

Tex Study Guide

Tex by S. E. Hinton

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Plot Summary

Tex is the aimless, trouble-prone, and eponymous protagonist of the novel. He lives with his 17-year-old brother, Mason, who caters to their everyday needs in the absence of the brothers' father and their deceased mother. The father has preferred going on a 5-month rodeo circuit tour over his natural responsibilities as a parent. He sometimes sends money, but he forgets to do so during the timeframe covered by the novel. Mason is an ultra-popular basketball player whose goal is to leave the small, poor town he grew up in and pursue a college education. Unfortunately, Mason has been thrust into his parental position by virtue of circumstances and his older age. Enjoying the simple things, 14-year-old Tex leads an easygoing, carefree and happy teenage life. He enjoys riding his horse Negritto and daydreams about his friend Johnny's cute sister, Jamie. Throughout the novel, the two boys' lives are turned upside down.

Against this situational backdrop, the novel opens with a description of a routine day for Tex. Heading home after school, he finds out that his brother has sold his favorite horse, Negritto, as well as his own, Red, to pay the gas bill and make ends meet. When Tex finds out, a fight ensues between the brothers, leaving a bruise above the protagonist's right eye. Tex then darts off to look for the horses and runs into his friends, Jamie and Johnny Collins. As the Collins express their shock at the bruise and scar, Mason appears in the truck ordering his brother to get in.

Thwarted in the pursuit of his dreams, Mason is tired of the over-burdening responsibilities set on his young shoulders. Bob Collins, Mason's friend, goes to see the brothers, and tells Mason Tex did not deserve the punch, but it should have been directed at their father. Bob then takes Tex and Johnny to the county fair. When the outing is over, the boys visit Charlie Collins, Johnny's older brother, who is having a party. Johnny and Tex accidentally get drunk for the first time.

The following morning, the Collins' father, Cole, finds all four passed out and sets the blame on Mason and Tex, who he believes are negatively influencing his children. Later that day, Mason's drug-dealer friend Lem Peters pops up and announces he is a father for the first time. They sneak over to the Collins' to share the news, where Jamie and Mason tell Lem he and his wife are not ready for parenting.

The novel comes to one of its climaxes when Mason discovers he has an ulcer. On waiting for test results from the city hospital, Mason and Tex decide to pay Lem and his small family a visit. There, they find out about his drug dealing. On their way back, tragedy strikes when they pick up a hitchhiker who aims a gun toward them and makes Tex drive to the State line. When a patrol car follows, Tex saves his and Mason's life. Thanks to his presence of mind, he manages to drive the truck into a ditch. The hitchhiker eventually dies in a shootout with the cops.

The notoriety is seen by their father, Pop, on the news. He calls and tells them he'll be coming home the following morning. Soon after he arrives, he gets into a fight with his eldest son. Pop also promises to get Negritto back for Tex, but it's Mason who



eventually ends up making the unsuccessful trip. Tex tells Mason he will hate him forever.

After attending a basketball game in which Mason is injured, Tex takes his romance to another level with Jamie in the truck after he punches a guy who insulted her. Tex wishes to push it a bit too far but Jamie refuses, leading to their breakup. Tex and Johnny are frequently getting into trouble, often fighting with each other. Both are suspended from school for gluing caps onto the letters of typewriters. Pop deals with the matter rather lightly, prompting Mason to reveal Pop is not Tex's biological father.

