



[Catch-22](#), by Joseph Heller

In A Nutshell

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller met with mixed reviews when it was published in 1961. Some hailed the book as one of the greatest works to be published in the post-World War II era. Others were not quite so enthusiastic.

Catch-22 is about an Air Force captain's exploits and experiences trying to stay alive during World War II. The novel introduced the public to a form of circular reasoning called "Catch-22," associated in the book with the madness and horror of war experienced by the protagonist, Yossarian. The book sold exceedingly well and has since established itself as one of the most important books of the 20th century.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 One of the most challenging aspects of this novel is piecing together the order in which events occur. How does Heller manipulate time, fragment the action and confuse cause and effect? More importantly, how does this confusing form fit the function? In other words, how does the *way* in which this story is told fit with what is actually happening in the story?

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- 2 How is insanity defined in *Catch-22*? What characteristics do "crazy" characters have? Is madness the norm or an exception during wartime?
- 3 Does there seem to be any system of justice in the novel? Are "good" characters rewarded while "evil" ones punished? Can we clearly say who is "good" or "evil"? If not, is there such thing as justice at all?

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