The Outsiders Study Guide

The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton

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The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

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Contents

Introduction

S. E. Hinton irrevocably altered the course of juvenile literature in America with her first novel. *The Outsiders* was published when she was seventeen and was her stark answer to the fluffy high school stories about proms and dates typical of the 1960s. "Where is reality?" she asked in an essay explaining her motivation in the *New York Times Book Review*. In other narratives for teens, she could not find "the drive-in social jungle ... the behind-the-scenes politicking that goes on in big schools, the cruel social system," or the teenagers who lived in those settings In contrast, her story was real, graphic, emotional, and true to the challenges of being a teenager in twentieth-century America. In addition, it was an exciting narrative that captured teenagers' attention. It drew a wide audience, particularly boys who were reluctant readers. Thirty years after its publication, the novel remains immensely popular and has sold more than four million copies in the United States. Its adaptation to film was a great success as well. The novel is the story of a traumatic time in the life of a recently orphaned fourteen-year-old boy named Ponyboy Curtis. He lives on the East Side, a member of the lower class and a gang of "greasers." Quiet and dreamy, Ponyboy has conflicts with his older brother and guardian, Darrel, who keeps the family together. The greasers— whom Ponyboy distinguishes from "hoods"—are the heroes of the tale. Set against them are the upper-class socials, or Socs, who enjoy drinking, driving nice cars, and beating up greasers. The circumstances of this social situation result in the death of three teens. The story explores the themes of class conflict, affection, brotherly love, and coming of age in a way that young people readily appreciate. This novel's portrayal of disaffected youth has been criticized for its violent content, but it is now regarded as a classic of juvenile literature. It can be considered one of the first examples of the "young adult" genre, and after its publication literature for teens gained a new realism, depth, and respect for its audience

Overview

The Outsiders deals with universal themes, such as family relationships, friendship, loyalty, and interaction between social classes. Hinton turns such cliches as "things are rough all over" and "don't judge a book by its cover" into forceful, fresh ideas. The book's narrator, Ponyboy Curtis, writes his story precisely in order to make other people understand these two points, and he succeeds. The Outsiders is consistently on lists of teen-agers' favorite books and appeals to young men and young women alike.

Author Biography

Born in 1950, Susan Eloise Hinton was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She was an avid reader as a child and experimented with writing by the time she turned ten. Her early stories were about cowboys and horses, and she preferred plots with rough riding and gunfights. When Hinton reached her teens, however, she could not find anything pleasing to read. Adult literature was still a bit too complicated for her, while literature for teens consisted of innocent tales about girls finding boyfriends. To please herself, she decided to create a different fictional universe from these annoying "Mary Jane goes to the prom" novels. She wanted to create a realistic story about being a teen. Additionally, like her character Ponyboy, she wanted to record some events of her high school years. She took inspiration from real events and people to create a story of class warfare between teens. After working on the novel for a year and a half and through four rewrites, she let a friend's mother read it. The mother liked it enough to refer her to an agent, Marilyn Marlow of the Curtis Brown Agency. A contract offering publication arrived during Hinton's high-school graduation ceremonies.

The Outsiders was published in 1967, when the author was just seventeen. Susan Eloise shortened her name to S. E. Hinton so that boys would not know the author was female. It was published to critical acclaim, won several awards, and became a cult classic among teen readers. The success of *The Outsiders* enabled Hinton to go to The University of Tulsa, where she earned a B.S. in Education in 1970. While in school she met her future husband, David Inhofe, who encouraged her to write her second novel. *That Was Then, This Is Now* (1971). Over the next decade, she published a new novel every four years. In 1975, she published *Rumble Fish*, and Tex in 1979. Although she was no longer an adolescent herself, Hinton was still able to bring her sympathy for teens and insight into their lives to her work. She only published one work in the 1980s, 1988's *Taming the Star Runner*, and in the 1990s she has focused more on picture books for younger readers than on novels.

Other than her writing, Hinton is kept busy by a family life and her son, Nicholas David. She has also served as a consultant on the film adaptations of her novels and has even appeared in minor roles. She continues to write and lives in Tulsa. Her pivotal role in the development of young adult fiction was recognized in 1988, when the American Library Association awarded her the first Margaret Edwards Young Adult Author Achievement Award for her body of work.

About the Author

Susan Eloise Hinton was born in 1950 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. While still in high school, Hinton began work on her first book, The Outsiders, writing and rewriting it from the time she was fifteen until its publication two years later. Ironically, Hinton received a "D" in her high school creative writing class while working on The Outsiders, which she based on her high school experiences. She wrote the book to fill a perceived gap in young adult fiction; excepting cowboy novels and animal stories, all of the other books seemed to focus on superficial topics such as high school dating rituals. The Outsiders, a realistic book about life in the inner city, was one of young adult literature's first "problem novels." This genre addresses typically "adult" problems ranging from death to divorce to abortion, and studies their effect on the lives of adolescents.

Hinton's novels all deal with friction between the social classes. Her books examine problems faced by most teenagers, such as establishing individuality within a peer group, making choices about one's future, and finding one's place in society. Hinton makes reference to drug addiction or alcohol abuse in all her books, and she focuses on these issues in both That Was Then, This Is Now and Rumble Fish, The Outsiders received the Media and Methods Maxi Award in 1975 and was also an honor book in the 1967 Chicago Tribune Children's Spring Book Festival, as was That Was Then, This Is Now in 1971. Both books were on the American Library Association's Best of the Best book list in 1975, and Rumble Fish was one of the American Library Association's Best Books for 1975.

Hinton's work has been published in Denmark, Germany, Finland, and England, and four of her books have been made into feature films. Hinton says that writing does not come easily for her, and credits her husband, David Inhofe, with instilling good work habits in her. When they were dating, Inhofe refused to take Hinton out unless she had written at least two pages that day.

Her husband's vigilance has paid off, and Hinton is now one of the world's best-selling authors of young adult fiction, having sold more than ten million copies of her books.

Plot Summary

The Greaser Gang

The Outsiders opens with the recollections of Ponyboy Curtis, the narrator of the story. He tells the reader in the first paragraph that he is a "greaser," from the poor neighborhood of his hometown. In the second paragraph, however, he explains that he is different from other greasers in his love of movies and books. Ponyboy is daydreaming after a Paul Newman movie when he is jumped by a gang of upper-class rich kids, known as socials, or "Socs." It is only the intervention of his two brothers and their friends that saves Pony-boy from being badly injured. The greasers have good reason to fear the Socs, a group of whom beat their friend Johnny so badly that he began to carry a switchblade wherever he went. Partly for this reason, Ponyboy's oldest brother Dairy yells at him for going to the movies unaccompanied, and Pony relates that he feels that he can never please Darry

On the next night, Pony and Johnny accompany Dallas Winston, the most hardened member of their gang, to a drive-in movie. There Dally begins to harass two Soc girls who are there without dates. After one of the girls, Cherry Valance, tells Dally to leave them alone, he leaves she and Ponyboy strike up a conversation. Dally returns, and when Johnny tells him to leave the girls alone, Dally stalks off for good. Later Two-Bit will join them, scaring Johnny in the process. Later Cherry asks, and Pony tells, why Johnny seems so jumpy and scared. After hearing how the Socs nearly killed Johnny, Cherry tells Ponyboy that "things are rough all over," but he does not believe her

Greasers vs. Socs

After the movie, Cherry and Ponyboy share their thoughts on the differences between Greasers and Socs, and Ponyboy is surprised to find that they have similarities, too. The three greaser boys are walking Cherry and her friend Marcia to Two-Bit's car when they are spotted by the Socs. In order to avoid a fight, Cherry and Marcia agree to go home with the Socs and Two-Bit also goes home. Johnny and Ponyboy remain at the lot and talk about how things should be different before falling asleep. After Pony arrives home late, Darry confronts, then slaps him. Pony runs out of the house, and he and Johnny go to the park so Ponyboy can cool off before returning home.

In the park, Johnny and Ponyboy are accosted by drunken Socs. After they try to drown Ponyboy, Johnny kills one of them with his knife. The two decide to run away, and Dally helps them by telling them where to hide and giving them money and a gun. They hop a train to their hideout, a church in the country. There they cut and bleach their hair to disguise their identities. Pony feels that in losing his hair style, he has lost his identity, a feature that made him a greaser: "Our hair labeled us greasers, too—¦ it was our trademark. Maybe we couldn't have Corvairs or madras shirts, but we could have hair."

Ponyboy and Johnny pass a lonely and bored four or five days at the church, reading to each other from *Gone with the Wind*. One morning the two boys watch a sunrise, which reminds Ponyboy of a Robert Frost poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," though he feels that the poem's deeper meaning escapes him. The next morning, Dally arrives and tells them that Cherry Valance will testify on their behalf. This prompts Johnny to say that they will turn themselves in. Dally tries to talk Johnny out of it, not wanting jail to harden him, but Johnny is determined. They are on their way back to the church when they realize that it is on fire and that a group of kids is trapped inside.

Hoods and Heroes

Ponyboy and Johnny manage to rescue all the kids in the church, but Pony faints after Johnny pushes him out the window. When he wakes up in ambulance, one of the teachers tells him that in spite of Daily's heroism in pulling Johnny from the flames, Johnny is in critical condition. Pony tells the disbelieving teacher that he and Johnny are wanted for murder. At the hospital, Pony is reunited with his brothers; when he sees Darry crying, he realizes the depth of Darry's love and concern for him.

Because of the publicity, Ponyboy realizes that he and his brothers could be separated He also finds out that Sandy, Soda's girlfriend, has left town, and it is implied that she is pregnant. Later, Pony and Two-Bit encounter Randy, one of the Socs, who is tormented by his part in what has happened. He tells Pony that he could never have gone into the fire to rescue someone as Ponyboy and Johnny did. Two-Bit and Ponyboy then go to the hospital, and Pony realizes that Johnny is dying. Johnny's eyes glow when Pony tells him he's being called a hero, but when Johnny's mother comes to see him, he passes out from the strain of trying to refuse her visit. When Pony and Two-Bit then visit Dally in his room, Pony thinks of Dally as his buddy for the first time. Later, Two-Bit and Pony run into Cherry Valance, who assures them the score-settling rumble with the Socs won't involve weapons. She angers Pony when she says she won't visit Johnny in the hospital because he killed Bob. When Cherry weeps, Ponyboy tells her they both see the same sunset.

The rumble begins later that night when Darry squares off against an old friend of his from high school Dally runs up to join the rumble and helps Pony fight one of the Socs. He then takes Pony to see Johnny at the hospital to tell him of their victory. Johnny tells them that fighting does no good and then instructs Ponyboy to "stay gold" before he dies. The one thing he loves gone, Dally runs out of the room in agony. After Ponyboy arrives home, the gang gets a call from Dally, who has just robbed a store. They arrive at the vacant lot in time to see Dally killed in a Shootout with the police, and Pony faints at the scene of Daily's death.

" Staying Gold"

Ponyboy is still recovering when he is visited by Randy, who leaves when he realizes that Ponyboy is trying to deny that Johnny is dead. Pony plans to confess to killing Bob

at the hearing inquiring into the incident, but he is not questioned about it. Pony and his brothers are granted permission to remain together, but Pony continues to have trouble recovering. He tries to write an essay so he can pass English, but finds all the possible topics either meaningless or too painful. After Pony and Dairy argue again, Soda uncharacteristically explodes in anger, and Ponyboy learns that Sandy was cheating on Soda. She will not answer Soda's letters, and the baby she is carrying is not his. Ponyboy has been oblivious to Soda's pain, and after Soda tells them that without each other, they'll end up like Dally, they vow to fight less often.

Shortly after the family reconciliation, Ponyboy picks up Johnny's copy of *Gone with the Wind*. Inside, he finds a letter from Johnny, in which he tells Pony to let Dally know that it was worth it to rescue the children from the church, and that Pony can be whatever he wants to be in life, even though he is a greaser. Ponyboy finally realizes what it means to "stay gold." He begins to write his English theme, thinking of all the kids who need to know there is good in the world. He begins with the day that he walked out of the Paul Newman movie, forever changed by all that has happened since.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Stepping out of the movie house into bright sunlight, Ponyboy is thinking about two things; Paul Newman and a ride home. He wishes he were tougher looking- like Paul Newman. He decides his own looks aren't so bad. Ponyboy thinks about his own looks. He thinks his hair is longer than that of his peers, but he's a "greaser" and most of his neighborhood rarely bothers to get a haircut.

Walking home alone, Ponyboy thinks about how none of his peers, including his two brothers Sodapop and Darry, appreciate reading books, watching movies, and drawing pictures like he does. That is why he is walking alone. He is more comfortable watching a movie by himself.

Ponyboy thinks about how his brother Soda at least tries to understand him. He thinks he loves Soda more than he has ever loved anyone-including his parents. Ponyboy thinks about how his brother Darry is hard and rarely grins at all. Pony continues walking home. Suddenly he wishes he weren't alone, because "greasers can't walk alone too much or they'll get jumped, or someone will come by and scream 'greaser!' at them." Socs (like socials) is the term Ponyboy and his buddies call the rich kids from the West side, and greaser is what the Socs call Ponyboy and the other kids from the East side.

Ponyboy thinks about the differences between the greasers and the Socs. Most of the greasers are poorer and wilder than the Socs. Stealing, driving souped up old cars, holding up gas stations, and having a gang fight once in awhile were all common to the greasers. He thinks about how he has to stay out of trouble so he and his brothers won't be split apart. Since his parents were killed in an auto wreck, the three of them are allowed to stay together as long as they behave.

Ponyboy starts thinking about how he could have gotten a ride or had one of the gang go along to the movie with him. The "gang" consists of the four boys Darry and Soda and Pony had grown up with. He and his brothers knew them real well. Ponyboy thinks that he should have asked Darry or Two-Bit Mathews (one of the gang) to give him a ride home after the movie. Alas, he wasn't thinking-a habit that really bothers his brother Darry.

Spotting a red Corvair following behind him, Ponyboy starts to get nervous. He walks a little faster. He thought about how badly his friend Johnny was hurt when he was jumped by the Socs. The Corvair pulled up beside Ponyboy and five Socs got out. Ponyboy was scared. He thinks about how much bigger the Socs were than he is. Ponyboy started sweating out of fear. He looked around for something that could be used as a weapon and saw nothing. The Socs surround him. The Socs taunt Ponyboy and curse at him. One of the Socs pulled out a knife and flipped the blade open.

Ponyboy backed away from the knife and ran into the Soc behind him. Almost instantly, he was down. The Socs pinned down his arms and legs, and one sat on his chest. Ponyboy fought to get loose. The Socs tightened their grip on him and slugged him a couple times. Ponyboy lay still and had a blade against his throat. Ponyboy realized they could actually kill him and went wild. He screamed for his brothers, or anyone. He was slugged again for biting the hand that tried to muffle his cries. The Socs stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth.

Ponyboy heard shouts and running, the Socs ran off and left him lying there. Ponyboy just lay there wondering what was going on. Someone grabbed Ponyboy and lifted him to his feet. It was Darry. Darry shook Ponyboy and asked him if he was all right. Ponyboy knew it was Darry. Ponyboy asked Darry to quit shaking him; Darry stopped and apologized. Ponyboy thought to himself that Darry wasn't really sorry.

Ponyboy rubbed his injured cheek while Darry asked him if he'd been hurt very bad. Ponyboy was shook up, hurting, and wanted to cry, but he said, he's okay. Then Sodapop arrived. It struck Ponyboy how handsome his brother Soda was, "movie-star kind of handsome." Ponyboy thought about how Soda was the only one he knew that gets drunk on life and not on alcohol. Soda looked at Pony as he started to cry, and Pony looked away. Understandingly, Soda put his hand on Pony's shoulder and eased his fears. Pony tried not to cry in front of Darry-whom he thought wouldn't understand. Pony thought about how Soda was the only one who dared to tease Darry. Everyone else is afraid of him.

The gang, finished chasing the Socs, returned. Steve Randle was Soda's best buddy, and his specialty was cars. Steve and Soda both worked at the same gas station. Pony liked Steve only because Soda did. Steve was bothered by the fact that Soda continually invited Ponyboy to go places with them.

Two-Bit Mathews was the oldest of the gang, a wisecracker. He couldn't quit making funny remarks. He had a talent for shoplifting and smarting off when he shouldn't. Pony liked him because he kept everyone laughing.

Dallas Winston, known to the gang as Dally was a different story. He was from the wild side of New York. He was "tougher, colder, and meaner" than the rest of the gang. Dallas was bitter and had a reputation for getting into trouble.

Johnny Cade was the youngest, next to Ponyboy. He was slighter in stature than the rest. Johnny had a rough home life and would have simply run away--if not for the gang being there for him.

Steve wondered why Pony had been walking alone. "I was comin' home from the movies. I didn't think…." Then Darry jumped in accusing Pony of never thinking when it counts and having no common sense. Soda stood up for Pony and told Darry to get off of his case. Soda always did that. Darry laid off and Two-Bit suggested that next time Pony should get one of the guys to go with him.

Dally broke in and said the rest of the gang should join him at the Nightly Double the next night. Steve and Soda had plans with their girls and Darry had to work as usual, but Pony volunteered himself and Johnny.

Pony noticed the ring on Dally's finger and asked if he had broken up with Sylvia again. Dally said, "Yeah, and this time its for good. That little broad was two-timin' me again while I was in jail." Pony thought of all the girls he had been around. He wondered if they were all basically the same. He did know that he liked Soda's girl, Sandy. She was a greaser too, but was a nice girl at the same time.

Pony was still thinking about girls later when he was home doing his homework. Pony likened himself to the character Pip from the book *Great Expectations* that he was reading. Soda was rubbing Darry's back, because Darry was always sore. He worked hard roofing houses. Financially unable to go to college, Darry was forced to work instead.

Pony looked at his bruises and wondered why the Socs hated the greasers so much. He nearly fell asleep trying to figure it out. Soda called Pony to bed. When Pony joined him, Soda tried to explain to Pony that he shouldn't worry about what Darry had said because Darry hadn't really meant it. Pony questioned Soda about why he had dropped out of school. Soda, saying that he is dumb, ended the ensuing argument by telling Pony his plans to marry Sandy.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Ponyboy, our main character, takes us into his world via a first person view of his own thoughts. He introduces us to his two brothers and the four guys that they spend their days with.

Pony's brother Darry seems unnecessarily rough and judgmental towards Pony. Ponyboy realizes that Darry has had to make some huge sacrifices since the death of their parents. Sodapop, on the other hand, is the light of Pony's life. Ponyboy knows that Soda loves him and that Soda at least tries to understand him.

The gang is comprised of four other young men: Dallas Winston (Dally), Steve Randle, Two-Bit Mathews, and Johnny Cade. Dally is the meanest of the bunch, a troublemaker hardened by the rough streets of New York. Steve Randle is a cocky and smart young man. He has been Soda's best friend since grade school. He is an expert on cars; both theft and repair. Two-Bit Mathews, the oldest of the gang is the wisecracker of the bunch. He is always getting into trouble and adding humor along the way. "Johnny Cade was last and least," the youngest, next to Ponyboy, and smaller than the rest of the gang. He had a rough home life and needed the love and affection of the gang.

