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School: Yorba Linda High School

Grade: Senior

Book Title: Catch-22

Book Author: Joseph Heller

Rate (1-5): 5

Joseph Heller's 1963 novel *Catch-22* centers on John Yossarian and his Air Force squadron on the island of Pianosa in the latter half of World War II. Yossarian is an anti-hero, and the story depicts his various, often comical attempts, to avoid flying any more missions. Yossarian would be considered insane for wanting to fly more missions, and sane if he didn't. However, because he is sane, he has to fly more missions. Yossarian has a tragic secret that Heller refuses to reveal, but the secret haunts the novel and much of his actions. The novel has dozens of other subplots with various characters. Heller uses them to satirize and criticize multiple different aspects of war. The book continually satirizes the absurdity and the bureaucracies of war. Its most defining aspect is its non-chronological narrative told from the viewpoints of different characters.

I really loved this book. It was probably the first and only time that I laughed out loud to a classic book. But it also plays with your emotions. When Heller wants to get serious, the novel takes a profoundly dark and bleak turn, describing scenes devoid of humanity that have continued to haunt me. Heller uses humor to give the book an unforgivingly anti-war perspective that changed my thoughts on war. Despite being a book about World War II, readers can relate to the story's absurd characters, distaste for bureaucracy, and gross injustices. At first, the nonlinear storytelling was at best off putting, but by the end I understood why it was necessary and came to

appreciate Heller's literary genius. The themes of the book stuck with me even after I put it down.

Upon reflection, *Catch-22* might be my favorite book of all time. People who love war books and nonfiction books will love this book too, but it's a book that is available to and enjoyable for all.

It is a life changing book whose spot in the Western literary canon is undoubtedly merited. It is a book that will make you think, yet also a book that will make you laugh. That theme of contradictions is what makes this book itself.