



The Catcher in the Rye Vernacular Language

Throughout the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger uses vernacular language, mid-twentieth-century slang, and everyday speech. This vernacular language makes the novel easier for readers to identify with while also connecting the character Holden to the youthful quality his character is intended to project. In addition, this vernacular language is also what makes the novel popular and controversial at the same time.

Using the chart below, identify and note the contextual meaning of these vernacular words and phrases by looking up the terms in context, using the page references provided. Then, identify modern-day equivalents (slang or words used in your own current society) that connect to each vernacular word or phrase.

Vernacular Term	Text Page	Contextual Meaning	Modern-Day Equivalent
chewing the fat	p. 189	<i>informally talking with someone</i>	
chisel	p. 113		
crumb-bum	p. 110		
crumby	pp. 3, 61, 70		
dough	p. 29		
grippy	pp. 18, 196		
grools	p. 79		
hot-shot	pp. 11, 32		

louse	p. 157		
lulu	p. 143		
phony	pp. 5, 20, 57, 118 + more		
sharp	pp. 64, 140		
snappy	p. 192		
sore	pp. 91, 147		
stinking	p. 160		
stinks	p. 70		
suave	p. 79		
swanky	p. 157		
tear	p. 164		
touchy	pp. 3, 92		

RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

L.9-10.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9-10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

L.9-10.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Answer Key

Vernacular Term	Text Page	Contextual Meaning	Modern-Day Equivalent
chewing the fat	p. 189	<i>informally talking with someone</i>	<i>chatting; gossiping; catching up</i>
chisel	p. 113	<i>to cheat or swindle someone</i>	<i>scam; defraud; deceive</i>
crumb-bum	p. 110	<i>a worthless, low-character person</i>	<i>loser; low-life</i>
crumby	pp. 3, 61, 70	<i>not favorable; negative or seen in a negative way</i>	<i>crappy</i>
dough	p. 29	<i>money or wealth</i>	<i>cash; bankroll</i>
grippy	pp. 18, 196	<i>inflicted with flu-like symptoms</i>	<i>sick</i>
grools	p. 79	<i>ugly and/or foolish people</i>	<i>ditzes</i>
hot-shot	pp. 11, 32	<i>someone who is highly successful and self-confident</i>	<i>big deal; big wig</i>
louse	p. 157	<i>a terrible person; someone with poor character</i>	<i>jerk; sleazeball</i>
lulu	p. 143	<i>a remarkable or outstanding person; someone who is the extreme</i>	<i>standout</i>
phony	pp. 5, 20, 57, 118 + more	<i>fake; disingenuous; deceptive; false; putting on a show</i>	<i>fake</i>

sharp	pp. 64, 140	<i>smart or knowledgeable</i>	<i>smart; intelligent</i>
snappy	p. 192	<i>quick and to the point</i>	<i>brief</i>
sore	pp. 91, 147	<i>upset, angry, or irritated</i>	<i>pissed off; irritated</i>
stinking	p. 160	<i>very or extremely</i>	<i>very</i>
stinks	p. 70	<i>being very unpleasant or disappointing</i>	<i>sucks; stinks</i>
suave	p. 79	<i>charming; smooth</i>	<i>smooth</i>
swanky	p. 157	<i>stylish; luxurious; sophisticated</i>	<i>fancy; chic</i>
tear	p. 164	<i>to quickly leave a place</i>	<i>take off</i>
touchy	pp. 3, 92	<i>oversensitive and irritable</i>	<i>oversensitive</i>