

The Guardian

JD Salinger exhibition to unveil photographs, letters and notebooks

New York Public Library exhibit will show a mix of personal and literary effects, and will run for three months



JD Salinger in 1952. Photograph: San Diego Historical Society/Getty Images

Tom McCarthy *in New York*

Mon 7 Oct 2019 12.14 EDT

When the writer JD Salinger died in 2010, his literary agent issued a statement saying that “in keeping with his lifelong, uncompromising desire to protect and defend his privacy, there will be no service”.

That was then. Next week, the curtain of privacy behind which Salinger carefully guarded his personal life will be lowered further, with a major exhibition at the New York Public Library.

The exhibit, which will be free to the public and is scheduled to run for three months, will present a mix of personal and literary effects, ranging from the original typescript of *The*

Catcher in the Rye, revised by the author, to a bookcase from Salinger's bedroom filled with books from his personal library.

The exhibit was organized by Salinger's son Matt Salinger, widow Colleen Salinger and the library's special collections department.

"He was a famously private man who shared his work with millions but his life and non-published thoughts with less than a handful of people, including me," Matt Salinger said in a statement.

"But I've learned that while he may have only fathered two children there are a great, great many readers out there who have their own rather profound relationships with him, through his work, and who have long wanted an opportunity to get to know him better."

The exhibit will also include:

Photographs from Salinger's childhood, youth and later life, including from his second world war service in the US army and time as entertainment director on the cruise ship MS Kungsholm in 1941

Correspondence between Salinger's friends, fellow soldiers and authors and editors including William Shawn, William Maxwell and Ernest Hemingway

Items from the writer's childhood, including a bowl he made at summer camp when he was about 10 and kept his whole life

Notebooks, passports, honorable discharge papers from the army in which he identified his civilian occupation as "playwright, author", and personal artifacts such as pipes, eyeglasses and a wrist watch

One of the author's two typewriters, his film projector and numerous other personal effects
Salinger ceased publishing in the 1960s and refused with rare exceptions press requests and the enthusiastic advances of fans, some of whom went looking for him in his rural New Hampshire home.

The Catcher in the Rye, published as a novel in 1951, has sold tens of millions of copies. The dyspeptic teenage protagonist of the novel, Holden Caulfield, spends a couple of days wandering New York City but does not make it to the library.

The exhibition will also include a previously undisclosed self-description from a 1982 legal document.

"I am a professional short-story writer and novelist," the description reads. "I write fiction and only fiction. For more than 30 years, I have lived and done my work in rural New Hampshire. I was married here and my two children were raised here ... I have been writing fiction rather passionately, singlemindedly, perhaps insatiably, since I was 15 or so.

"... I positively rejoice to imagine that, sooner or later, the finished product safely goes to the ideal private reader, alive or dead or yet unborn, male or female or possibly neither."

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