everything has to be so difficult and badly planned out, just like everything else in the world. It's like a big old metaphor or simile or whatever goddamn literary device it is for life and people and all that.

Another thing that doesn't make any sense is that Alaska is so far away from the rest of the country. If we wanted to steal some land from Canada so badly, why did we take such a godawful piece? I mean it's sort of like stealing a pig and eating only the hooves. I think pigs have hooves. They definitely aren't called feet. If I was in charge of the whole operation I wouldn't have done such a lousy job. You either eat the whole pig or don't steal it in the first place. Once I claimed Canada for the old U. S. Of A., I wouldn't stop there. I'd go to Mexico and South America and Europe and I wouldn't stop until I touched down to Antarctica with a 246 star flag in hand. At least then everything would be consistently phony, just like back home. I guess you can't change what has already happened, but it's interesting to think about. Still, it must be really lonely and cold in Alaska. If I were the president, I could just give it back to Canada, but we already spent all this effort getting it, and it would be a big shame to let all that go to waste. What I could do is take all of the people in America and fly them out to Alaska. I'm sure they wouldn't mind that much. I'd give them all shovels, and they'd dig a trench along the border until Alaska wasn't attached to Canada anymore. Then, I'd have everyone grab the bottom and carry Alaska for a little bit. Alaska's pretty heavy I guess, but there are a lot of people in America to carry it. They might get tired, but I would let them have breaks, because it's important as a president to make sure everyone doesn't hate you. I'd make them take Alaska down until it was nice and warm, maybe around California. It would sort of suck to have it as an island because you'd have to make a huge bridge to connect to everyone else, so I'd make them put it right next to the coast. The Californians would probably complain that they wouldn't have any beaches anymore, but they only really use them to show off how good-looking they are to each other and never for anything actually fun. I've been there once when I was small. The whole beach was packed to the brim with phonies. The whole state is full of them. The whole world, actually. Once Alaska would be set down, it would start to warm up and all of the snow would melt. Some pretty little beaches would form on the coast and I would make a

small house on one of them. I'd retire as a president and just stay there alone and read and do whatever until I died. I think it would be pretty nice there.