The setting in Chapter 1 is in an unidentified urban area. Ponyboy and his peers are present in the poor area of their town/city. This town/city has populations from the middle to upper classes of society which are referred to as the "Socs." The lower class,

or poor, characters are referred to as "greasers." Pony and his peers fall into the latter category.

The main conflict in this Chapter is that of the hatred between the Socs and the greasers. This is exhibited by the incident where Ponyboy is assaulted by the Socs for no reason other than that he is a greaser.

Ponyboy brings attention to the idea that he is somehow different from the rest of the gang. This theme repeats in his thoughts about other people as well. As a book for young adults, this could certainly represent the discovery of oneself that every youth must accomplish on the road to adulthood.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The next night Pony and Johnny met up with Dally as planned. They caused all kinds of mischief on the way to the drive-in and took the opportunity to visit with other greasers. Once there, they sneaked over the fence--it was more of a challenge than paying to get in. Ponyboy, Johnny, and Dally chose seats by the concession stand. There were only two other people with them in the seats, they were a couple of Soc girls.

Dally decided to have some fun by antagonizing the girls. He moved up until he was sitting directly behind them and began talking as dirty and as loud as he could. Pony felt embarrassed due to Dally's behavior. The girls stiffened and tried to ignore Dally's lewdness until they realized he wasn't going to stop on his own. The red-head turned around and told him to shut-up and leave them alone. Dally didn't budge. Dally and the two girls argued back and forth. Dally offered them a coke nonchalantly. The red-head replied that she wouldn't drink a coke he offered. Then she told Dally to get lost.

Dally left and the two girls turned their attention to Pony. They asked him if he would be next to harass them. In shock, Pony told them he wouldn't. The redhead smiled at Pony and he realized how pretty she was. The redhead and Pony introduced themselves to each other. Pony expected to have his name made fun of, but Sherri, who was called Cherry because of her red hair, told him it was a lovely name.

Cherry and Pony continued talking. Cherry told Pony that Soda was a doll and that she thought Pony resembled him. The brunette, whose name was Marcia, asked Pony why they never saw Soda at school. Ponyboy admitted that his brother was a dropout. Johnny got back from getting a coke, and seeing no Dally around, shyly greeted the girls.

Dally got back with the drinks. He handed one to each of the girls. Cherry threw hers in his face. Dally was gearing up to bother her more when Johnny spoke up and told Dally to leave her alone. Dally was shocked. Johnny had never stood up to anyone. Unable to hurt Johnny, Dally simply stalked off. Cherry was relieved that Dally was gone. Marcia invited Johnny and Ponyboy to sit with them. The boys agreed and sat next to them. The girls told Johnny and Ponyboy that they weren't as scary as Dally. Ponyboy and Johnny stood up for Dally out of loyalty, but all four of them knew better.

Cherry and Marcia explained that they were without a car because they had gotten into a fight with their boyfriends. Two-Bit came up behind them and scared Johnny and Ponyboy. He apologized for scaring them and joined the group. Two-Bit started harassing the girls in his joking way. He asked them how they had been picked by Ponyboy and Johnny. Johnny broke in and told Two-Bit to cut it out. He then explained that they had been invited to sit with the girls after rescuing them from Dally. Two-Bit was amazed by Johnny's sass.

Two-Bit asked where Dally had gone. He explained that Dally had gotten caught slashing someone's tires and would get into a fight over it. Two-Bit thought Dally deserved whatever he got just because he had been caught. Cherry and Marcia indicated that they didn't approve of Two-Bit's belief that sometimes a fight was deserved.

Ponyboy and Cherry went to buy some drinks and popcorn. They got to the concession stand and stood in line. Cherry questioned Ponyboy about how Johnny had been hurt pretty badly at some point. Pony explained that it had been the Socs that hurt Johnny. He told of the incident that had occurred about four months earlier.

It was near the gas station where Steve and Soda work. Steve noticed something on the ground as he, Soda, and Ponyboy walked. It was Johnny's jacket. The jacket had blood on it and there was more blood on the ground. They noticed Johnny lying face down, and he was hurt bad.

The rest of the gang showed up. They all wondered if Johnny was even alive after being beaten so badly. Soda shook Johnny gently and he came to. Johnny explained he had been hunting the gang's football when a blue Mustang pulled up. Four Socs got out and caught him. One had a lot of rings on his hand, and they had beaten him and the rings had cut him up pretty bad.

Pony explained that Johnny had been scared so badly that he would kill the next guy that tried to jump him. Cherry told Pony that not all Socs were like that. Cherry looked sad and told Pony that the Socs had troubles too. Troubles he couldn't even imagine. Pony and Cherry went back with the snacks and watched the second showing of the movie. Two-Bit and Marcia seemed to have the same quirky sense of humor. Pony thought about how it was nice to be sitting next to a girl without worrying about anything. He wondered what Cherry had meant when she said that the Socs had problems too. He thought he would feel lucky to have Soc problems instead of his own.

Chapter 2 Analysis

In Chapter 2, we meet two new characters: Cherry and Marcia, two Soc girls. Cherry is a fiery redhead that Pony recognizes as a cheerleader at his school. Marcia is Cherry's friend and has a quirky sense of humor like the one that Two-Bit exhibits. Pony and Dally spend some time talking with the girls at the drive-in. Pony learns that maybe the Socs and the greasers aren't as different as he once thought. Cherry makes him realize that Socs have problems too and enjoy some of the same things. Cherry also points out that the greasers are more emotional, while the Socs spend all of their time trying to hide their emotions. They are the same, but exist on different levels.

Cherry and Marcia make Pony and Johnny realize that though they and Dally are alike in that they are all greasers, they are actually very different from one another. Chapter 2 repeatedly reinforces the differences and the similarities between the Socs and the greasers.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

After the movie Two-Bit, Ponyboy, and Johnny talked the girls into walking to Two-Bit's house to get his car so they could give them a ride home. On the way there, Ponyboy started to realize that Soc girls were normal people just like him. Cherry pointed out that besides money, the greasers tended to be more emotional than the Socs.

Ponyboy thought about how easy it was to talk to Cherry Valance. Before her, the only one who could get him talking was Soda. Ponyboy told Cherry about the horse Soda had loved and called his own when he was 12. The horse had actually belonged to someone else, but it loved Soda. Ponyboy went to the stables a lot to see the horse called Mickey Mouse. One day the true owner sold Mickey Mouse and Soda cried when the horse was taken away. Ponyboy had cried for Soda's loss as well.

Cherry told Ponyboy she thought he was the type that watched sunsets. She used to watch them too. Pony tried to picture Cherry watching the sunset. He realized that it was the same sunset that he watched. He thought that maybe their two different worlds weren't so different after all. Marcia saw a blue Mustang approaching them. Johnny paled at the sight of it. Cherry and Marcia were nervous about being sighted by their boyfriends. It was them, Randy and Bob, who drove towards them in the blue Mustang. They had a few other guys riding with them. Johnny began to tremble as the car got closer.

Cherry suggested that they act natural and hope that they went unnoticed. The Mustang went right by them and kept going. Cherry turned to Ponyboy and asked him to tell her about Darry. Ponyboy's face got hot as he exploded. He told Cherry that Darry wasn't like Sodapop at all. He said that Darry would have stuck him in a home somewhere if Soda would let him.

Two-Bit and Johnny stared at Pony in disbelief. They told him he was wrong about Darry. Then Pony mouthed off to Johnny that he knew Johnny wasn't wanted at home either. Johnny looked as if he had been slugged. Two-Bit slapped Pony pretty hard. Pony apologized to Johnny and told him he didn't mean it.

Pony dwelled on all the rough breaks he and the other greasers faced. He said that it just wasn't fair. The Mustang headed back and Cherry announced that they had been spotted. The Mustang pulled up beside them and the two boys in the front got out. The two Socs tried to convince Cherry and Marcia that they should leave with them. They referred to Two-Bit, Johnny, and Ponyboy as bums. Offended by this, Two-Bit smarted off to them and readied for a fight. Seeing the impending violence, Cherry decided to just go with them. She hated fighting.

Cherry pulled Ponyboy aside and told him that she liked him, but not to be offended if she didn't talk to him when she saw him at school. She said her parents wouldn't understand. Then the girls got in the Mustang and left. Pony, Two-Bit, and Johnny headed home in silence. They got to the vacant lot and then Two-Bit left them. Johnny and Ponyboy stayed at the lot and watched the stars. It was still early and Ponyboy didn't have to be home until midnight. The two of them lay there and Johnny exclaimed that he couldn't take it anymore. He wanted to be somewhere where there were just ordinary people, not greasers and Socs. Ponyboy and Johnny thought it would be like that in the country.

All of a sudden Johnny was waking Pony up. Pony saw the stars had moved and wondered what time it was. Ponyboy ran home worried about what would happen when he got there. He was late and Darry would be angry. When he got there Darry was waiting. Darry was madder than Ponyboy had seen him in a long time. Pony told Darry that he and Johnny had fallen asleep in the lot. Darry and Pony argued. Darry yelled at Sodapop when he tried to intervene. Then Ponyboy yelled at Darry and told him not to yell at Soda. Darry slapped Pony so hard that it knocked him against the door.

Darry, Soda, and Ponyboy were all shocked. No one in the family had ever hit Pony. Ponyboy turned and ran out the door. He ran back to the lot where he found Johnny. Ponyboy told Johnny what had happened and that they should run away. They ran until they were out of breath. Ponyboy broke down and cried. Johnny tried to console him. Ponyboy and Johnny started wondering if running away was such a good idea. Ponyboy suggested they walk to the park and back. Then he would probably go home.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Pony continues to reinforce his thoughts that the Socs are not much different than the greasers. They were normal people just like him. Pony realizes how easy it is for him to talk to Cherry Valance, he feels comfortable with her. We meet two additional characters when Bob and Randy, Cherry and Marcia's boyfriends, enter the scene. Johnny recognizes them as the guys that hurt him badly about four months before. Pony is pushed into admitting his fear that his brother Darry doesn't care for him, mirroring the insecurities and misunderstandings many people face. Bob and Randy come to get Cherry and Marcia to leave with them. Cherry refuses until it is the only way to avoid a fight, then they leave.

Cherry tells Pony that although she likes him she won't be able to talk to him in front of other people. She tells him that the others wouldn't understand. She is worried about what other people think of her. Pony got home late and had a fight with Darry that caused him to run away. He and Johnny ran as long as they could and finally cooled down enough to decide that maybe it would be better to just go home.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Pony and Johnny got to the park. It was a nice park, about two blocks square with a fountain and a pool for little kids. It was shadowy and dark because of all the large Elm trees. The park was empty at 2:30 AM and they decided it was a good place to cool off.

Ponyboy and Johnny heard the blast of a car horn. They saw the blue Mustang circling the park. Johnny and Ponyboy wondered what they wanted and why they were in greaser territory. Johnny and Ponyboy realized it was too late to run when they saw the five Socs headed towards them. Pony could see that Johnny was scared and felt trapped. The Socs surrounded Pony and Johnny at the fountain.

Ponyboy recognized Randy and Bob and saw that there were three other Socs with them. He could tell Johnny recognized them by the way Johnny stared at the rings on Bob's hand. The Socs started insulting Johnny and Ponyboy and told them to stay away from their girls. Bob said that Ponyboy could use a bath and told one of the other Socs to give him one. The Soc caught Pony and shoved his face into the fountain. Ponyboy held his breath as long as he could. He was drowning, and slowly he lost consciousness.

The next thing Ponyboy knew, he was gasping for air lying down on the pavement. Then he saw Johnny. Johnny looked strangely pale and his eyes were huge. Johnny slowly said, "I killed that boy." Pony looked over and saw Bob lying in a pool of blood. Then he looked at Johnny and saw the switchblade in his hand. Ponyboy asked Johnny what had happened. Johnny said that he had to do it, he thought they were killing Pony. Ponyboy started screaming hysterically and Johnny tried to calm him down. Johnny suggested they get out of there. He told Ponyboy that they needed money, a gun, and a plan.

Johnny said they could get Dally to help them. Then Johnny told Pony that he thought Dally was at Buck Merril's. Buck Merril was Dally's rodeo partner. Pony and Johnny knocked on Buck's door. Buck opened the door. Johnny told Buck that they needed to see Dally. Buck argued and Pony told him to just tell Dally that it was them. Dally appeared at the door and asked them what they needed him for.

Johnny told Dally what had happened at the park, and that they thought he would be able to help them. Dally took Johnny and Ponyboy into a back bedroom in Buck's house. Dally made Pony take his wet shirt off and told him to dry off. Dally left the room and was back in a minute. He handed Pony and Johnny a roll of bills and a gun. He told them to be careful because the gun was loaded. Dally handed Pony a shirt that was way too big and gave him his own worn leather jacket with wool lining. Dally said it would be cold where they were going.

Ponyboy put on the shirt as Dally told them to catch a train to Windrixville and look for the abandoned church on Jay Mountain. Dally advised them to get a week's supply of food early before everyone was about. Dally said that after they got the supplies they should stay put and he would meet them out there later in the week. Dally walked Johnny and Ponyboy to the door and told them to take off.

Johnny and Ponyboy hopped into an empty boxcar as the train left. For the first time Ponyboy started to realize what was happening. Johnny had taken a life, they were wanted for murder, and now they ran with a loaded gun by their side. Ponyboy fell asleep.

Ponyboy awoke as he and Johnny leapt from the train. It was nearly dawn. The two of them wondered how they would find Jay Mountain. Johnny told Pony to go down the road and ask someone where it was. Ponyboy left and wondered how so much could have happened in such a short time. He met a farmer and stopped him. He asked the man where Jay Mountain was. The man gave him directions. Pony walked back to where Johnny was waiting.

Pony and Johnny climbed up the road to the church. Both of them had a hard time up the steep incline because they were exhausted. When they got to the church Pony reminisced about the times he had gone to church in the past. This church was different; it gave him the creeps. The two of them fell fast asleep on the hard stone floor.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Bob and Randy find Pony and Johnny in the park. They feel they need to get revenge because they were embarrassed that their girls were found with them. Bob, Randy, and the three other Socs surround Johnny and Pony and try to hurt them. Johnny defended Pony by stabbing Bob and killing him. He was desperate and felt like he had no other option. After Pony comes to, he and Johnny have to decide what to do.

They realize that Dally has had similar experiences and may be able to help them. Dally isn't as upset about the murder as Johnny and Pony are. He is different. Nonetheless, Dally risks everything to help his friends. Pony and Johnny are sent on the run and feel completely scared and alone. Johnny is aware that he ended a human life and hates himself for it. Pony and Johnny end up in an abandoned church. The church may symbolize how abandoned Pony and Johnny felt by all that was once good in their lives.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

It was late afternoon when Pony awoke. It took a minute for him to remember where he was. He tried to pretend he was still at home. He quit pretending and got up realizing that Johnny wasn't there. Pony called for Johnny, but all he heard was his own echo. Then he saw the note Johnny had left that said he had gone for supplies. Pony went to get a drink from the pump. He could see for miles from up there where the church sat. Pony felt like he was sitting on top of the world.

Pony sat on the hill and let his imagination get the worst of him. It was a form of delayed shock and he was scared sitting there by himself. Pony heard someone coming and hid. Then he heard the whistle the Shepherd gang used for "Who's there?" and knew it had to be Johnny. Pony was glad Johnny was back. Johnny warned Pony that Dally had told them to stay inside and out of sight.

Ponyboy and Johnny went through the supplies that Johnny had brought back. Among them was a paperback copy of *Gone With The Wind.* Johnny said he knew Pony had wanted the book, and he figured it would be a good way to pass some time. Seeing the peroxide Johnny had brought back, it dawned on Pony. Johnny told him they needed to disguise themselves so they wouldn't fit the descriptions that would be in the paper.

Ponyboy pleaded with Johnny. His hair was the only thing he had to be proud of. It was what made him a greaser. Johnny reasoned with him and finally Pony agreed.

Johnny cut Pony's hair and sat him outside for the bleach to dry. After it dried Pony looked at himself. Ponyboy thought he looked younger and more frightened than before. Ponyboy was miserable. Then Johnny had Ponyboy cut his hair. He didn't look like Johnny anymore. Johnny knew Ponyboy was upset over the loss of his hair and apologized. Pony admitted he wasn't really upset about his hair, it was everything else that had him upset. Ponyboy still couldn't believe so much had happened since the night before. He started to talk about it until Johnny lost it. Johnny told him to quit talking about last night. He had killed a kid last night. The two cried and consoled each other.

For the next four or five days Pony and Johnny tried to kill time. They spent time reading *Gone With The Wind* and playing poker. Johnny enjoyed the book although Pony had to explain a lot of it to him. Pony was amazed at how Johnny could interpret more meaning from some of it than he could. Johnny wasn't dumb, it just took him longer to grasp things. Johnny was really impressed by the Southern gentlemen and their manners and charm. They reminded him of Dally. Johnny thought Dally was gallant because he would take the blame for others without batting an eye.

Then Pony realized just how much Johnny admired Dally. Pony thought about how Dally was so real that it scared him. Pony and Johnny stayed in the back of the church out of

harm's way. They spent a lot of time looking out over the valley. One morning Pony woke up earlier than usual. He went to sit on the back steps and smoke. It was almost dawn. The valley was covered with mist that broke off in small bits and floated away. The sky was awash with golds and pinks. Then the sun rose, and it was gone.

Ponyboy heard Johnny exclaim how pretty it had been from behind him. Johnny said that it was too bad it couldn't stay that way all the time. Pony replied that, "Nothing gold can stay," as he remembered a poem he had read once.

Pony recited the poem to Johnny and told him it was by Robert Frost. Johnny stared at Pony and said the poem said exactly what he had meant. Pony explained that he had never been able to understand the poem's meaning. On the 5th day Pony had read up to Sherman's siege of Atlanta and he owed Johnny $150.00 from playing poker. Pony wasn't feeling very well from too much smoking on an empty stomach.

Pony laid down to sleep his queasiness off and heard the Shepherd gang's whistle again. He drifted off anyway. Suddenly Pony awoke to a toe in his ribs. It was Dally. Pony couldn't believe how glad he was to see him. Pony began questioning Dally about everything that was going on back home. He was talking so fast Dally couldn't get the answers out. Dally told Pony and Johnny that the cops thought they were headed to Texas and they were safe enough to get a bite to eat.

Dally was concerned that Pony and Johnny had both lost weight and looked really pale. Dally reached into his pocket saying he had a letter for Pony. It was from Soda. Dally explained that Soda had gone over to Buck's house and seen Pony's sweat shirt there. Dally didn't admit it, but Soda knew that Dally knew where they were.