Surprised, Tex runs out of the school and ends up coming across Lem, and subsequently he accompanies him on a drug-selling errand. He ends up in the hospital after he is shot by Lem's customer and runs over the aggressor, amputating his arm. Tex calls Jamie and tells her where he is, and faints directly afterwards. When he regains consciousness, Mason tells him he beat up Lem, and Pop gives Tex details of his birth. Tex finds out that he was born as the result of an affair his mother had while Pop was in prison. Tex later grabs Jamie and kisses her when she briefs him of what happened when he was away. The novel ends happily with Tex sorting out his life and relationship with his brother. In the end, Mason is set to leave for college while Tex finds a job working with the horses he adores.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1. The setting for the chapter is a fall morning where Tex's day is routinely starting. Before heading to school, he rides his favorite horse, Negritto. At school, he meets his best friend, Johnny Collins, with whom he had had a lot of fun riding a motorbike over the summer. Tex reveals he strongly wishes to go back home and ride Negritto. Upon his return home, he finds a grumpy Mason sitting at the kitchen table, not tending to his usual athletic practice. Mason, or "Mace," is an all-star on the town's basketball team. After the brothers engage in a heated discussion, Tex, to his dismay, finds out the horses have been sold to pay for the gas and other needs. A brawl ensues, resulting in Mason bruising Tex's right eye. Running out of the house, Tex meets Jamie and Johnny Collins. Mason eventually finds him and orders him to get into the truck.

Chapter 2. The mood is still tense between the two brothers, but there is calm after Mason tends to his brother's wound. Mason tells his brother he will be missing the country fair this year. The discussion then turns to their father, Pop. Mason believes he will never come back, but Tex disagrees, betting he will be back by Thanksgiving.

Tex gets permission to go to the fair with Johnny. Bob, the Johnny's older brother, drives them to the city, which is 20 miles away. There, the boys meet Jamie and her friend. Tex does not let Jamie pay for anything and they all enjoy the rides. Bob picks the boys up later and takes them to Charlie's place. The boys unexpectedly get drunk at the elder Collins' place.

Analysis

The first two chapters of the novel establish the setting, tone and mood. The rural physical environment is the background for simultaneously uncovering the main characters. Through the narratives and descriptions readers get to know Tex, his outlook on life, and his worldview. Tex seems to lead a relatively simple life, starting his day with horseback riding and then heading off to school. From the first chapter, one understands Tex is not concerned much with school, impatiently hoping to end his day and reunite with Negritto to enjoy some riding. Tex is disappointed when he gets back home to find out his beloved animal friend has been sold by his more responsible brother. The two fictional constructs are subtly juxtaposed to prove one has to make crucial and oft-times painful decisions when initiated into the more responsible life of adulthood.

The reader also finds out about the abandonment of the siblings by their father – a harsh reality coupled with the death of their mother from pneumonia. Fending for themselves, they start reaching the conclusion they are on their own and Mason takes it to another level thinking their father may never come back. This is symbolic, as the



younger McCormick does not come to terms with this probability, betting his brother their father will come back by Thanksgiving. Mason, on the other hand, has attained a higher degree of maturity hinting at the harsh reality that lies ahead: their irresponsible father, who has failed to send them money once again, is out of their lives. Even if he does come back, life will not be the same after these hardships.

Mason actually plays the role of Tex's father, taking on responsibilities and giving Tex permission to go to the fair with the Collins'. There, Tex goes through some of his last experiences as an irresponsible fun-loving kid, enjoying the rides and flirting with Jamie. He also shows his country boy values when he does not let Jamie pay for her rides. Tex then encounters the other side of city life at Charlie Collins' place, when he is first introduced to alcohol and ends up drunk.

Vocabulary

shattered, assault, brooding, compensate, vague, paralyzed



Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3. The next day, Tex and company are hung-over and are awakened by Cole Collins banging on the door. Cole ends up blaming his boys' drunkenness on Tex and Mason. He tells the group he does not want the brothers around his sons anymore. After this incident, Lem Peters, Mason's old friend who got married in the city, informs the brothers he has just recently become a father of a baby boy. The three then sneak into the Collins' house and share the news with them. Tex takes advantage of the opportunity to sneak into Jamie's room, where her father almost catches him.

