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School: Troy High School

Grade: Senior

Book Title: The Bell Jar

Book Author: Sylvia Plath

Rate 1-5 - 4.5

Sylvia Plath's semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, tells of Esther Greenwood, a young college student and mental breakdown and her recovery. Esther's dreams of being a poet conflict with the societal expectation of women to settle down and be subordinate wives to their husbands. This pressure to conform, despite her ambitions, causes her to descend into madness and feel trapped in a bell jar.

Although *The Bell Jar* is a difficult read as it deals with heavy topics such as mental illness and suicide, I found it to be one of my favorite novels. Esther's story reveals the struggles that women faced during the reemergence of the Cult of Domesticity in the 1950s. It also explores the complexity of the human mind as it battles with mental illness, identity crises, and alienation through a feminist lens. While many dark events present in the novel can be difficult read through, they help convey the hopelessness and isolation felt by Esther.

I highly recommend others to read *The Bell Jar* due to its compellingness and insight into the human psyche. However, I suggest it be read by a more mature audience capable of confronting and reflecting on the heavy and complex themes presented in the novel. While they may be impactful and thought-provoking, they can also be difficult to fully grasp due to the dark moments experienced by the protagonist. I also recommend *The Bell Jar* to those who enjoyed *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen. While it is a play rather than a novel, *A Doll's House* deals with similar themes of self-discovery against society through a feminist lens.