Pony read the letter. It said how sorry they were about what had happened. Soda wrote about how worried he and Darry were about them. Soda even mentioned that they were famous now--there had been an article in the paper. Soda wished that they would come back and turn themselves in, but he understood that no one wanted Johnny to be hurt. Dally told them that they should go get something to eat. They got in the car with him and sped to town. Ponyboy and Johnny both wolfed a large amount of food down at the Dairy Queen. Dally told them that they were having all-out-war with the Socs all over town. No one could walk alone anymore. Dally said he had started carrying a gun because of it. The gun was unloaded, but very convincing anyhow. Dally told them that the local gangs were going to rumble with the Socs the next night in the vacant lot. If the Socs won things would go on as usual. If the greasers won, the Socs would stay out of their territory. Dally also mentioned that they had a spy on their side, it was Cherry Valance.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Pony and Johnny spent their days doing the only things they could do. They spent hours together reading *Gone With The Wind.* Johnny read meaning in the book and tried to apply that meaning t his own life. The boys saw the beauty in the dawn and

wished it could stay that way. Pony recited a poem by Robert Frost, which he had never understood the poem fully, but somehow Johnny did. When Dally got there, Pony was shocked to find how happy he was to see him. Pony was alienated and home sick, anything familiar would have made him feel better.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Johnny and Ponyboy reacted in shock to the news that Cherry was on their side. Dally told the story of how she had come to them and almost been jumped. It had taken nerve. Cherry had said that she felt personally responsible for what had happened. She felt she owed them. She had also told the cops that Bob was killed in self-defense. Dally told them it had been a good idea to cut their hair and to bleach Pony's, they sure didn't match their description now. Johnny announced that they would go back and turn themselves in. Dally gagged, and Johnny repeated himself.

Johnny explained that he thought he had a chance of getting off easy because he didn't have a record and it was self-defense. Johnny didn't want to hide for the rest of his life. Johnny didn't think it was fair to keep Pony on the run and make his brothers worry. Then Johnny asked if his parents were worried or anything. Dally avoided the question and said that the boys were all really worried. Johnny asked again. Dally told him they weren't and tried to make Johnny feel better by telling him he didn't need his parents. Johnny was hurt nonetheless.

Ponyboy reflected on the relationship between Johnny and his parents. The boys tried to make up for the lack thereof to no avail. Johnny still wished his parents cared. Dally told Johnny that he wished he would have turned himself in from the start if he was going to anyway. It would have saved a lot of trouble. Johnny thought Dally was mad at him. Then, in a voice Pony had never heard Dally use, Dally told Johnny he wasn't mad. He just didn't want Johnny to get hurt. Jail could harm him in ways he couldn't even imagine. Jail could harden Johnny. Dally didn't want that to happen to him. Just then, the car neared the top of Jay Mountain and they could see the old church was on fire.

Ponyboy hopped out to see what was going on. Johnny followed him. There was a crowd of mostly little kids out front. Ponyboy asked the nearest grown-up what was going on. The man wasn't quite sure. He said they had been having a school picnic and all of a sudden, the place was on fire. The man told the children to stand back and that the firemen would soon be there. Ponyboy told Johnny that he thought they must have started the fire. A lady ran up and told Jerry (the man Pony had been speaking to) that some of the kids were missing. Jerry said they were probably around somewhere, there was a lot of excitement over the fire. The lady said that wasn't the case, they had been missing for at least half an hour. She had thought they had climbed up the hill. Everyone froze, there was the faint sound of yelling coming from inside the church. Ponyboy took off saying he would go and get the kids. Jerry argued that he would do it instead. Feeling responsible for the fire, Pony kept running. Pony broke the window and pulled himself in. Then he realized Johnny was right there beside him.

Pony asked Johnny if the man was coming. Johnny told him the man couldn't get through the window. They immediately started looking for the kids. Stumbling through

the smoky church, they found 4 or 5 kids in a corner at the back of the church. Pony and Johnny weren't scared. They started carrying the kids to the window and dropping them out. A crowd had already gathered at the window and Dally was with them. Dally screamed that the roof would cave in soon. Pony and Johnny dropped the last kid out as the front of the church started to cave in. Pony leapt out the window as he heard timber crashing behind him. He tried to catch his breath. He heard Johnny scream and then Dally hit him across the back and he passed out.

When Ponyboy came to, he was confused and wondered where he was. He could hear a siren. Pony thought the cops had caught him and Johnny. Pony opened his eyes and asked if he was being taken to jail. Pony recognized the man in the ambulance with him. He asked where Johnny and Dally were. The man told Pony that they were in another ambulance and told him he would be ok. The man explained that Pony had been on fire and Dally had put it out by hitting him. He said the coat had saved him from being burned badly. Pony then remembered the man, it was Jerry from the fire. Jerry told Ponyboy that they were being taken to the hospital.

Pony asked him if Johnny and Dally were ok. Jerry told him that the blonde kid had a badly burned arm, but would be ok. He said the dark-haired kid had a broken back and was suffering from 3rd degree burns. Jerry could see that Pony was scared and changed the subject. Jerry told Ponyboy that the three of them were the bravest kids he'd seen in a long time. They seemed to be sent from heaven. Pony told Jerry that they were greasers and they were wanted for murder, he said that Jerry would find out at the hospital.

Pony had already been checked out and released, now he waited in the hospital for word about Dally and Johnny. Jerry waited with Pony. Pony told him the whole story about the murder. Jerry thought they would be ok, they were heroes and it had been self-defense. Jerry told Pony that his brothers were there and Pony ran for the door to meet them. He landed in Soda's arms. Soda put him down and asked what happened to his hair. Then Ponyboy saw Darry. Darry leaned in the doorway, he was the same Darry. Pony was horrified to realize that Darry was crying. Suddenly Ponyboy knew what the others had said was true. Darry did care about him. Pony ran and latched on to Darry and told him he was sorry. Ponyboy was finally home.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The main theme in Chapter 6 seems to be that of belonging. Johnny didn't feel that he and Pony belonged on the run. Johnny wondered if his parents were worried about him at all. When Dally told him they weren't he was hurt. He wanted to belong to his own family. Pony and Johnny felt they had to save the kids in the church. They felt responsible for the fire. When Pony was reunited with his brothers and realized that Darry actually cared about him, he felt like he was finally where he belonged and needed to be.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The three brothers waited together for word about Dally and Johnny. The reporters and the police came and asked Pony so many questions he got mixed up. He didn't feel well anyway. Finally, things started to wind down and people started leaving. Darry had to convince the doctor that they were as good as family before they would give them any information about how Johnny and Dally were doing.

The doctor told them Dally would be ok after his arm had a couple days to heal. He said that Johnny was in critical condition. His back was broken, he was in shock, and he had 3rd degree burns. If he lived, he would be crippled for the rest of his life. Pony was distraught at the thought of Johnny being crippled or maybe even dying. He couldn't speak for fear of crying.

The three of them decided to go home and get some rest. Pony woke up first the next morning, showered, and started fixing breakfast. Pony heard someone at the door, and Two-Bit and Steve came in. Two-Bit came running into the kitchen, he was glad to see Pony. Steve asked how Pony liked being famous and showed the front page newspaper article to him. Pony read the article; it covered everything. Then Pony read that he was supposed to appear in juvenile court for running away. Another article talked about how hard Pony and his brothers had worked to stay together.

It dawned on Pony that they were thinking about putting him in a boy's home. He didn't want that now that he and Darry understood each other. Steve told Pony not to worry. Then Darry and Soda came in. Pony asked Darry if he knew about having to go to juvenile court. Darry had been told the night before. Pony mentioned having another one of his recurring nightmares. Everyone was concerned. Soda said he would throw a party after they beat the Socs in the big rumble. Pony asked Soda if he was going to take Sandy to the party. Everybody grew silent and Pony asked what was wrong.

The gang told him that Sandy had gone to live with her grandmother in Florida. It was either that or get married and her parents wouldn't let her marry Soda. Then Darry announced that they had better get to work. Darry hated to leave Ponyboy alone, but Two-Bit offered to keep an eye on him. Darry told Two-Bit to take it easy on Pony because he didn't look well. Then he left.

Two-Bit and Pony cleaned the house and then headed to the hospital. While walking down the street the Socs who had jumped Johnny and Ponyboy pulled up beside them and hopped out of the car. Ponyboy recognized Randy and the tall guy that had almost drowned him.

Randy asked pony if he would talk to him alone. They got in the Mustang and Randy told him that he had read the article in the paper. Randy told Ponyboy that he probably

wouldn't have tried to save those kids. Pony told him he couldn't be sure about that. Randy told Pony that he wasn't going to show up at the rumble. He said he was sick of all of it. Losing Bob made him realize that none of it was worth it. All of the fighting did nobody any good. Ponyboy got out of the car and walked back over to Two-Bit. Two-Bit asked Pony what the Soc wanted. Pony said that he wasn't a Soc, he is just a guy that wanted to talk.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Pony and his brothers heard from the doctor that Dally would be ok and Johnny would either die or be crippled for life. Pony could not deal with the idea and was in denial. Pony discovered that he had to go to court and could possibly be placed in a Boy's home. He worried excessively over that and wanted to stay with his brothers now that they finally understood each other. Darry kept a watchful eye over Pony and wouldn't let anyone harm him. Randy asked to speak to Pony and the two of them talked about how Randy wouldn't be at the rumble. Randy felt that fighting was useless. Pony left him with the realization that Socs truly did have troubles too.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The nurses wouldn't let Pony and Two-Bit see Johnny because his condition was so critical. Finally, the doctor told the nurses that it couldn't hurt now. Ponyboy realized that Johnny was truly dying. Two-Bit asked Johnny how he was and told him that the big rumble was that night. Two-Bit asked Johnny if he needed anything and he looked at Ponyboy and said he wanted the book. Ponyboy explained to Two-Bit that Johnny wanted a copy of *Gone With The Wind* so he could read it to him. Ponyboy asked Two-Bit if he would run and get one. Two-Bit left to get the book. Pony sat with Johnny and visited. He told Johnny about everything that had happened since they had gotten back.

Johnny asked Pony how bad he was, Pony lied and told him he'd be ok. Johnny told Pony that he was scared and that he still had stuff he wanted to see and do. Pony told Johnny that he shouldn't get excited and that he wasn't going to die. Then the nurse came and told Johnny that his mom was there to see him. He told the nurse he didn't want to see her. The nurse protested and when Johnny argued he passed out from the pain. Two-Bit got back and the nurse told him he couldn't go back in Johnny's room. Two-Bit handed her the book and asked her to put it where he could see it.

Ponyboy and Two-Bit went to visit with Dally. In the hall they passed Johnny's mother and the nurse. Johnny's mom was telling the nurse about how much trouble she had gone through to raise him and that she had the right to see him. Then she saw Pony and Two-Bit. She turned to them and told them that everything was their fault. Two-Bit looked at her and told her it was no wonder that Johnny hated her. When they got to Dally's room they could see that he was back to his old self. Dally asked how Johnny was doing. Pony and Two-Bit told him that Johnny was in pretty bad shape. Dally cursed and grew pale at the news.

Dally asked Two-Bit for his blade. Two-Bit handed it over without hesitation. Dally told them that they had to beat the Socs in the rumble. He said they had to get even for Johnny. Dally put the blade under his pillow and Pony and Two-Bit left. Pony didn't feel very well Two-Bit discovered that he had a fever. Pony asked him not to tell anyone. If Darry thought he was sick he wouldn't be allowed to be in the rumble. Ponyboy told Two-Bit that he had a bad feeling about the rumble.

When Ponyboy and Two-Bit were nearing the vacant lot, on the way home, they saw that Cherry was waiting there. Two-Bit asked her what the Socs were planning. She told him they would fight fair and without weapons. Cherry asked Pony how Johnny was doing. He told her that he wasn't very well and asked her to go and see him. She said she couldn't, even though she understood the reasons, she couldn't visit the boy who had killed Bob. Pony was upset and told Cherry she was a traitor. She tried to defend herself and he realized he had no right to be upset with her. He asked her if she could

see the sunset from the west side of town as well as he could from the east side. She said she could.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Ponyboy realized now, without a doubt, that Johnny was dying. He continued to act normally. He had to be strong for his friend. When Dally heard the news he became very angry and wanted revenge. Johnny wanted to read Gone With The Wind with Pony some more. It was important to him. Pony and Two-Bit realized what a poor home life Johnny actually had when they ran into his mother. She wanted to see Johnny for her own reasons, not for his comfort. Johnny refused her, he had finally given up on his own family. Cherry wouldn't visit Johnny; the thought bothered her. Pony didn't understand at first and was upset with her. Then Pony realized it was her choice to make.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Ponyboy finally got home around 6:30. He couldn't eat much and swallowed 5 aspirin in the hopes it would get him through the big rumble and maybe get rid of his headache. Pony showered and got ready for the rumble. After everyone was ready, they sat and waited for the rest of the gang to show up. Pony realized that each one of them had a different reason for fighting. Darry told Pony that maybe he shouldn't be in the rumble. Darry told him he didn't look well enough to fight. Pony pleaded with him and Darry gave in but told Pony to be careful.

Two-Bit arrived just as everybody started getting themselves pumped up for the fight. After a round of yelling and acrobatics in the front lawn, they all headed towards the vacant lot. On the way there, Darry warned Ponyboy and Soda to take off if the cops showed up. They already had enough trouble to deal with. When they arrived at the lot the other gangs were already there. Pony proudly realized that he was the youngest one there. He thought about how he would fight well and make Darry proud.

Ponyboy realized that his gang shouldn't be there. They weren't hoods like the other gangs. The Socs showed up in four cars and Pony counted 22 of them. The Socs lined up facing the greasers and one of them went over the rules. The first group that ran would lose. Darry stepped forward and announced that he would take anyone there.

A husky blonde stepped up from the line of Socs and said hello to Darry. Darry said hello to him and Pony and Soda realized it was one of Darry's old buddies that he had played football with in high school. Someone yelled from behind the greasers and the husky blonde took a swing at Darry. Then Dally was there too. He said that he had convinced a nurse to let him go with the help of Two-Bit's blade. Just as quickly as it had begun, someone yelled that they had beaten the Socs. Dally grabbed Pony by the shirt and pulled him to his feet. He told Pony that they had to hurry to see Johnny, he was worse. Ponyboy kept up with Dally as good as he could although he was dazed and confused.

Dally and Pony reached Buck's T-Bird that was parked in front of Pony's house. They got in and roared toward the hospital. A cop turned his sirens on and pulled them over. Dally told Pony to act sick and the cop ended up giving them an escort to the hospital. They got to the hospital and the cop left. Dally and Ponyboy ran towards Johnny's room. The doctor told them that Johnny was dying. They went into Johnny's room. Dally told Johnny that they had beaten the Socs. Johnny told Dally that fighting was useless. Then Dally told Johnny that he was still a hero and that everyone was proud of him. Johnny glowed when he heard that Dally was proud of him. Johnny called to Pony and told him to "Stay gold." Then Johnny was gone; he died. Dally came unglued, begging Johnny not to die, and telling him that's what he got for helping people. Then he bolted out of the room and down the hall.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Ponyboy and the gang got ready for the rumble. Pony didn't feel well, but he needed to fight to make Darry proud of him. He needed to fell that he was part of the gang. Dally rushed Ponyboy to the hospital to see Johnny before it was too late. Dally told Johnny that they had won the rumble. Johnny told him that fighting was useless. Johnny was dying and couldn't waste time talking about things that didn't matter.

Dally told Johnny that everyone was proud of him. Johnny glowed knowing that they all valued him. Johnny told Pony to "Stay gold," and he died. Pony wondered what he meant by it and was struck with the grief of losing his friend. Dally couldn't handle losing one of the only things left in the world that he loved.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Pony walked down the hall in a daze. He had to walk home because Dally had taken the car. Pony pretended Johnny hadn't died, that he was just somewhere else. Pony wandered for hours in his confused state. A man pulled over and asked him if he needed a ride. He asked Ponyboy if he was alright. Pony said he was ok. The man told Pony that his head was bleeding. The man asked his address and drove him home.

The rest of the gang was in the living room when Pony got home. They were all beat up and bandaged. Darry asked where Pony had been and what was wrong. Pony told everyone that Johnny was dead. The room was silent. Then Pony told them that Dally had lost it and had taken off. Soda tried to get Ponyboy to sit down because he didn't look well. Suddenly the phone rang and it was Dally. He had robbed a store and needed help getting away from the cops. Everyone ran out of the house. They arrived at the vacant lot just as Dally got there. The police pulled over across from the lot and leaped from their cars.

Dally ran under the street light and pulled a black object from his waistband. Pony remembered Dally mentioning that he had been carrying a gun. Dally raised the gun and was shot by the cops. Pony realized that was what Dally had wanted to happen. Pony remembered Dally helping him and Johnny. He had risked his life for them. Pony thought Johnny had been right, and that Dally had died gallant.

Suddenly Pony became dizzy and started swaying. He lost consciousness as he hit the ground. When Pony woke up the house was quiet and it was daylight. Pony saw Soda and asked if someone was sick. Soda said there was and told Pony to go back to sleep. Then it dawned on Pony that he was the one that was sick. Pony went back to sleep. The next time Ponyboy woke up it was daylight and he was hot, thirsty, and hungry. Pony saw Darry sleeping in the chair beside him. He wondered why Darry wasn't at work. Darry woke and asked Pony if he was feeling better.

Pony asked what was wrong with him. Darry told him he shouldn't have fought in the rumble. Pony remembered Dally and Johnny were both dead and told himself not to think about it. Pony asked how he had gotten a concussion, and how long he had been asleep.

Darry told him he had been kicked in the head during the rumble and that it was Tuesday now, he had been out since Saturday night. Pony asked Darry if he thought they were going to split them up when he talked to the court. Darry told him he didn't know.

Changing the subject, Darry asked Pony if he remembered being in the hospital at all. Darry told Pony that Johnny had left his copy of *Gone With The Wind* with the nurse to

give to him. Ponyboy looked at the book and thought he would never be able to finish it. Soda ran in and leaped towards Pony, but was caught by Darry. Darry told him they couldn't be rough with Pony yet. Darry left to fix Pony something to eat. Soda told Pony all of the stuff he had talked about while he had been delirious. Pony told Soda that he looked tired. Soda hadn't slept much since Pony had gotten sick. Soda crawled into the bed with Pony and they were both asleep before Darry got back.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Pony was in denial about the death of Johnny. He pretended it wasn't true. Pony was in shock and very sick and he wandered aimlessly until a man gave him a ride home.

When Pony got home, he told everyone that Johnny had died. Everyone was riddled with grief. When Pony told them Dally had taken off, the gang realized that he had finally been broken. The loss of Johnny made Dally feel as if he had nothing left to lose. Dally called and told them that he needed help getting away from the cops. The gang got to the vacant lot in time to see Dally force the cops into taking his life. Pony knew it was his plan and that he would be better off. He knew that Dally could not stand to live in this miserable situation any longer. He could no longer deal with his pain, and he wanted to die. Pony collapsed and made his brothers sick with worry. Darry continued to be very protective of Pony.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Pony stayed in bed for the next week. It drove him crazy. He read and drew pictures most of the time. One day he looked at one of Soda's old yearbooks. He came across a picture that looked vaguely familiar and realized it was Bob. The picture made him take the time to think about Bob. Pony wondered what Bob had been like. Ponyboy thought about Bob for awhile until Darry came and told him someone named Randy was there to see him. Pony agreed to see him, and Randy came in. Pony told him to find a seat if he could. Randy moved a couple of books and sat down in the chair.

Randy asked Pony if he was feeling ok. Pony said that he was.

Randy told Pony that he had come to see if he was ok and to talk about what would happen when they went into court the next day. Randy told Pony that he hadn't done anything, that it was only Johnny. Pony denied it and said that he had killed Bob himself. Randy argued that it had been his friend, the one that died, that had done it. Pony said that Johnny wasn't dead. Darry told Randy that he should go. He said he shouldn't talk about Johnny around Ponyboy. Darry scolded Pony for smoking in bed and making such a mess in his room. Pony told him he would try to be more careful.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Pony saw Bob's picture in an old yearbook and spent a long time thinking about what type of person Bob must have been. He thought Bob must have had good qualities that he had never known about. Bob had friends, and family that cared about him. He had been a human being just like everyone else. Randy came to visit Pony and discovered that Pony was delusional. Pony was using denial as a means of self-preservation. He was in denial of the fact that Johnny was dead. He told Randy that it was him, not Johnny that had killed Bob. Darry tried to snap Pony out of it by simply giving him time and being patient.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The hearing was unlike what Pony thought it would be. The only people there were the ones involved in the murder, and Pony's Doctor. Pony's doctor spoke to the judge before the proceeding began. First they questioned Randy, he looked pretty nervous. All of the Socs pretty much said the same thing. They told mostly the truth Pony thought. When it was Pony's turn the judge only asked him if he liked school and living with Darry. Then the judge told Pony he was acquitted and the whole thing was over. After the hearing, everybody tried to get back to their normal lives. Pony had a hard time with that. He started being clumsy and forgetful. Pony stopped eating and started having problems with his schoolwork.

One day Pony's English teacher kept him after class. The teacher told Pony that he knew he was struggling, but if he could come up with a good semester theme he would pass Pony with a C grade. Pony told his teacher he would try and asked what type of theme he was looking for. The teacher told him it could be anything important to him as long as it was his own thoughts and ideas.

Pony was at lunch with Steve and Two-bit. They had driven to the neighborhood grocery store. Pony was sitting on the car fender smoking while Two-Bit and Steve were inside. A car drove up and three Socs got out. Pony still just sat there. The Socs said they didn't like him because he had killed their friend. Pony broke the end off of his Pepsi bottle and threatened the Socs with it if they didn't leave. Pony walked towards them with the broken bottle and they left. Steve and Two-Bit had been watching from the doorway. They could tell he hadn't needed any help.

Two-Bit told Ponyboy not to get tough, he said Pony wasn't like them and shouldn't try to be. Pony thought Two-Bit was wrong, they all knew that when you are tough you don't get hurt. When you are smart nothing can touch you. When Pony got home, he tried to think of something to write about for his English paper. When Soda got home, Pony got the impression that something was wrong. Soda was quieter than usual and not up to his usual mischief. After supper, Darry and Pony got into an argument about Pony's paper for English. They argued back and forth until Pony noticed the look on Soda's face. Soda had gone white and looked pained. Soda ran out the door.

Darry went and looked at the envelope that Soda had dropped on his way out. It was the letter he had written to Sandy. It had been returned unopened. Pony felt bad that he hadn't realized Soda had his own problems. Darry told Pony that when Sandy had gone to Florida, it hadn't been because of Soda. Soda had wanted to marry her anyway, but she left. Darry told Pony they should catch up to Soda. Darry and Pony chased Soda clear to the park and finally caught him. Soda told Darry and Pony that he couldn't stand it when they fought and just had to get away from it. Darry and Pony looked at each other realizing for the first time what it had been doing to Soda to hear them fighting all

the time. Soda explained that Darry only wanted what was best for Pony and that Pony needed to appreciate the sacrifices that Darry had made. Soda told them they were all they had left and they should be able to stick together against anything.

Darry and Pony agreed that they shouldn't fight anymore. The three of them decided to race home, no one wanted to leave the others though and it was a three way tie. Pony still didn't want to work on his homework that night. He hunted for a book to read instead. Pony picked up the copy of *Gone With The Wind* and thought about Johnny. He took a deep breath and opened the book. A slip of paper fell out and Pony picked it up. It was a letter from Johnny.

Pony read the letter and thought about it. He wondered if Dally would have listened to what Johnny had wanted to tell him. Suddenly Pony realized he needed to tell all the kids living on the wrong side of a city, the ones who didn't know there was still good in the world, that there was hope. He needed to tell their story so others would understand and not be so quick to judge them. Pony picked up the phone and asked his English teacher how long the paper could be. His teacher told him it could be as long as he wanted, but not less than five pages. Ponyboy thanked his teacher and hung up.

He sat down with his pen and remembered the people who were no longer in his life. He had to tell their story and he could start with his English teacher. He wondered how to start for awhile and finally began like this: "When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home…"

Chapter 12 Analysis

Pony and his brothers got to stay together after the hearing. It was less formal than Pony had thought it would be. Pony realized that even though his brother Soda seemed happy all the time, he had problems too. No one was without trouble. Pony opened the copy of *Gone With The Wind* and discovered a letter from Johnny. Johnny asked Pony to tell Dally that there was still good in the world. Johnny referred to the Robert Frost poem that Pony had recited for him at the church. He said Pony should "Stay gold." He shouldn't let the beautiful newness and wonder that was "gold" give way to the bitterness and callousness that often replaced it as time went on.

Pony thought about the letter and realized he had to let everyone know that there was still hope and goodness in the world. If Johnny could know that, after everything he had been through, then it must be true. He started to write the story of the three people who he had lost and the circumstances surrounding them during their last week of life.

Characters

Randy Adderson

Randy is Bob's best friend and takes his death very hard. Before the rumble, he has a talk with Ponyboy about all that has happened. He has decided that violence is wrong because "it doesn't do any good." He stays out of the rumble and later comes to visit Pony when he's sick. His words lead Pony to realize that "the other guy was human too."

Johnny Cade

Beaten by his father and ignored by his mother, he stays around town only because he is the gang's pet, "everyone's kid brother." Johnny reminds Pony of a "little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers." He was jumped once by the Socs and beaten very badly. Since then he has carried a blade and has become even more suspicious and jumpy. Johnny and Pony are friends by default. They are the youngest in the gang and also the most sensitive. They are quiet around the older boys and reflective between themselves.

Johnny echoes Pony's frustration at their predicament in life, scared of being beaten or killed and not able to change anything about it. Johnny was considered dumb by his teachers, and yet he realizes things that completely pass by Pony. While Pony reads from *Gone with the Wind* about Southern gentlemen riding into certain death, Johnny sees Dally. And when Pony recites Robert Frost, Johnny understands the meaning of the poem. They have to stay gold, stay young, and stay true to themselves. It is this message that Johnny sends to Pony in his final letter and the one Pony is left to struggle with.

Darrel Curtis

Darry has been taking care of the family ever since Mr and Mrs. Curtis died in a car wreck, eight months before the start of the novel. A judge allows the brothers to stay together under twenty-year-old Darry's supervision—so long as they stay out of trouble. Rather than go to college on a football scholarship, Darry has to go to work in order to keep the three together and Pony in school. He has had to give up a lot and has become an adult too fast. "Dairy's hard and firm and rarely grins at all." A big and powerful young man, Darry has "eyes that are like two pieces of pale blue-green ice.... He doesn't understand anything that is not plain hard fact. But he uses his head." Darry takes his custodianship very seriously by keeping a tight hold on Pony.

Ponyboy often has conflicts with his oldest brother, not realizing how similar the two are. Darry is different from the other greasers; as Two-Bit says, "the only thing that keeps Darry from being a Soc is us." He is the leader of the gang by mutual consent and

respect. He wears his hair short like a Soc and he is clean shaven. While Darry likes fighting for the athletic challenge of it, Pony realizes that Darry is too smart to stay around the greasers forever. "That's why he's better than the rest of us, [Pony] thought. He's going somewhere." Pony finally comes to understand his brother really does love him.

Dairy Curtis

See Darrel Curtis

Ponyboy Curtis

The story is Ponyboy Curtis's narrative about his experience seeing three young men die. Pony is a good student, a track star, and a greaser. It is this latter distinction, rather than his orphan status, which brings him trouble. In addition, he is a solitary, sensitive boy who likes movies, watching sunsets, and reading. His consumption of these poetic pursuits often foils his common sense. Thus, his desire to see movies without the distracting fidgets of friends or brothers leads to his lonely walk home from the cinema and his run in with a group of Socs. Luckily for him, his brothers and the gang hear his cries for help and he doesn't receive anything like the beating that spooked Johnny.

A great deal of the tension in Pony comes from his attempts to figure out his oldest brother Darry. He complains to Two-Bit, Johnny, and Cherry that his brother doesn't like him. He believes that Darry resents him because he had to turn down a football scholarship to college in order to support him. Everyone tries to tell him otherwise, but Pony doesn't believe in Dairy's love for him until he is injured in the fire. Even so, he only comes to understand his brother after their fighting drives Soda-pop, the middle brother, to tears.

The beauty of Ponyboy's character is that though he emerges strong and confident at the end of the book, it is not the result of becoming a tough hood but of remaining true to himself. The positive tone is not so much because the Socs are beaten (this time), or that the boys will remain together, or that Ponyboy recovers from his injuries. Instead, the resolution is excruciatingly personal. When he scares off a bunch of Socs with a broken bottle, he considers his act no big deal: "anyone else could have done the same thing." This scares Two-Bit, because none of the gang wants Pony to become just another greaser However, Two-Bit relaxes when he sees Pony stoop down and clean up the glass shards so that no one will get hurt Ponyboy has, as Johnny would say, stayed golden. The real denouement of Pony's character growth is the resolution of tension between him and Darry. It tries to come once, when he hugs him at the hospital, but does not arrive until they chase down Soda. The three have a heart-to-heart talk and when Darry says "Sure, little buddy," thus calling Pony by the name reserved for Soda, Pony knows everything will be okay. "I reckon we all just wanted to stay together."

Sodapop Curtis

Ponyboy's older brother is sixteen going on seventeen and a high school dropout He is the care-giver and peacemaker of the Curtis brothers. Soda is "movie-star kind of handsome, the kind that people stop on the street to watch go by." Bubbly like his name, Soda is "always happy-go-lucky and grinning" and the type of person who doesn't drink alcohol because "he gets drunk on just plain living " He listens to everyone, "understands everybody," and is Pony's confidante. Soda enjoys teasing Darry and is the only one who would dare do so. He also gives Darry backrubs after he has tried to carry too much roofing material at work. However, being caught between Darry and Pony is draining. He also has to suffer in silence when his girlfriend, Sandy, is shipped to Florida.

Paul Holden

In the big confrontation between Socs and greasers after Bob Sheldon's death, Darry is put forth as the rumble starter. Paul steps up to answer for the Socs. While in high school, the two were friends and teammates on the football team. Now Paul shows hatred, contempt, and pity for his old friend.

Johnnycakes

See Johnny Cade

Marcia

She is a friend of Cherry's who seems like a good match for Two-Bit when they meet at the drive-in. However, social reality will keep them from getting together.

Two-Bit Matthews

See Keith Matthews

Keith Matthews

The funny guy of the gang who always has to make his "two bits" worth of smart remarks. His specialty is shoplifting, which he does for the challenge of it. He likes "fights, blondes, and for some unfathomable reason, school."

Buck Merrill

Daily's Rodeo partner is the source of the cash Johnny and Pony use to hide out after the killing of Bob Sheldon.

Steve Randle

Soda's best friend and another greaser, Steve works part-time at the gas station where Soda works full-time. His specialty is cars. Between Soda's looks and Steve's mechanical aptitude, their station is the most popular in town. Ponyboy only likes Steve because of Soda; Steve treats Pony like a tagalong when Soda brings him on their escapades.

Sandy

Soda's girlfriend who, later in the novel, leaves for Florida. It is implied that she is pregnant, and Soda has offered to marry her. But she returns his letters unopened and Soda discovers someone else is most likely the father.

Bob Sheldon

The rich, handsome, and arrogant Soc who is responsible for the serious damage done to Johnny one night. Bob is also Cherry's boyfriend; although she doesn't want to see him when he has been drinking, she says otherwise he is sweet and friendly He has a set of rings he wears to make his hitting all the more damaging. Johnny kills Bob to save Pony.

Curly Shepard

Tim's younger brother, "an average downtown hood, tough and not very bright." He and Pony have a mutual respect for each other after they once burned each other on a dare. Like Darry does for Pony, Curly's older brother Tim keeps an eye out for his sibling. While Pony and Curly are in similar positions—they are being brought up and protected by powerful older brothers—Curly is always in and out of the reformatory.

Tim Shepard

The leader of another gang of Greasers who ally themselves with Darry's gang. He "looked like the model JD you see in films and magazines" and is "one of those who enjoy being a hood." Tim demands the discipline and code one normally imagines a gang to have. That is, his gang is not a loose group of childhood friends like Darry's. He has broken a "few of Daily's ribs in one of the regular fights they have just for fun.

Nevertheless, he and Dally are good friends. When the rumble is scheduled, it is Tim who brings in his troops and another gang to bring the greaser total to twenty.

Mr. Syme

Ponyboy's English teacher, whose assignment leads to the narrative of the novel. He is concerned about Pony's slumping grades, and "you can tell he's interested in you as a person, too."

Cherry Valance

See Sherri Valance

Sherri Valance

Cherry is a pretty, red-headed Soc whom Pony and Johnny meet at the drive-in. Although she responds negatively to Daily's crude come-ons, she tells Pony that she could easily fall in love with him. Cherry hates fighting and serves as a go between for the two groups. She doesn't succeed in stopping the fighting, but she does help increase understanding. She delivers two important revelations to Pony. The first is that Socs are not without their own problems, and the other is that rich people are capable of watching sunsets, just as Pony does.

Dally Winston

See Dallas Winston

Dallas Winston

"The real character of the gang," Dally was arrested his first time at the age of ten. He spent three years on the "wild side" of New York and likes to blow off steam in gang fights. He is the most dangerous member of the bunch—not even Darry wants to tangle with him—but he is still a part of their greaser "family." The local police have a large file on him, and he has just gotten out of jail at the opening of the novel. While "the fight for self-preservation had hardened him beyond caring," there are two things that have meaning for him: jockeying on ponies (the "only thing Dally did honestly") and Johnny.

In Tulsa, lacking a rival gang, Dally hates the Socs. Fighting them is frustrating, however, because he knows that beating them doesn't take away any of their social advantages. During fights he takes particular care to look out for Johnny, and so he helps the boys after the murder even though it could return him to prison. Johnny returns Dally' s care with a devoted admiration. Consequently, Johnny views him as a heroic gentleman of courage, like those in *Gone with the Wind* When Johnny is dead

the rest of the gang realizes he was Daily's breaking point. Having lost the one thing he really cared about, Dally sets himself up for death. After robbing a store, he threatens the pursuing cops with an empty gun. He dies in front of his friends in a hail of bullets.

Jerry Wood

One of the few adults in the novel, Jerry Wood is a teacher at the scene of the fire. He stays by Pony in the ambulance and the hospital and listens to his tale.

Setting

Setting is crucial to this story, for it is through their environment, the inner city, that the main characters are defined: they live on the wrong side of the tracks, and their surroundings force them to grow up quickly and to become tough. Hinton modeled the book's setting on her hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma, although she never refers to the city by name. The novel is most likely set in the mid-1960s, the time period during which it was written, although, again, Hinton makes few explicit references to external historical events that might fix the book in time.

In The Outsiders, the city is dirty, noisy, crowded, and full of danger. With the city's art museums, concert halls, and theaters traditionally off-limits, the only sources of culture available to the poor boys, or "greasers," are the rodeo and the movies. Many of the greasers dream of the freedom and quiet of the country, where people are not labeled and discriminated against because of their appearance. Ponyboy explains, "I wanted to be out of towns and away from excitement. I only wanted to lie on my back under a tree and read a book or draw a picture, and not worry about being jumped." Later in the book, Ponyboy finds himself in the country with Johnny, who is wanted for murder.

The two boys undergo a physical and emotional transformation while hiding out in an old church building for five days. For people accustomed to the fast pace of city life, the isolation and quiet of this new setting seems interminable.

Social Concerns

The area of social concerns has always been one of the most important to the fiction of Hinton. Primary among the concerns of her fiction is the role of the modern teenage peergroup, especially as it is realized in gangs. The narrator of The Outsiders, Ponyboy, is cognizant of his role as a gang member throughout the novel. He feels that he belongs to his gang, that he must cooperate with them, and that even if members sometimes disagree, they are still united against common enemies. Most of all, he knows that one must "save face" in front of the gang, fighting in fights and protecting his own. The world of adult authority, with its rights and duties, is almost nonexistent in the novel, except for the role of the police and state agencies (who are seen mainly as troublemakers for members of the gang). Ponyboy's parents are no longer alive, and he is being raised by his two older brothers, who are both members of his gang.

This type of intense solidarity coupled with a world view that knows only immediacy and instant gratification might be one of the best portrayals of the teen-age mind-set in modern times.

Another concern in the novel is class warfare, realized in a climactic gang fight between the "greasers," Ponyboy's peer-group, and the "Socs," the more wealthy, middle-class set. The warfare takes on the characteristics of a constant feud between the two groups. Individuals are brutally attacked by roving "packs" of teenagers from the opposing group, and only quick-wittedness or aid from one's own peer-group can provide safety. Each group has a "territory" which must be defended for the honor of the gang. In addition, relationships between people must take place only within one's gang and its attendant family members.

When Ponyboy is friendly with a Soc girl, he and a friend, Johnny, are attacked by a pack of Socs. "You're outa your territory," Johnny tells them.

They respond by stating, "Next time you want a broad, pick up ye own kind — dirt." Hinton illustrates this social concern while spurring on the plot.

A major concern in society today, the use of illicit drugs, is treated in an unusual manner by Hinton. Her heronarrators do not take illegal drugs and do not generally approve of those who do. When the reader sees Ponyboy smoking incessantly (most of the teenagers do), it is tobacco, not marijuana.

In fact, Ponyboy does not even like alcohol; it makes him ill. He tells readers, "I tried drinking once before. The stuff tasted awful, I got sick." When he and Johnny see the pack of Socs about to confront them, he is especially fearful because a "cool deadly bluff" will not get rid of them if they are drunk.

Hinton's attitudes about alcohol and drugs may be in part attributed to the generally bright narrators she always employs; it certainly helps the readers accept the other

terrible aspects of social life in the novel more readily by not alienating those who are opposed to drug use.

Relationships with the opposite sex are always described from the male point of view because the narrator is always male. While the relevant social concern of unwanted pregnancies is touched upon, it is given more of an erotic than a social concern. Girls are primarily in existence to be protected (if related to a gang member), to be eroticized (for immediate gratification), and to give one status within the group. While unwanted pregnancies seem to result in marriage rather than abortion in the world Hinton describes, the male viewpoint is certainly one of the factors that colors the depiction of this modern problem.

All of these social concerns come together in the viewpoint about values in the works. Because the world is populated by young teenagers, there is an immediacy to everything that happens and to everything that is desired.

The young people in the novel cannot and do not plan for the future. After Ponyboy and Johnny have killed a Soc during the "pack" attack scene in The Outsiders, they can think only of immediate escape and someone who can effect this escape for them. This sense of living only in the present leads the characters to have less of an appreciation for their own individual identities and more of a feel for establishing their identities through the peer-group. And, of course, it is because of this group identity that so few gain a true awareness of self which would lead to the development of a conscience and a probable concern for the social mores and values that adults usually see as the right way of behaving.

Social Sensitivity

The Outsiders was one of the first so-called "problem" novels, dealing with poverty, class conflict, teen-age violence, family difficulties, and child abuse. Some parents and teachers have complained that the book glamorizes violence and gangs. But Ponyboy dislikes meaningless fighting and deplores the lack of ambition demonstrated by most of the gang members, and it is with Ponyboy and his feelings that most readers will identify.

The conflict between the poor and the upper classes is at the heart of this story. The Socs label everyone from the ghetto as hoods and in so doing deprive the greasers of their humanity. The greasers are also guilty of prejudging the Socs, although Hinton deemphasizes this point. Clearly, though, both sides are at fault: neither attempts to understand the other group's problems, and both act violently. The important point, which many critics overlook, is that Ponyboy offers a way out of this cycle of violence and retribution. He listens to Cherry and discovers that the Socs must contend with serious problems such as overindulgent or absent parents, lack of responsibility, and, ultimately, lack of self-esteem. As Ponyboy's hatred is tempered by understanding, he comes to realize that words, not blows, are the only solution.

Hinton has defended the violence in the novel, saying that it is a real part of teen-agers' lives. The violence in The Outsiders is realistic, but Hinton does not dwell on gruesome details. Parents and teachers should lead discussions about Ponyboy's attitudes towards gangs and fighting and how these attitudes change during the story.

Family conflict is another major issue in The Outsiders. Although Darry and Ponyboy fight, readers know that they love each another, and the brothers do in fact come to terms with their feelings during the course of the story. Johnny, however, comes from an abusive home.

His parents fight constantly and either ignore or berate and beat their son.

Johnny suffers from low self-esteem as well as extreme shyness as a result. He longs for a loving home and knows he will never have one. Teachers may want to talk about Johnny's feelings concerning himself and his parents and to offer some suggestions as to how Johnny might have improved his life, such as seeking counseling or moving into a foster home.

Perhaps the most curious problem with The Outsiders is its sexism. Hinton chooses to focus almost exclusively on male characters and has little to say, let alone anything positive, about the greasers' female counterparts. When Dally harasses Cherry and Marcia at the drive-in, Ponyboy says he would probably have joined in if the girls had been "our kind," but refrained because these were "nice" girls. For someone who crusades against labeling and stereotyping, Ponyboy exhibits an attitude that does not make sense.

Parents or teachers should discuss this inconsistency in Ponyboy's beliefs and talk about the double standards many people hold for boys and girls.

The Outsiders is socially sensitive to a point and covers many important issues—teen-age gangs, violence, and child abuse—that were not standard fare for young adult novels in 1967.

Hinton handles these topics in an understated but forceful manner.

Techniques

Hinton makes great use of the literary technique of "point of view," that is, the point from which a story is told.

Hinton always uses the first-person narrative in which the story is told through the eyes and experiences of a central character; only what he has seen or has been told can be related to the readers. Thus the presence of the author is removed almost entirely from the storytelling. This point of view is, in fact, a brilliant choice by Hinton, given the themes and concerns of her novels. Ponyboy is an engaging and intelligent creation; the reader tends to like him almost immediately for his complete honesty and for his growing self-awareness of the life he leads. His teen-age voice captures the speech rhythms of modern youth. Many critics believe that Hinton's ability in this area is unusually masterful. She has a gift for the exact vocabulary (excluding most obscenities, which she does not use) and the syntax of the modern teen-ager. Thus the novel seems to take on an air of verisimilitude for the reader, even if the situations seem sentimental or cliche at times. Doubtless the true-to-life speech has led to the popularity of The Outsiders among young adults.

The world of romance — in its technical sense as an invocation of the socially remote or past, as a world separate from reality but one that reinterprets reality through well-known stories whose very familiarity allows profound allusions to other matters — is also invoked by Hinton as a technique. Her novels deal with a world in which adult values and authority are nonexistent or not understood, a world socially remote. And her very use of cliche situations, so often criticized by reviewers, becomes an important element in this technique by taking situations so familiar that they are cliche but transforming them through the specialized sensibility of her intelligent but not-yet-matured teen-age narrator in the plot. The narrative in The Outsiders often alludes to much more than it states, forcing the reader to transform the experiences of Ponyboy into something larger than the musings of a teenage boy.

Finally, the novel achieves a kind of local brilliance through its use of the enveloping technique. After enduring all of these traumatic experiences through the course of the novel, especially the tragic deaths of his friends Johnny and Dallas, Ponyboy responds by feeling dissociated from everything around him in an attempt not to be hurt further. He starts "running into things" and "losing things." The A's he always made in English become D's or worse. At the end his English teacher gives him the chance to pass the course if he can write a good semester theme, one based on "something important," but something from Ponyboy's own ideas and experiences. Ponyboy consid ers this and then in a final flash of realization and insight he begins his English theme. The novel ends with the beginning words of Ponyboy's English theme, which are also the opening words of The Outsiders. This technique, using a meta-rhetoric, is a wonderful evocation of the new maturation achieved by Ponyboy in a way that reckons and reviews everything that has happened in the novel as an indication of this maturation, enveloping all the experiences within it.

It is clear that Ponyboy also has reached a new level of self-awareness at this point as he now notes the difference between more oral, nonreflective storytelling, and the power of the more reflective and insightful written word which allows fuller realization and understanding of all that has happened. Ironically, this self-enclosing of the story line as it has been told and is now being written by Ponyboy also opens up what has been happening in the course of the narrative to the full understanding of the reader.

Literary Qualities

The Outsiders contains a complex symbolic structure within a straightforward plot. Hinton uses symbolism to express class and character differences.

For the greasers, long hair represents dignity and independence. Even the legal system recognizes some connection between hair and self-esteem, for as Johnny notes, the first thing a judge does when a greaser appears in court is to order a hair cut. The greasers' hair also symbolizes the group's lower social status: the word "greaser" refers to the way the young men fix their hair. It is a derogatory term, although the greasers have adopted it themselves.

On a broader symbolic scale, Hinton weaves archetypal images and situations into her story. Ponyboy and Johnny, for example, do not simply hide out in the country; they undergo a metamorphosis. Hinton carefully constructs their rites of passage to include the typical stages of this process. First, the boys are exiled: they must hide in the country, away from family and friends.

For five days they wait for word from outside, yet during this period they are thinking and growing. They cut their hair, thus breaking a major connection with their past lives and making themselves more open to change. Their transition comes as a test, literally a trial by fire: the boys must decide in a few seconds whether or not to risk their own lives in an attempt to save the children in the burning church. They decide on the noblest course of action, and Johnny sustains an injury that proves fatal.

Nevertheless, both boys are reborn in a sense: they come through the fire; they rescue their innocence and goodness, as symbolized by the children they save from the church; and they are proclaimed heroes. Praised in the newspapers and admired even by their enemies, Ponyboy and Johnny mature as a result of their ordeal. Johnny grasps the meaning of a Robert Frost poem that he and Ponyboy puzzled over while cooped up in the church, and Ponyboy recognizes that most violence serves no purpose. Both want to share their insights with others.

The structure of The Outsiders is circular rather than linear. It begins and ends with Ponyboy leaving the movie theater, thinking about Paul Newman and a ride home. By the end of the book, though, readers know that what they have just read is Ponyboy's semester theme-paper, and that it has been written for two distinct purposes: to tell the "hundreds and hundreds of boys living on the wrong sides of cities" that there is still some goodness left in the world, and to tell the greasers' side of the story to everyone else.

At times the plot or characterization is a bit melodramatic, as in Daily's selfcontrived death and Johnny's dying words, a reference to Robert Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay": "Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold..." While such sentimentality may detract from readers' enjoyment of the story, the book's intensity and essential truthfulness make up for any shortcomings in plot or characterization. Readers will identify with the confusion

felt by the characters and with Ponyboy's struggles to be an individual while remaining one of the gang. Although the characters are stereotypes, they possess a truthful simplicity that will perhaps appeal to younger readers more than to adult readers.

Thematic Overview

The Outsiders is first and foremost a bildungsroman, a novel of the formation and maturation of a youthful central character. The novel is, of course, primarily the story of Ponyboy, the narrator. He is made to undergo several of the most intensive and disturbing weeks of his life during the course of the book, and his new sense of life and realization of the full impact of what has happened to him is a major motif in the book. Ponyboy is good in English (when he wants to be), even though this is not a value for his gang.

He reads a number of pieces of literature, and in one important moment during the time in which he and Johnny are "hiding out" after killing a Soc, Ponyboy recites verbatim from memory Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." Through acts such as these (he amuses himself and Johnny by reading aloud from Gone with the Wind during the "hideout" period) the native intelligence and sensibility of Ponyboy, even in the midst of gang culture, are developed, and the theme of the maturation of such a character is then more readily believed by readers.

A common twentieth-century literary and philosophical theme, alien ation, also pervades the book. Ponyboy and his fellows feel strangely apart from society even if the group gives them some sense of solidarity. Ponyboy muses that the Socs must see the same sunset he sees every day, yet their perspective about everything else is so different. He feels typecast as a "hood," because of his poor clothes and distinctive hair style, but he does not want to be one. He remembers that he used to like going to church, but he stopped going because he felt embarrassed in his shoddy clothing and his friends, bored with the service, misbehaved. Thus he feels alienated from religion, from family (Johnny's parents are alive but they exist only to ignore or beat him), and from a larger group like his country. His gang is his sense of belonging and thus of being. Isolation is a feeling that he cannot escape even in the midst of a gang, especially since most of its members cannot appreciate his finer sensibilities.

The theme of an Oedipal struggle is clear in The Outsiders and in Hinton's other works, although it is cleverly hidden by transference to an older sibling. Ponyboy's nickname for his oldest brother Darry is a revealing "Superman" or "Muscles," indicating a figure of power and envy. His memory of his real parents is completely fantasized; he remembers chocolate cakes baking and feeding cattle and riding horses. He does not fully understand his brother, although he comes to realize that Darry, a football star, gave up college to work and keep the three brothers together. But when Darry acts altogether like a member of the teenage gang (participating in and leading the climactic gang fight with the Socs), Ponyboy is confused at this role reversal. He sees that Darry "was ashamed to be on our side," sensing that his oldest brother had himself some feeling for the oddity of the situation. He feels his brother should perhaps be smarter than the others and realize the futility of gang fights. To emphasize the point, on the way to the fight Ponyboy's attempts to question gang members about why they like to fight are rebuffed with unthinking cliche answers.

Thus Ponyboy both idolizes and doubts his oldest sibling, who is a father figure to him. Darry is, of course, the one who makes the rules, the one who shouts at him, and the one he must become reconciled to as he comes to understand these things are done out of love and concern for him rather than for mere punishment or flexing of power.

Themes

Class Conflict

Issues of American economic class are confronted head on by the portrayal of the rival gangs as rich and poor. The rich Socs "jump greasers and wreck houses and throw beer blasts for kicks, and get editorials in the paper for being a public disgrace one day and an asset to society the next." The poor greasers, conversely, "steal things and drive old souped-up cars and hold up gas stations and have a gang fight once in a while." Each group views the other as the enemy and "that's just the way things are." But circumstances will at least reveal to a few that everyone is human—although there will still be a rivalry.

Cherry offers her opinion that it is not just a difference in money: "You greasers have a different set of values. You're more emotional. We're sophisticated—cool to the point of not feeling anything.... Rat race is a perfect name for [our life]." This leads Pony to wonder if perhaps it is just natural for the two classes to be separate and unequal—a fact that haunts Johnny's decision to turn himself in. He knows that the courts stereotype all greasers as juvenile delinquents. Still, Ponyboy comes to understand that Socs and Greasers have similarities: "It seemed funny to me that the sunset she saw from her patio and the one I saw from the back steps was the same one. Maybe the two different worlds we lived in weren't so different. We saw the same sunset."

That is as far as the bridge is going to extend between the two worlds. Cherry warns that in public she will have to appear to ignore him as usual, "it's not personal or anything." Pony then says Two-bit is smart for throwing away a false phone number Marcia gave him: "he knew the score " To give her credit, Cherry does act as a go-between in terms of the rumble, but there is no hint of change. Indeed, Cherry's help may simply be an attempt to appease her own conscience. Finally, all contact is lost after Bob's death. Cherry cannot bear to resume the effort of bridging the gap with the group who killed her boyfriend—despite the fact that Bob brought it on himself.

In sum, the portrayal of class that Hinton makes simply outlines the facts. There is no attempt to suggest a way of bringing the classes together. Nor is there a criticism of either side, because both sides are at fault. The only optimism this novel offers is that members of the two sides can learn to understand one another, even if they still fight. In the end, greasers will be greasers and Socs will be Socs.

Search for Self

Ponyboy has all the worries of a boy his age; is he strong, brave, or handsome enough to match up to the masculine ideal? In Pony's case, the ideal is a cross between Soda and Dairy. He wants to be handsome and appealing to everyone but he also wants to be tough, full of sense, and a good fighter He is none of these things. Everyone in the

gang is cautious around Pony because they already recognize that he is something special in his own right. As Two-bit says, in response to a headline, "Y'all were heroes from the beginning." Pony doesn't seem to understand this, however. When others tell him they are impressed by his rescue of the children, Pony shrugs and says that anyone would have done the same. But not everyone would have rushed into a flaming building to rescue someone they didn't know; few also have the courage, to hold off a gang of Socs. The brilliance of this last episode is how it reveals Pony is learning something which he sensed at the rumble, but only confronts in the writing of the tale.

In this last confrontation, Pony makes the Socs back down with a broken bottle, giving every appearance of having become a young tough hood. Two-Bit witnesses this and is concerned: "Pony-boy, listen, don't get tough. You're not like the rest of us and don't try to be...." But tough hoods don't get hurt, Pony thinks in response. They also do not pickup glass shards off the street, which Pony proceeds to do. This relieves Two-Bit, who suddenly realizes Pony is still himself, although he won't take anymore trouble from the Socs. In other words, he can act tough enough to survive, but it is just an act—Pony is still the one who remains considerate, stays gold, reads poetry, and picks up the glass. "I didn't want anyone to get a flat tire."

Loyalty

The tenderness with which the gang regards its respective members is endearing. They are all tough guys, but they all really care about each other. It is a gang community of greasers that wants, subtly, to change their group They will do it through the youngest and brightest members, Johnny and Pony. Darry wants his younger brother to amount to something and Dally wants Johnny to have a better life. "I just don't want you to get hurt," Dally says when Johnny speaks of turning himself in "You get hardened in jail I don't want that to happen to you."

In some ways, then, the group understands the cycle of violence and wants it to stop. Unfortunately, they do not have the family, financial, or community support to make changes, and they realize that they must be satisfied with each other. By this standard the novel ends happily. It is this communal love that enables Johnny to survive a rough home life and die peacefully "Dally was proud of him. That was all Johnny had ever wanted." Daily's loss of the one person he cares about drives him to a fatal confrontation with police. It is this same community recognition that Pony seeks, and finally gets, from Darry. The brothers realize that "if we don't have each other, we don't have anything." There is some hope that together they will be okay.

Style

Narration

Ponyboy narrates the story in retrospect, under the guise of having to write out a theme for English class. This presentation of a story by one of the characters involved is called first-person narrative. A first-person narrative is easily identified by the use of "I" in telling the story. Having one of the characters tell the story can make the story more immediate for readers, because they easily can put themselves in the narrator's place.

A first-person narrator also means a limited perspective, however. Ponyboy can only describe his own thoughts and can only relate events he has witnessed or heard about. This limited perspective lends itself very well to the themes of class conflict that appear throughout the book. At the beginning of the story, Pony can only sympathize with other greasers. A third-person narrator ("he/she said") who knows about all of the characters could tell the reader what Cherry or Randy or even Sodapop was thinking. Instead, Pony has to learn to understand other people's feelings all by himself. This understanding is an important part of his coming of age.

Characters

Hinton is a character writer instead of an idea writer. She develops her characters in depth and then lets them create the story. Consequently, the opening of the book is a very detailed introduction to each character. By the end of the book, the reader knows each character in intimate detail. In addition, the characters' names are particularly descriptive, "Ponyboy," for instance, creates an image of a youth becoming a cowboy. Sodapop's name reflects his own bubbly personality. Even "Dallas Winston," the combination of a Texas city and a famous cigarette brand, invokes bygone days of Western heroics and toughness. This invocation ties in with Hinton's fascination with that earlier rough and violent era.

Description and Diction

The brief detail used in the book is rather startling in its effectiveness. Just as Ponyboy can "get [Daily's] personality down in a few lines" of a drawing, he can sum up his friends in just a few words. Johnny, for instance, is "a little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers." The speed of slang adjectives adds another dimension to description. "Greasers. You know, like hoods, JD's," for example, gives Mr. Wood a short but precise description of the boys' background.

The scene of heroic rescue is full of delightful phrasing. The comparison of the burning church to hell might be expected, but the simile of falling cinders as biting ants is rather novel. Adding realism to tension occurs in a truism: "I picked up a kid, and he promptly

bit me." And a reaction to Two-Bit's drinking, "I'd hate to see the day when I had to get my nerve from a can," sounds like a wise saying. Hinton is successful in using youth slang in her prose style and this success makes the narrative more believable.

Allusions

Allusions are references to other works of literature or art. A narrator can use them to explain a character or situation by comparing it to something already known by the reader. Ponyboy refers to several other works of literature to make comparisons as well as to avoid lengthy explanations. For instance, he refers to Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*, another tale of class conflict: "That kid Pip, he reminded me of us—the way he felt marked lousy because he wasn't a gentleman or anything, and the way that girl kept looking down on him." While Johnny and Ponyboy are hiding out at the church, they discuss two works: the novel *Gone with the Wind* and the poem "*Nothing Gold Can Stay*." Johnny sees echoes of the Southern gentlemen's gallantry in Daily's coolness, and the sunrise reminds Ponyboy of the poem. It is only later, with Johnny's help that Pony comes to understand the meaning of the poem. In this way, an allusion has helped illustrate the coming of age theme of the novel.

Imagery

Imagery is using visual images, sometimes called symbols, to reinforce themes or represent deeper meanings. The novel does not contain many symbols, because the story is simply a recounting of what happened. There is one overriding image in the story, however, one which is important to the main characters and the main theme. The image is that of a sunrise or sunset. Once again, the myth of the cowboy is suggested. Our heroes should ride off safely into the sunset, just like the heroes of Western movies. Unfortunately, not all of the gang will make that ride. Sunsets also figure in the novel because Pony likes to watch them. This signifies that he is a sensitive boy who appreciates beauty. But he is not alone in his appreciation. He discovers that a Soc, Cherry, is capable of watching a sunset. Given the chance, so is Johnny. The sunrise that Johnny and Pony share at the church prompts recitation of a Robert Frost poem, "*Nothing Gold can Stay*." That poem sums up the meaning of the sunset in this story and is the theme Pony is trying to develop for his English teacher. For Johnny and Pony, the phrase comes to mean that good things don't last. Sunsets are short, and blissful escapes into abandoned churches end in fire. But it is possible, Pony proves, to remain true to one's self and thereby "stay gold."

Historical Context

The Rise of Youth Culture

In the United States, the period from 1945 to 1963 was termed the "Baby Boom" because of the sharp increase in the number of children born during those years. By 1958, one-third of the country's population was fifteen years old or younger. The years after World War II had also seen an increase in wealth throughout the United States. By the time they became teenagers in the late 1950s and early 1960s, therefore, many of these "Baby Boomers" had plenty of spare cash to spend. Companies competed to attract the dollars of these new consumers. The film, music, television, and fashion industries created products especially for the increasingly influential teen market. Rock, 'n' roll became the most popular music on the radio, and movies also reflected this new focus on adolescents. Actors James Dean and Marlon Brando became idols for portraying teenage antiheroes in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) and *The Wild One* (1954). Paul Newman, whose looks Ponyboy admires as "tough," followed in the footsteps of these actors by playing similarly cool characters in the films The *Hustler* (1961), *Hud* (1963), and *Cool Hand Luke* (1967).

Teenagers' increased spending power also gave them a new measure of independence from their parents. Rebellion against adult authority became a notable theme in many teen films. Loud rock V roll music became another way for teens to defy their parents' values. Some adolescents' rebellion turned violent, and teenage gangs sprouted in urban areas. The increase in the numbers of young people meant an increase in juvenile delinquents as well. These "JDs" became an urgent concern for law enforcement in the 1950s and 1960s. As *The Outsiders* demonstrates, however, not all of these delinquents were from poor neighborhoods. Children from supposedly "good families" also became dropouts, gang members, and drug or alcohol abusers.

The Vietnam War and the Protest Movement

Teenagers were not the only Americans who challenged authority in the 1960s. The public in general had begun to question U.S. involvement in Vietnam's war against communist rebels. The United States had been providing military advisors to this southeast Asian country since the 1950s. In 1964, however, the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam doubled. By 1967, almost half a million Americans were fighting in Vietnam. Nevertheless, many citizens had doubts as to the effectiveness and morality of American involvement. Protesters turned up in the thousands for antiwar demonstrations. The protesters came from all walks of life: groups included those made up of students, clergy, scientists, and women.

Critical Overview

Although *The Outsiders* has been a favorite with teens ever since its publication in 1967, adult critics have been more cautious in their assessments. Initial reviews debated the supposed "realism" of this startling new work, as well as the skill of its young author. Thomas Fleming, for instance, questioned Hinton's portrayal of the Soc-Greaser conflict. He noted that in his hometown it was the poor kids who beat up the rich ones, not the other way around. Nevertheless, he added in his *New York Times Book Review* assessment that "Hinton' s fire-engine pace does not give the reader much time to manufacture doubts." Nat Hentoff similarly observed in Atlantic Monthly that the plot of the book was "factitious," or forced and artificial. He praised the author, however, for addressing issues of class that were absent in previous books for teens: "Any teenager, no matter what some of his textbooks say, knows that this is decidedly not a classless society." *School Library Journal* contributor Lillian Gerhardt similarly hailed Hinton's portrayal of class rivalry: "It is rare-to-unique among juvenile books ... to find a novel confronting class hostilities which have intensified since the Depression."

In another early review, William Jay Jacobs favorably compared *The Outsiders* with a popular classic from the 1950s, J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. Other critics have observed similarities between Hinton's Ponyboy and Salinger's Holden Caufield. "But as much as the sensitive, thoughtful Ponyboy resembles Holden, his [environment] is irrevocably different," Jacobs noted in *Teachers College Record*. "All around him are hostility and fear, along with distrust for the 'system'." The critic did fault some of the dialogue as "false" and the themes as a bit too "profound" for "hoods." Nevertheless, he noted that the novel had a more mature tone than most first novels, and had "relevance for today's [society]."

By 1970, *The Outsiders* had already been identified as a powerful influence on young adult literature. Many critics questioned whether it and other examples of the "New Realism" were a positive influence on teens. Attempts to ban the book were made in various places. As a result, many reviews of the time were particularly negative. For instance, a *Times Literary Supplement* critic worried that young readers "will waive literary discriminations about a book of this kind and adopt Ponyboy as a kind of folk hero for both his exploits and his dialogue." Other critics faulted the slang dialogue and sometimes moralizing tone. In his *Children's Book News* review, Aidan Chambers noted that the book was flawed because it was written with self-indulgence "and could profitably have been cut." Nevertheless, reviewers could not deny the appeal the hook had for teen readers. As Chambers added, the first-person narrative had "interesting qualities," such as compassion and lots of action.

Critics have also recognized, however, that the strength of *The Outsiders* lies in its characters. In her 1969 work *Children's Reading in the Home*, May Hill Arbuthnot praises the book's "incisive portraits of individual boys growing up in a hostile environment.... The characters are unforgettable." Alethea K. Helbig and Agnes Regan Perkins made a similar observation in their 1986 work *Dictionary of American Children's Fiction*. They remarked that while some of the incidents in the plot seem unbelievable,

"they hold up well during reading, probably because the author makes Pony's concerns and the warm relationship between the brothers seem very real." Cynthia Rose likewise stated in *Monthly Film Bulletin* that Hinton's "characterization of the emotional claustrophobia and relentlessly limited prospects of the poor white world— where sacrifice so often defines love—is her most impressive literary achievement."

Hinton's novel has maintained its popularity for over thirty years, leading later critics to analyze its appeal. In a 1986 Nation article, Michael Mal-one suggested that it was because *The Outsiders* conforms to the popular myth of "the tragic beauty of violent youth." He observed that rather than being realistic, Ponyboy's language and story belong to a mythic or ideal world where teens anguish over their problems without adults to hinder or help them. Nevertheless, Malone added that Hinton's ability "to evoke for her audience how teen-agers feel about those clashes [of ideals] is indisputable." On the other hand, critic Michele Landsberg called Ponyboy's many poetic descriptions, particularly those of the greasers' appearance, "simply absurd." She explained in her *Reading for the Love of It* that Hinton's book "flatters the egos of young male readers with its barely-subliminal sexual praise, and lets them escape into the fantasized glory of attention and approval from an older teenage tough."

Other critics have found true literary merit in the novel, however, merit that explains its long-lasting popularity. As Jay Daly observed in his Presenting S. E. Hinton: "It has nothing to do with the age of the author, and little to do with the so-called 'realism' of the setting. It does, however, have very much to do with the characters she creates, their humanity, and it has everything to do with her honesty." "One of Susan Hinton's significant achievements in *The Outsiders* is to hold up for scrutiny young people from economically, culturally, and socially deprived circumstances," John S. Simmons claimed in *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints*. "In Ponyboy Curtis, his brothers Sodapop and Darry, and his 'Greaser' companions, Hinton has introduced readers, most of whom have probably been from white, middle class origins, to the desires, the priorities, the frustrations, the preoccupations, and above all, the anger of those young people who may live in the seedier parts of town but who have established a code of behavior which reflects (to the dismay of some) their sense of dignity and self-worth.... Most important, they believe in, trust, and support each other, all sentiments which can be universally admired despite the circumstances in which they are displayed."

Hinton herself has always known the key to her success. "Teenagers should not be written down to," she wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* upon the publication of *The Outsiders*. As a result, Hinton is an amazingly popular writer amongst teens and, especially, reluctant readers. Librarians and teachers use her books frequently for reading assignments. Hinton sums up the attraction to her action packed gang thrillers, saying: "Anyone can tell when [a teen's] intelligence is being underestimated. Those who are not ready for adult novels can easily have their love of reading killed by the inane junk lining the teenage shelf in the library." So she has gained the devotion of teen readers by following her own advice: "Earn respect by giving it."

Criticism

Jane Elizabeth Dougherty

Jane Elizabeth Dougherty is a doctoral candidate in English at Tufts University. In the following essay, she examines The Outsiders as a coming-of-age novel, focusing on Ponyboy's choices between growing up too soon and never growing up.

David Ansen has called *The Outsiders* "the prototypical young adult' novel." Written when S. E. Hinton was sixteen, it is widely credited with ushering in a new era of "realism" in the writing of young adult novels. Yet Hinton's book also contains haunting lyricism; indeed, the tension between dreamy romanticism and hard-knock realism is part of what the book is about. In the early pages of the novel, Ponyboy Curtis tells us of his two brothers: "Darry's gone through a lot in his twenty years, grown up too fast. Sodapop'll never grow up at all. I don't know which way's the best. I'll find out one of these days." In Ponyboy's relationship with his two brothers and with Johnny Cade and Dallas Winston, he experiences the differences between growing up too soon and never growing up. By the end of *The Outsiders*, he has found some tentative answers to the question of which way of being is best.

Ponyboy portrays himself as dreamy and sensitive, not very realistically-minded, and the other characters respond to him this way as well. His idealism enables him to connect with Cherry Valance and with Johnny Cade; makes him fear Dallas Winston; causes him to admire his friend Two-Bit; and creates clashes with his hard-headed, realistic brother Darry. When Ponyboy meets Cherry, he realizes that they are both outsiders in their respective groups, the greasers and the Socs. Both of them are dreamy romantics who watch sunsets, and Ponyboy realizes that, like him, Cherry has green eyes. Of Two-Bit, who is older than Ponyboy, he says more than once that he admires Two-Bit's ability to "understand things." Like Two-Bit and the others in the gang, Pony is also protective of his friend Johnny's innocence, and they connect emotionally because they are both innocent. Pony is the youngest member of the gang, called "kid" by the others, and Johnny has not allowed his abysmal home life or his brutal beating by the Socs to kill his basic goodness. Pony writes of Johnny:

I don't know what it was about Johnny—maybe that lost-puppy look and those big scared eyes were what made everyone his big brother But they couldn't, no matter how hard they tried, take the place of his parents I thought about it for a minute—Darry and Sodapop were my brothers and I loved both of them, even if Darry did scare me, but not even Soda could take Mom and Dad's place And they were my real brothers, not just sort of adopted ones No wonder Johnny was hurt because his parents didn't want him Dally could take it—Dally was of the breed that could take anything, because he was hard and tough, and when he wasn't, he could turn hard and tough. Johnny was a good fighter and could play it cool, but he was sensitive and that wasn't a good way to be when you're a greaser

Ponyboy thinks of Dally and Johnny as opposites, but in the course of the story, each shows himself willing to sacrifice for others. Johnny calls Dallas "gallant," like a

foredoomed Southern soldier in *Gone With the Wind*, because when he was arrested for something he knew Two-Bit had done, he didn't betray his friend and took the punishment himself On hearing this story, Pony comments:

That was the first time I realized the extent of Johnny's hero-worship for Dallas Winston. Of all of us, Dally was the one liked the least He didn't have Soda's understanding or dash, or Two-Bit's humor, or even Darry's superman qualities But I realized that these three appealed to me because they were like the heroes in the novels I read. Dally was real. I liked my clouds and books and sunsets Dally was so real he scared me In spite of his original fear and dislike for Dally, a fear which he understands is motivated by his own idealism, Ponyboy comes to realize all that Dally has done for him. It is Dally who makes sure that Johnny and Pony are able to run away after Johnny accidentally kills Bob. Dally saves Ponyboy from the burning church, and tries to save Johnny as well. Ponyboy also realizes that in spite of his cold exterior, Dally has been deeply scarred by his experiences, and is trying to spare Johnny the same trauma

"Johnny," Dally said in a pleading, high voice, using a tone I had never heard from him before, "Johnny, I ain't mad at you. I just don't want you to get hurt. You don't know what a few months in jail can do to you Oh, blast It, Johnny"—he pushed his white-blond hair back out of his eyes—"you get hardened in jail. I don't want that to happen to you. Like it happened to me...."

I kept staring out the window at the rapidly passing scenery, but I felt my eyes getting round. Dally never talked like that Never. Dally didn't give a Yankee dime about anyone but himself, and he was cold and hard and mean He never talked about his past or being in jail that way—if he talked about it at all, it was to brag. And I suddenly thought of Dally ... in jail at the age of ten. Dally growing up in the streets...

Ponyboy realizes that, to Dally, Johnny's innocence represents his own lost childhood. When Johnny dies a hero after having saved the kids from the burning church, Dally says bitterly that it is useless to care about other people, that caring for others is not worth it, and that Pony is going to need to toughen up too. Yet Daily's own inability to completely turn off his emotions leads him, in his agony over Johnny's death, to rob a liquor store and then wave an unloaded gun at the police. In this final gesture of his life, Dally finds a way both to end the torment of his emotions and to try to prove, one last time, how tough and violent he is. Ponyboy tells us that both Johnny and Dally died "gallant," but each of them has died gallantly for a different reason: Johnny because he never grew up and remained frozen in his youthful idealism and Dally because he grew up too soon and lost his innocence in the struggle to survive.

Ponyboy struggles for a long time afterward, trying to make sense of these two deaths. The gang begins to worry about him becoming hardened; when Pony pulls a broken bottle on some Socs, Two-Bit and Steve react by telling him not to get tough like the rest of them. But Ponyboy tells himself, as Dally told him, "that if you got tough you didn't get hurt." It is only near the end of the book that Johnny's voice takes over, telling Ponyboy in a letter that it was worth it to save those kids that he should "stay gold" and continue

to look at the world through a child's eyes. It is only after reading Johnny's letter to him that Ponyboy begins to accept Johnny's death.

Ponyboy's discovery of Johnny's letter is one of two reconciliations at the end of the book. Like Dally and Johnny, Soda and Darry are initially represented as opposites of each other. In his youthful idealism, Pony had believed that Darry was simply a hard-headed, and hard-hearted, realist who did not love him. As Jay Daly writes, "innocence/youth/idealism carried to such extremes is not youth/innocence/idealism at all. It is usually a more selfish, and sometimes dangerous thing. Look at Ponyboy's selfish attitude toward Darry early in the book. This is an attitude that is innocent of the most elementary awareness of another human being." At the end of the book, Soda is forced to confront the reality of his first love's betrayal at the same tune his brothers involve him in yet another argument. Upon witnessing the pain he has been causing both his brothers, Pony finally realizes that Darry can feel as scared, hurt, or lost as the rest of them; that he has asked Darry to understand him without trying to do the same; and that Darry has sacrificed for his younger brothers. It is only then that the Curtises finally reach a reconciliation. Soda and Darry represent different kinds of voices than Johnny and Dally; they have found ways to survive without losing their goodness, their "goldness " They have done this in part by sacrificing for and taking care of Ponyboy.

In fact, Ponyboy cannot fully honor Johnny's wish that he stay gold He has seen too much, and his own awareness of both the existence and the cost of his innocence makes it impossible for him to continue as he was before the deaths of Bob, Johnny, and Dally. But Ponyboy, like Darry and Soda, begins to stay gold by helping others: he writes that suddenly his story "wasn't only a personal thing to me. I could picture hundreds and hundreds of boys living on the wrong sides of cities.... There should be some help, someone should tell them before it was too late." Thus Ponyboy's narrative finds a way to reconcile the stories of Johnny and Dally, of Soda and Darry, by pointing out that they are all outsiders, all caught between never growing up and growing up too soon, all redeemed, even if only in death, by the sacrifices they, and by extension we as readers, have made for others.

Source: Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 1999

John S. Simmons

In the following excerpt, Simmons attempts to explain the lasting popularity of The Outsiders, and why it sometimes is a candidate for banning. Before we can begin to write a book rationale for our classroom or school library, two conditions should apply. (1) we know the book extremely well, and (2) we believe that this book makes a significant contribution to our curriculum and to students. Writing a rationale for why a book ought to be in the curriculum requires a knowledge of the goals and objectives of the curriculum, the skills, abilities and interests of students, a knowledge of students' literary and popular culture backgrounds, and a knowledge of the broader area of study in which the book is to be used. It is also helpful to know how frequently the title is used in similar situations, what reviewers have had to say about it in professional journals and in the popular press, and what awards the title has won, if any. Much of this

material should be available locally; for example, in the school's curriculum guides. Much of the information, however, must be culled from a variety of sources such as textbooks, monographs and journals related to teaching or educational materials. *The Book Review Index*, published by Gale Research Company since 1965, provides an index of reviews appearing in more than 200 periodicals. Readers who are particularly concerned about children's and young adult literature should consult the annotated list of reference and bibliographical resources described in "Familiarity with Reference" (Kenney 48-54). All of these sources add to the rationale writer's own justifications for using a specific title. And since rationales frequently don't get written until a work has been challenged, the rationale writer should also be familiar with the concerns that have been expressed about the work in the local community. This information should be available in a written complaint filed by a local community member but may also need to be acquired through an interview. The local newspapers are another obvious source for community viewpoints on the controversial material. At the state and national level, the rationale writer should consult the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* which keeps track of what titles have been challenged and why they have been challenged.

A rationale explains why a title is valued in the curriculum. It provides reasons for having a book in the public school library or for using it in the classroom. It does not provide all of the support that is needed. A book may be attacked for reasons that are not included in an essay. For support, teachers and librarians should consult with their educational association or union, their local, state, and national subject matter organization and one or more of the anti-censorship coalitions or committees mentioned earlier. Most state professional organizations have such committees, A number of states also have intellectual freedom coalitions made up of union representatives, subject matter organizations, librarians, and school administrators.

The titles that are discussed in this book were chosen on the basis of frequency of challenge. Lee Burress listed over 800 titles that were challenged between 1950 and 1985, in *The Battle of the Books*. That list came from 17 surveys of censorship pressures carried out by various scholars. In addition, several titles were added to the list of frequently challenged books from more recent reports, especially from the ALA *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*. One person who was asked to write an essay complained because his favorite censored book was not on the list. The reason is fairly clear; that book is very rarely assigned in the schools, so it is almost never challenged. We could not practically provide essays on 800 or 900 titles, so we chose the books that are most often reported by teachers or librarians as objects of attack. Indirectly, therefore, this list of titles is an index of books that are used in the schools.

If we examine the list of challenged titles, it is clear that most are twentieth century books, that most are by American authors, and that a disproportionate number are by non-Caucasian writers and deal with non-Anglo Saxon characters (disproportionate, that is, in comparison with the total number of books published in the U.S.). There is a strong suggestion here that racism lies behind the challenges. It is frequently disguised under charges that the books contain obscene or pornographic language. So far as the present writers know, no book used in the public schools has been found by a court to be obscene.

Another reasonable conclusion that maybe drawn from the list is that good books are more likely to be challenged than are books of little value. Every library, bookstore and supermarket contains many books with the same kind of language as may be found in the challenged list of books. The great majority of those books are ephemeral or superficial. There is little in them, therefore, to question the values of this society, to challenge readers to question their own values or way of life. The essays in this collection provide specific support for a rather select list of titles which are frequently challenged. They also serve as models for the development of rationales for use in the public schools.

The present volume is different from our earlier collection, *Celebrating Censored Books*, in two significant ways. It is expanded. The earlier volume focused on the so-called "dirty thirty." This volume doubles the number of works discussed and includes a selection from the earlier volume. In addition to essays written by teachers and professors of literature, *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints* includes essays by poets, novelists and dramatists-authors of adult and adolescent literature.

The central charge to these reviewers was direct and simple: Why should anyone read this book? Why should it be recommended? They were asked to express their impressions of the text, of the concepts and emotions that readers might experience, of the personal and social understandings that might be achieved. A second concern addressed the question, Why is this book under attack? The reviewers were asked to consider the censorial challenges to the text in relation to its perceived merits. Another consideration suggested to reviewers was pedagogic, that is, classroom application.

The essays included in Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints provide, in effect, a defense of these frequently challenged books, a rationale for ensuring access to them for readers and support for teaching them. This collection does not, however, propose a curriculum for the English language arts classroom nor is it a cultural literacy list. The editors are not arguing that everyone must read all of these books. Rather, we strongly advocate the right of readers to select literary materials in an open marketplace of ideas and of teachers to select classroom materials in keeping with appropriate teaching objectives.

The collection is organized in two sections. The first, "Perspectives: Censorship by Omission and Commission," offers six author's views. Arthur Miller considers historical attempts to "revise" Shakespeare's King Lear in conjunction with current omissions of segments of his plays from school texts. He reflects on current censorship practices against an international backdrop. John Williams focuses on acts of omission—publishers censoring, that is, not publishing—works by African-American authors. The nature and force of censorship attacks and their impact on authors is revealed by Norma Fox Mazer. She introduces censorship by commission, that is, the act of self-censorship, encouraged by publishers so as not to offend the public. Similarly, Rudolfo Anaya reflects on cultural discrimination that proscribes Hispanic-American writers and the effect of self-censorship on the expression of their life experiences The last two essays in this section, by Mary Stolz and Lee Bennett Hopkins, encourage broad understanding of censorship challenges. They illustrate their insights with a wide

selection of diverse fiction and poetry that has been challenged, from picture-story books to mature adolescent novels.

The second section, "Challenging Books," provides responses and defenses of individual books. Arranged alphabetically by the title of the text, they provide a varied perspective. Some are oriented to social issues, others to personal transactions with the text, and others to teaching concerns. They provide diverse, thoughtful approaches, suggesting that there is no one best way to prepare a rationale for a book or a particular situation. The array is enlightening.

But as these essays enlighten, we hope that they will stir the reader to take a deeper look at the whole question of intellectual freedom for our youth. We, as educators and parents, must constantly remind ourselves and our students that the constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state, freedom of speech and of the press, even the right to congregate to exchange ideas are not given by God but must be won anew with each generation. With the ever escalating calls for accountability in public education, the growing diversity in the school population and the concomitant rise in controversial materials designed to address the needs of all of our youth, (and let's not forget the increasingly organized religious right) we cannot expect or even hope that the number of censorship attempts directed to our public schools will diminish anytime soon. Our future depends upon our youth having the opportunity to grapple with ideas in their reading, their viewing and their interactions with each other and their adult mentors. We can opt for no less if we are to have an educated public capable of dealing with the culturally pluralistic and diverse nature of our world.

A glance at the young adult section of almost any mall bookstore these days will reveal a generous number of novels by the widely heralded writers of the moment: Robert Cormier, Judy Blume, NormaFox Mazer, Lois Duncan, and Richard Peck, to name but a few Standing right there beside them, almost assuredly, will be S.E. Hinton's The Outsiders—which is quite remarkable when one stops to consider the fact that the life spans of most young adult novels, even the initially popular ones are brief indeed Most of the highly popular works of the mid to late 60s—*The Outsiders*, appeared in 1967—are now long forgotten. But *The Outsiders*, written when its author was 17 years old and making her maiden voyage on the publication waters, continues to hold the attention of the teenage reading audience as well as the English Education gentry. It would be hard to imagine a college or university instructor of a Literature for Adolescents course not calling attention to this novel somewhere along the line.

The question, then, is *why* this relatively short, rather simply written novel about a fourteen year old boy from the other side of the tracks in a moderately large, unnamed town has remained on the high interest list for so long—25 years. What follows is an attempt to answer that question....

Briefly stated, the American young adult long fiction genre has gone through three discernible evolutionary stages during this century. For the first 40 or so years, it provided little more than escape and recreational reading matter for the children and teenagers of that period. The Hardy Boys novels, along with the adventurous,

picaresque, contrived, melodramatic works of Zane Grey, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and William Heyliger held the interest of boys, especially those who fantasized about their exploits on the gridiron, the diamond, the jungle, or the battlefield. For girls, the career and love sagas (although not necessarily in that order) of Emily Loring, (Sue Barton, girl nurse), Daphne du Maurier, Grace Livingston Hill, and Carolyn Keene (the Nancy Drew series) provided a wealth of entertaining books. In that pre-television era, such "light" reading preoccupied millions of young people in their search for escape from the world of homework and tedium. Escape yes, literary study no, in the eyes of classroom teachers, librarians, and teacher educators alike. For just about all of those professionals, a loosely defined set of "classics," largely written by Victorian era novelists and poets, served as objects of serious classroom study.

During the next three decades, however, a "new" kind of young adult novel began to emerge. Writers such as John R. Tunis, Paul Annixter, Fred Gipson, Esther Forbes, and Maureen Daly continued to include substantial doses of action, suspense, and adventure in their novels, but they also attempted to portray the world of the adolescent in a more realistic, self conscious manner. As Stephen Dunning said of *this* young adult novel, "It pretends to treat life truthfully." As the more credible young adult novel appeared on bookshelves everywhere, teachers, especially those in the junior high schools, began to consider their *teachable* aspects, as did the growing number of university faculty members who called themselves English Educators....

Since the young adult novel has developed more recently as a serious literary endeavor, it comes as no surprise that the representation of ostensibly unsavory characters and settings should emerge only after other types had been featured. Main and supporting characters in the novels of Tunis, Annixter, Daly, et. al. were from suburban, rural, or historical backgrounds. Thus one of Susan Hinton's significant achievements in The Outsiders is to hold up for scrutiny young people from economically, culturally, and socially deprived circumstances. In Ponyboy Curtis, his brothers Sodapop and Darry, and his "Greaser" companions, Hinton has introduced readers, most of whom have probably been from white, middle class origins, to the desires, the priorities, the frustrations, the preoccupations, and above all, the anger of those young people who may live in the seedier parts of town but who have established a code of behavior which reflects (to the dismay of some) their sense of dignity and self-worth. As developed by their author, there is little which has been considered contemptible, callous, or even objectionable about the Curtis brothers and most of their friends. Faced with poverty and limited opportunity, they maintain a certain determined optimism and aspiration for a better life. Most important, they believe in, trust, and support each other, all sentiments which can be universally admired despite the circumstances in which they are displayed. Hinton's novel is not "rigidly wholesome" nor "insistently didatic" as were many young adult works of preceding decades. It offers a number of complex human beings whose strengths and limitations are left to the readers themselves to infer and judge.

Breaking from the pattern of third person omniscient narrators which characterized the majority of earlier young adult novels, Hinton has presented her story from her protagonist's angle of vision. As with Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), wherein we

view the world from the perspective of the disturbed, vulnerable teenage Holden Caulfield. Hinton establishes the 14-year-old Ponyboy as both protagonist and narrator. It is through his eyes that readers view the events and analyze the individuals who make up this novel. His naiveté, lack of sophistication and commitment to an established lifestyle give the novel its tone. Amazingly, the author, a teenage female, has created a credible teenage male protagonist/narrator. In doing so, she has contributed significantly to the new realism of the contemporary young adult novel mentioned earlier.

In his 1958 study, Dunning pointed out that one of the major weaknesses of the young adult novels of that era was the authors'; unrealistic depiction of adults and their relationships with adolescents, especially their sons and daughters. Hinton has dealt with this problem quite decisively; she virtually excluded adults from the narrative. This is truly a novel of the teenager, by the teenager, and for the teenager. It is devoid of significant adult characters, and the few that are included serve the most perfunctory of purposes. Thus the focus here is on the young people, particularly the two rival gangs: the Greasers (Ponyboy's) and the Socs (a group of upper middle class individuals whose main goals in life seems to be to embrace hedonism and to wreak havoc on the Greasers, although not necessarily in that order. In *The Outsiders*, adults would only serve as a nuisance, and the author does not allow that to happen.

Hinton does provide an element of mature influence, however, in the person of Ponyboy's older brother, Darry. A reluctant school dropout, Darry has assumed the responsibility of parenting his two younger brothers in the face of the untimely, accidental death of their mother and father. At age 20, Darry has taken on an adult role and, given his Limited education and financial resources, does the best he can. It is through his character that readers perceive the fight for survival in an underclass situation. But Darry, perhaps more than the other Greasers, accepts his lot stoically and with dignity. He asks for neither material aid nor sympathy. To provide what is needed for family survival, he works longer hours and enforces house rules. In Darry, Hinton has added a note of prophecy to her story. As have countless young single parents of America's 1990s, he has become an adult before his time.

The theme of human fragility is given eloquent voice in *The Outsiders*. Violent confrontations with their rivals place the well-being of both gangs in constant jeopardy. The absence and indifference of

parents lead most of the Greasers to the conclusion that they must pretty well fend for themselves. Death and serious, sometimes disabling, injury are possibilities which the latter group faces as a matter of course. During an interlude in which Pony-boy is hiding out with his friend Johnny, a fugitive from the recent murder of a Soc, he recites Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" to his distracted friend. The poem has a profound impact on Johnny, who relates it to his own imperiled youth. Later, as he is on his deathbed, Johnny's last words are, "Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold...." In an environment, where the concern with survival is omnipresent, the joy and promise of youth are both perceived with irony by Ponyboy and his Greaser cohorts, a far cry from the idyllic teenage days described in so many novels written in the decades before Susan Hinton's

first literary effort. As teachers attempt to introduce their classes to a meaningful example of the ironic in literature, they may well look to *The Outsiders*.

The dour tone of *The Outsiders* prevails throughout although the novel is punctuated with examples of humor, selflessness, courage, and humanitarian acts. Despite their heroic quest for dignity and self-determination, both Darry and Ponyboy reflect an alienation from conventional middle class values largely through no fault or their own. Their contempt for the Socs and their lives of luxury, as well as their distrust of public institutions, particularly the law, may stamp them as undesirables in the eyes of some witnesses. It is an aspect of Susan Hinton's creative acumen that most thoughtful readers, both secondary school students and contributors to ALAN Review, do not demean these two young people for their attitudes toward middle class mores nor their stubborn adherence to the Greaser code of street-wise self reliance. Their alienation does not result in anti-social, serf-destructive behavior and their restrained optimism/hope for better days is made believable by the author's subtle portraiture. While there seems to be little hope for a privileged but emotionally disoriented Holden Caulfield at the end of *Catcher in the Rye*, Ponyboy and Darry exit the book with their heads held high and their eyes on the future In establishing, most convincingly, her characters' ability to cope, Hinton has led her readers to accept that positive outlook.

In one further stratagem Hinton has assisted the opening of new doors to her young adult novelist successors. The "life goes on" spirit reflected in the ending of *The Outsiders* stands in sharp contrast with the young adult novels of earlier decades.

All of the Horatio Alger-style books of the era before the 1940s included the Hollywood boy-gets-girl endings, which remain with us through endless TV dramatic offerings. Many of the well-written novels of the second phase described earlier were mixed, with the protagonist suffering some losses, usually minor, and some gains, usually crucial. As he leaves his readers, Ponyboy gives a few hints that he'll be okay, but there is no evidence that the quality of life, for either him or those around him, will improve to any degree, any time soon. "That's life" is what Susan Hinton seems to be saying in providing this ending to her book. Clearly, this perspective is consistent with the rest of the tale.

Undoubtedly, *The Outsiders* is, to a degree, a period piece, as indeed are the overwhelming majority of today's young adult novels. Paul Newman is probably a sex symbol only to the over-50 theater patrons. Other cigarette brands have replaced Kools among those widely smoked and advertised in this country. Affluent youngsters stopped wearing madras shirts long ago, and few, if any, 1990s teenagers are impressed by the Beatles or their hair style. Moreover, such words as "rumble," "chicken," "punkout," and "greasers" are terms long absent from teenage patois. The themes described above, however, are with us now and probably forever, and Susan Hinton has treated them with sensitivity. Thus, at least in this precinct, *The Outsiders* possesses a considerable dollop of literary merit. Yes, the book is still being read, taught, and discussed a quarter century after its publication. This is a solid reflection of its merit.

Source: John S Simmons, "A Look Inside A Landmark-*The Outsiders*" in Censored Books' Critical Viewpoints, edited by Nicholas J. Karokdes, Lee Burress, and John M. Kean, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993

Jay Daly

In this excerpt, Daly argues that The Outsiders is a revolutionary piece of young adult fiction which focuses on idealism rather than realism.

In April 1967 the Viking Press brought out a book called *The Outsiders*, by S. E. Hinton, and the world of young adult writing and publishing would never be the same. This is not an exaggeration. In more ways than one, *The Outsiders* has become the most successful, and the most emulated, young adult book of all time.

The situation was ripe, in the mid-sixties, for the arrival of something like *The Outsiders*, although no one knew it at the time. There had been a "young adult" genre for many years, dominated by books like Maureen Daly's Seventeenth Summer, dreamy-eyed stories of carefree youth where the major problem was whether so-and-so would ask our heroine to the prom in sufficient time for her to locate a prom gown. Or there were cautionary tales to warn us that, if we were not good, and we all know what "good" meant, we would never get to the prom at all.

Into this sterile chiffon-and-orchids environment then came *The Outsiders*. Nobody worries about the prom in *The Outsiders*; they're more concerned with just staying alive till June. They're also concerned with peer pressures, social status, abusive parents, and the ever-present threat of violence. What in the world was this? It certainly wasn't the same picture of the teenage wonder years that the "young adult" genre projected (and no one ever lived). Welcome to real life.

There is a perception now that *The Outsiders* was published to immediate teenage accolades, but such was not the case. In fact, because the book was so different from what the publishers considered "young adult" material, it was at first sent out with the general trade, or adult, releases, where it disappeared into the murk. It was only gradually, as the word from the hinterlands drifted in, that the publishers realized the book was finding its word-of-mouth fame among the very teenagers whose lives it depicted The rest, as they say, is history.

The grass-roots success of *The Outsiders* paved the way for writers like Paul Zindel, Richard Peck, M. E. Kerr, Paula Danziger, and Robert Cormier. It set off a wail of controversy from those who thought that there was enough real life in real life without also putting it into books. It caused many lesser writers to make the mistake of wandering off in search of the "formula" for her success, and it sent publishers scurrying off in search of other teenaged writer-oracles; everyone wanted a piece of "the next S. E. Hinton." In truth, of course, there is no formula, and it is not likely that there will be "another" S. E Hinton.

There are now perhaps ten million copies of Hinton books in print. *The Outsiders*, itself now twenty years old, no longer a teenager, continues to be the best selling of all Hinton' s books. Clearly there is more to this than the novelty of its publication in those pre-Hinton, Mary-Jane-Goes-to-the-Prom years. In fact there is something in The Outsiders, as there is in the other Hinton books, that transcends the restrictions of time and place, that speaks to the reader directly. It has nothing to do with the age of the author, and little to do with the so-called "realism" of the setting. It does, however, have very much to do with the characters she creates, their humanity, and it has everything to do with her honesty. Her characters are orphans and outlaws and, as the song says, "to live outside the law you must be honest." If there is a formula to S. E. Hinton books it is only this: to tell the truth.

There is also something that is quintessentially American about S. E. Hinton. Her books are all set in the real American heartland, the urban frontier, and her characters are American pilgrim-orphans, believers in the dream of perfection, of an American paradise on earth. Francis Ford Coppola, who filmed and cowrote, with Hinton, the screen versions of *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*, called her "a real American novelist," straight out of the tradition that runs from Herman Melville right up through J. D. Salinger, and beyond. The myth of the American hero, of the outlaw-individualist, of the "gallant," lives on in the eyes of Ponyboy Curtis and Johnny Cade.

None of this would matter, though, if it were not based on real characters. None of this would count if we did not believe that her books tell the truth, not so much about beer parties and gang fights, but about what it feels like to be a teenager, caught between childhood and adulthood, always on the outside looking in at a world that is very far from being a paradise on earth.

[Most of the controversy about *The Outsiders* came about because it] grew to be identified with something called "The New Realism" in young adult writing. The term—New Realism—was added later, but the fear—that books for teenagers were getting a little too realistic for their own good—-was beginning to be heard more and more frequently during the time after the publication of *The Outsiders*. Indeed there are many who fix the point at which young adult writing changed, and changed utterly—from the cautionary Mary-Jane-Goes-to-the-Prom book to the attempt at serious and authentic portrayal of life as it is—with the publication of *The Outsiders*. Such a radical change could not be expected to go unchallenged....

The irony is that, while the debate team focused on the gangs and the violence, the smoking and the beer drinking—all dreaded evidence of the New Realism—the major thrust of *The Outsiders* had nothing to do with realism at all. The real message of the book is its uncompromising idealism. The real reason the book struck such a responsive chord in its young readers (and continues to strike that chord) was that it captured so well the idealism of that time of life. Of all the young adult novels of that period, *The Outsiders* is by far the most idealistic, the least concerned with the strictly realistic. In its search for innocence, for heroes, for that Garden of Eden that seems to slip further away as youth fades into adulthood, *The Outsiders* is a book for dreamers, not realists. And youth is the time of dreamers.

On its surface at least, *The Outsiders* is indeed a novel about the friction between social classes, in this case between the greasers and the Socs. It is also about the hunger for status, for a place in the pecking order, both inside and outside these groups. And it is about the violence that is so much a part of that particular place and time of life. These concerns are not, however, what make the book come alive. The book comes to life through its characters and situations, their almost painful yearnings and loyalties, their honesty.... With all the talk of cliches and melodrama, why does this book continue to speak to new generations of young readers? Idealism alone, after all, is not enough. Nor is sincerity. Think of all the sincere, idealistic books in dustbins and yard sales around the country. The continuing popularity, the continuing interest derives, I think, from the fortunate combination of achievements by the young Susie Hinton in three essential categories: the hand of the storyteller....; the continuing credibility of the characters; and the honesty, the sincerity... embodied in the themes of the book, each of which reduces, finally, to the yearning to "stay gold."

The orphans of *The Outsiders* are outlaws and dreamers. They're like "that tragic boy," Peter Pan, in J. M. Barrie's turn-of-the-century play. The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up. Peter Pan, and his group of orphans, the lost boys, rejected by their parents, make their own world of heroics and adventure. They have their own Never Land, where they belong. Wendy, like Cherry with her busy-ness, cannot prevent herself from changing, until she suddenly turns around to discover that she is "old, Peter. I am ever so much more than twenty." Peter Pan, on the other hand, stays pure; he never grows up. He stays gold.

Likewise do the lost boys in *The Outsiders* form their own, more perfect world in the world of the gang. They dream of the perfection they know must exist, their Never Land, that perhaps they even once had and lost, where things are gold, where Johnny Cade can find his "ordinary people," where Ponyboy's parents remain golden and young. The striking thing about these orphans is that they use it to their advantage; they are dreamers and they use their abandonment to feed their dreams. Life intervenes, of course, and their dreams will never come true, but that's only because they have such high standards. They want perfection. Like Peter Pan, they want to stay gold forever.

Ponyboy recites [the Robert Frost poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay"] for Johnny.... The poem captures a feeling that is important to Ponyboy, though he's not sure of all of it. "He meant more to it than I'm gettin," he says, "I always remembered it because I never quite got what he meant by it." Ponyboy, who has the capacity to be a little slow when it serves to advance the story, needs Johnny to validate the poem for him, in his letter at the end of the book. "[H]e meant you're gold when you're a kid, like green. When you're a kid everything's new, dawn. It's just when you get used to everything that it's day." The only way to stay gold, then, is to stay a kid, or at least to retain that childlike wonder, that innocence, which continues to make the world new. The key to staying gold then, in Johnny's view, is to stay, like Peter Pan, a child.

If this is indeed the case, then it creates problems. To stay at a Peter Pan level of innocence is to be retarded (in all senses of the word). All of us are in fact more like Wendy than like Peter; we lose gradually that limber quality of youth, the idealism and

innocence, the ability, so to speak, to fly. To the extent that we retain some of this capacity we are blessed, but to retain it fully is impossible. Not just because "nothing gold can stay," but also because it would be unnatural to do so. Innocence cannot escape coming to terms with life, which does not necessarily mean being corrupted. The opposite of innocence is—not corruption, of course— but knowledge.

Worse yet, innocence/youth/idealism earned to such extremes is not innocence/youth/idealism at all. It is usually a more selfish, and sometimes dangerous, thing. Look at Ponyboy's selfish attitude toward Darry early in the book. This is an attitude that is innocent of the most elementary awareness of another human being. When he sees Darry cry, and feels his hurting inside, it is suddenly a loss of innocence, a falling into knowledge of the real world, but it's a far better condition he falls into than that he left behind.

It is no accident that those literary heroes who stay gold, who retain their innocence unnaturally, lead lives whose effect upon others is often far from innocent. There is something inhuman about them.

Think of Melville's Billy Budd, or Lennie in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. Their very innocence tends to lead them always toward, in Lennie's words, "another bad thing." It's as if they can't help but hurt people in the end. J. M. Barrie, once again, at the end of Peter and Wendy, describes his creation Peter, who would not grow up, as forever "young and innocent," but then he also adds, "And heartless."

The Frost poem is in fact not so much about the fleeting nature of youth, or even life, as it is about the Fall. Notice those repeating verbs, "subside ... sank .. goes down." The loss of Eden, of that state of perfection of which the "gold" of the poem is but a cruel reminder, this is the real knowledge in the poem, as it is in *The Outsiders*. When Ponyboy remembers his parents, it is always in a kind of misty Garden of Eden setting ... It's been only eight months since they died, but already they seem to have entered into a golden mythology. The book's idealism invents that place "in the country" of sunsets and ordinary people, but in fact—after the Fall-—such a place cannot exist, not in this life.

Which brings us to the one way of staying gold that works. It is the only way of achieving the perfection that was promised. It involves memory, and the shifting of emphasis in Frost's last line from "gold" to "stay." Nothing gold can stay. Rather than agree that Ponyboy's image of perfection cannot exist in this world, the book agrees only that it cannot stay here. By dying Johnny stays gold in a way he could never have achieved in life. Even Dally becomes a gallant in death, frozen in time forever under the streetlights of the park like a carved figure from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Most of all, Ponyboy's parents stay perfect parents in a world sadly lacking in parental perfection. They will be young and golden and love him always. His mother in particular remains "beautiful and golden," perfect in a way she could not have remained in life. It is an irony that only by abandoning him could she become for him that symbol of perfection that Ponyboy, and all the others, so desperately need. In the words of the

Keats poem: "She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss, / For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!"

In the pages of *The Outsiders*, and in Ponyboy's memory, she remains, as the song goes, forever young. She stays gold. It's a cruel sort of perfection, but for the idealistic heroes of all the Hinton books (up until *Tex*), who prize perfection so highly, it's the only kind of Paradise they know.

Source: Jay Daly, in his *Presenting S. B. Hinton*, Twayne Publishers, 1987, 128 p.

Adaptations

The Outsiders was made into a film starring C. Thomas Howell, Matt Dillon, Ralph Macchio, Patrick Swayze, Rob Lowe, Diane Lane, Tom Cruise, and Emilio Estevez. The 1983 Warner Brothers film, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, was a huge success and remains a popular film.

Fox-TV adapted the novel as a television series in 1990.

The Outsiders was also made into a filmstrip with cassette in 1978 by Current Affairs/Mark Twain Media, and as an audiocassette for Random House, 1993

Topics for Further Study

Reflect on the significance of the title—who are *the outsiders*, and what are they outside of? What does it mean to be an outsider and why has this become a twentieth-century phenomenon? Support your arguments with examples from recent history.

There are two famous novels with similar titles to Hinton's story. Both concern young men, circumstantial murder(s), and existentialism (the philosophy that the individual is solely responsible for his fate). The two novels are Richard Wright's The Outsider and Albert Camus's The Stranger (published in England as The Outsider). Compare Hinton's novel with one of these other "outsider" stories.

Many people deny that social or economic class plays a significant role in American society or government. Using examples from this novel and other teenage books or films (such as *The Breakfast Club* and *Pretty In Pink* through the recent *Clueless*), argue whether you think this is true or false.

Compare and contrast *The Outsiders* with another story of gangs, such as *Boys in the Hood* or *West Side Story* Compare specific events, characters, and themes.

Juvenile crime and "youth predators" have become an obsessive political issue over the last decade. Are youth today really more violent than twenty or thirty years ago? Do some research into the phenomenon of youth violence and some of the following topics: trying youths as young as twelve as adults; incarcerating teens with adults; and increasing security at school versus increasing education spending increases. Good sources to start with are the National Center for Juvenile Justice (http://www.ncjj.org) and the Center on Juvenile Justice and Criminal Justice (http://www.cjcj.org).

Compare and Contrast

1967: Romanticized movies of teen rebellion give way to upbeat musicals extolling a life of beach parties, fast cars, and teen relationships.

1990s One of the most popular genres for teens is the horror movie, in which a group of teens is pitted against a homicidal maniac. The 1996 film Scream becomes one of the top grossing releases of the year, earning over $100 million in box office receipts

1967: The Beatles lead the "British Invasion" of American music as they dominate the pop charts. Their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* uses several experimental recording techniques and influences countless pop and rock artists.

1990s: Popular music has broken down into countless genres, with no one type dominating the market. Rap, "alternative," rhythm and blues, pop, rock, and movie soundtrack albums all reach number one at various times during the decade.

1967: Dropout rates show a sharp increase, and by the late 1960s over 7.5 million students have left high school before graduating. In 1967, 15 percent of white students are dropouts, as opposed to almost 30 percent of black students (Hispanic rates were not recorded at this time).

1990s: In 1996, the overall dropout rate remains steady at five percent, or about 500,000 students yearly. Dropout rates for both black and white students have decreased, to 6.7 and 4.1 percent respectively; the Hispanic dropout rate remains higher, at 9 percent. Low income students have the highest dropout rate of any group: 11.1 percent.

1967: In an America torn by political protest, race riots, and growing recreational drug use, teenage gangs seem a minor menace in comparison. Schools are relatively safe, as violent confrontations most often occur between gangs outside of school property.

1990s: Teenage gang violence is an increasing problem for both urban and rural communities. Gang violence often erupts inside schools and sometimes involves innocent bystanders. Easy access to drugs and guns leads to deaths inside school buildings and on school grounds.

1967: The People's Republic of China explodes its first hydrogen bomb, raising U.S. concerns and Soviet fears of another contender in the nuclear arms race.

1990s: A clear sign that nonproliferation treaties have failed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, in 1998 first India and then Pakistan conduct nuclear tests and declare themselves nuclear states.

The year 1967 featured many notable protests. University of Wisconsin students destroyed university property while running recruiters from Dow Chemical (the makers of the defoliant napalm) off campus. The week of April 15 saw anti-war demonstrations

in New York and San Francisco bring out 100,000 and 20,000 people respectively. A protest at the Pentagon led to arrests of several notable people, including poet Allen Ginsberg and pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., proposed a merging of the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement. He declared the U.S. government "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world."

Race Relations in the 1960s

Although all of the "greaser" characters in *The Outsiders* are white, the prejudice they endure recalls that suffered by African Americans and other nonwhites during the same era. Several laws and court decisions of the late 1950s and early 1960s had outlawed public segregation. Nevertheless, discrimination was still part of daily life for many blacks in the 1960s. In some southern cities, public school integration had to be enforced by federal troops. Black students who attended previously all-white schools often faced ridicule and even physical abuse from their classmates. (This calls to mind how Ponyboy is called a "hood" by his lab partner when he uses a switchblade to dissect a worm in biology class.)

Despite the political gains made by the civil rights movement, practical gains for African Americans lagged far behind. According to census statistics of the 1960s, almost one-half of non-white households were below the poverty line, compared to one-fifth of white households. Unemployment rates among nonwhites were more than double that of whites, at 7.3 percent. "White flight" occurred as white middle-class families moved from the city to the suburbs. As a result, many companies and stores moved out of the cities as well, leading to a decline in investment in infrastructure. The poor families left behind, both black and white, often ended up with poorer schools, fewer government resources, and decaying neighborhoods. Thus, while political segregation was outlawed, economic segregation was still in place.

Race riots sometimes erupted in these impoverished neighborhoods, often provoked by incidents of police brutality. The most devastating of these incidents was the Watts riot that took place over six days in 1965. The Los Angeles police required the assistance of the California National Guard to halt this disturbance, which left thirty-four dead, thousands injured, and over forty million dollars of property damage. In 1967, race riots erupted in several U.S. cities, leaving eighty-three dead and several hundred injured. These riots were different from the "rumbles" portrayed in *The Outsiders*, which are essentially conflicts between rival gangs. These race riots of the 1960s, on the other hand, usually began as conflicts between white police and black residents. As the conflict grew, rioters targeted innocent bystanders and property as well. Shops were looted and burned, even those owned by black families living in the neighborhoods. One result of these riots was the Anti-Riot Act, which was added to the Civil Rights Bill of 1968.

What Do I Read Next?

Hinton's second book, *That Was Then, This Is Now*, was published in 1971 after she overcame a serious writing block. The story concerns two foster brothers moving in opposite directions: one becomes successful with school and girls while the other falls into drugs and crime.

Hinton's 1975 novel *Rumble Fish* continues to deal with youths and gangs. In this story, Rusty James struggles to earn a tough reputation.

The 1979 work *Tex* is Hinton's most seamless novel. The story is set in California, where a traveling father has left his two sons in each other's care. As with her other stories, this one is action-packed.

The classic *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D Salinger (1951) relates two days in the life of an idealistic boy after his expulsion from school. Holden Caufield's disillusionment with the world is more profound than Ponyboy's, but comparable

A novel by Pulitzer-Prize winner Paul Zindel, 1969's *The Pigman* is about two sophomores who are outsiders in their own community. John and Lorraine pass the time by pulling pranks. It is during one of these pranks that they meet the "pigman" and are led to betray the friendship they have created.

For a real change of pace, a story where the "outsider" takes her revenge is Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974). It is a brilliant book of horror set in the tense world of adolescent rivalry.

Topics for Discussion

1. Dallas Winston is an ambiguous character, romantic and independent, in some ways repugnant. He can be cruel and dangerous, but he loves Johnny, the gentlest boy in the gang. What makes Ponyboy admire Dally? Is Dally redeemed by his love and concern for Johnny? Does his suicide alter the way the reader thinks of him?

2. Discuss the various attitudes towards fighting found in The Outsiders. Which attitudes do you agree with? Which do you disagree with? Is violence ever justified?

3. One criticism of The Outsiders is its less-than-realistic language. Euphemisms such as "Glory!" are used in place of more likely, but more controversial expressions. In other scenes there are blanks where a curse would have been. Why does Hinton do this? Does it detract from the story or make it less believable? Why or why not?

4. What do you imagine Ponyboy doing in ten years? What about Sodapop, Darry, Two-Bit, Curly Shepard, Tim Shepard, Cherry, and Randy?

5. Imagine that you are a "greasey girl." Can you identify with Ponyboy's story? Do his complaints apply to you? Do you have any other problems that he would not be aware of?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Retell the story from the point of view of the Socs. What is the title of this new book? Are the Socs "the insiders," or are they outcasts, too?

2. Write a research paper on presentday gang life. Does the information you find remind you of Ponyboy's gang? Does it remind you of Tim Shepard's gang or the gang from Brumly? Considering that The Outsiders is set in the 1960s, how realistic do you think Hinton's portrayal of gang life is?

3. Write a paper about child abuse. What options are available for young people in Johnny's situation? Are Johnny's reactions and feelings typical of an abused child?

4. Who is your favorite character in this book? Why? Who is your least favorite character? Why? Which character in this book is most like you? Why?

5. Read some of the criticism written on The Outsiders. Do any of the critics mention ideas that you overlooked? What points do you agree with and disagree with in particular critics' assessments?

6. Many readers are surprised when they learn that S. E. Hinton is a woman. Why do you think this is so? What does this say about the book's content? What does it say about gender roles and conceptions about male and female behavior in your country?

7. Discuss the way adults are portrayed as a group and as individuals in The Outsiders.

8. Is there any one character in The Outsiders who can be called a villain? Who are some candidates for the title? In what ways do they fit the title and in what ways do they not?

Literary Precedents

The primary American novel of a youth maturing must be The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (1884). Huck's attempt to view the values and rules of the adult world lead to his own realizations. But more immediate as a precedent for The Outsiders is J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye (1951). The first-person narrative told by a teenage narrator who is trying to mature and come to terms with himself and the world reminds one of Hinton. The speech rhythms of a teenager were also noted by the critics in this novel. A neglected but sure precedent is also found in West Side Story. This story of teen-age rival gangs in New York who cannot find sense in the adult world, who achieve their status within the gang, and who come to a bette r understanding of each other at the end is similar to Hinton's themes. In addition, the poeticized telling of the story through music and dance in West Side Story brings to mind Hinton's use of literary allusions by Ponyboy in The Outsiders. The novels of Henry James and Joseph Conrad also are precedents in their use of the enveloping technique and a utilization of specialized narrators.

Although some have attempted to compare her style to that of American novelist Ernest Hemingway, this is clearly not the case. While the narrators of many of Hemingway's novels do have a tough, lean prose style in a first-person narration, they are clearly not the literary antecedents to the young, naive narrators who ask the unsophisticated questions in Hinton's works. Hemingway's narrators have a complex wounded psychology, which is different from the inner simplicity of Hinton's heroes, and Hemingway forces his first-person narrators into a specialized relationship of familiarity with the readers that Hinton's narrators do not attempt and do not want.

Further Study

David Ansen, "*Coppola Courts the Kiddies*," *Newsweek*, April 4, 1983, p 74.

A review, mostly negative in tone, of Francis Ford Coppola's film version of *The Outsiders*

Children's Literature Review, Volume 23, Gale, 1991, pp. 132-50.

A collection of interviews, articles, and reviews on Hinton and her works

Nicholas Emler and Stephen Reicher, *Adolescence and Delinquency The Collective Management of Reputation*, Blackwell, 1995.

After examining the theoretical perspectives on juvenile delinquency by sociology and psychology and dismissing them as based on nineteenth-century thinking, Emler and Reicher ask questions about the context of delinquent behavior in terms of social dynamics. Their questioning leads them to an analysis of identity construction as pursuit or avoidance of delinquent behavior. Finally, they offer solutions through a notion of "reputation management"

Stephen Farber, "*Directors Join the S E Hinton Fan Club*," *New York Times*, March 20, 1983, Section 2, Page 19, Column 2.

An article which tries to account for the sudden appeal of Hinton's books as sources for movie ideas, including quotes from Francis Ford Coppola and Hinton herself.

Randall K. Mills, "*The Novels of S E Hinton Springboard to Personal Growth for Adolescents*," in Adolescence, Vol XXH, No. 87, Fall, 1987, pp 641-46.

An article which examines how teachers may use Hinton's novels to help students explore issues of personal growth.

Wayne S. Wooden, Renegade Kids, *Suburban Outlaws From Youth Culture to Delinquency* (The Wadsworth Contemporary Issues in Crime and Justice), Wadsworth Publishing/TCP, 1994.

Wooden's book is full of qualitative research into youth culture and teen social groups of suburban Los Angeles and it is very accessible to students interested in sociology He investigates everything from "mall rats" to violent "gangbangers" and skinheads to try to understand what makes "good kids" turn "renegade "

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Alethea K. Helbig and Agnes Regan Perkins, "*The Outsiders*," in their *Dictionary of American Children's Fiction*, 1960-1984- Recent Books of Recognized Merit, *Greenwood Press*, 1986, pp. 495-96

Nat Hentoff, a review of *The Outsiders*, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1967, pp. 401-402.

Susan Eloise Hinton, "*Teen Agers Are for Real*," *New York Times Book Review*, August, 1967, pp. 26-29.

William Jay Jacobs, "*Reading the Unreached*," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 69, No. 2, November, 1967, pp. 201-202.

Michele Landsberg, "*Growing Up*," in her *Reading for the Love of It*; *Best Books for Young Readers*, *Prentice Hall Press*, 1987, pp 201-28

Michael Malone, "*Tough Puppies*," in the Nation, Vol. 242, No. 9, March 8, 1986, pp. 276-78, 280.

Review of *The Outsiders*, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, October 30, 1970, p. 1258

Cynthia Rose, "*Rebels Redux: The Fiction of S. E. Hinton*," in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol. 50, No 596, September, 1983, pp. 238-39

John S. Simmons, "*A Look Inside A Landmark. The Outsiders*," in *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints*, edited by Nicholas J. Karolides, Lee Burress, and John in Kean, *The Scarecrow Press, Inc*., 1993

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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