Chapter 4. Tex and Johnny are on the bus heading for school after Cole punished his son by taking the motorbike away for a week because of the drinking incident. Tex gets into trouble a lot, once setting an art project on fire. He tells the reader about the gym teacher's desire to make him the next family all-star. Miss Carlson, Tex's English teacher, helps him find books he might enjoy. He has had some success with this teacher after he wrote a report on Smoky The Cowhorse she approved. Johnny and Tex have a fight over a minor issue and stop speaking to each other until Jamie threatens not to speak to Tex until he and Johnny reconcile.

Analysis

The next morning, Cole, the Collins' father is introduced. With the Collins being far richer than the McCormicks and parent-wise, the reader is then introduced to the theme of social class differences. Blaming the whole drinking incident on the McCormicks, Cole reveals he does not think the two brothers should be friendly with his children because of their poor background and bad influence. When the brothers meet Lem, they are informed he is a new father. Once Mason's good friend, Lem is still young and on many occasions is referred to as someone who is not ready for fatherhood. This is yet another case where the city, where Lem lives, has negatively affected the lives of country boys, like Lem.

The kids are back on the bus, paying the price for the city incident by Cole's confiscating the motorbike. Tex continues with his 'fun' pranks at school, once setting an art project on fire. He is shunning any type of responsibility when he tells Johnny he does not want to be the next Mason, despite his gym coach's insistence. Tex is also proof of the adage stating when you are passionate about a subject, you can deliver on assignments. When writing a report on Smoky the old Cowhorse, his productivity is praised by his teacher, who helps him look for a similar novel. Jamie also reveals her power over Tex when she stops talking to him until he reconciles with her brother Johnny. Tex acquiesces to her subtle manipulation.



Vocabulary

hassle, grimy, queasily, dire, griping, reluctantly



Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5. Mason and Tex head to the city on a Saturday morning for the former's medical tests. Tex is worried by the thought of losing his brother, as a real parent would be. To avoid this preoccupation, Mason sends Tex out for a few hours with the truck. Stopping at a shopping center, Tex embarrasses himself with a sales clerk he finds attractive. He then goes to an outdoor gear shop where he finds a fishing lure he wishes to purchase.

Chapter 6. On their way back to town, the brothers visit Lem. They meet the small family and see his new baby. Lem takes them around in his new car, prompting Mason to ask what he is doing now. Lem admits to being a drug dealer to Mason's disapproval. The brothers leave and Tex is saddened because he knows he may never see Lem again. On their way back, Tex decides to pick up a hitchhiker to forget about the incident with Lem. The hitchhiker takes out a gun and points it at them, ordering Tex to keep driving until the state line. Through various monologues, the reader understands Tex's thought process. Keeping his cool, he sees police officers are following them and drives the truck into a ditch. The incident ends up with the death of the hitchhiker after a shootout with the cops.

Analysis

Tex finds out his brother is ill and realizes the consequences of the illness may lead to abandonment once again. Preoccupied with this, Tex goes out to discover the city, while his brother awaits test results at the hospital. There, he realizes again he does not belong in such an environment, getting embarrassed with a cute clerk and getting in trouble at the outdoor gear shop. By the time he has to go, he is relieved to go back into his own environment.

The visit to Lem's goes sour as the McCormicks find out about his drug-dealing. Mason sticks to his principles and it seems as if they will never see Lem again. On their way back, they try to release their anger and dissatisfaction by picking up a hitchhiker. Far away from home, everything tends to go wrong, as again the two are faced with the results of a hasty, bad decision. With a gun pointed at them, Tex shows signs of maturity by taking the initiative and driving the truck into a ditch. This act saves the brothers' lives and enables the police to kill the hitchhiker. Tex lives to see another day as he matures during his initiation to the external world's dangers.

Vocabulary

fidget, ulcer, wrench, obvious, dramatic, monologue



Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7. Tex calls Johnny and tells him to watch their escapade on the news, as the broadcast events cover 4 states. The brothers smoke marijuana after they are harassed by phone calls. The event has had such a traumatic event on Mason that he no longer bothers to stay “clean”. The brothers joke about Lem’s imagined reaction to Mason smoke Marijuana. When they return inside, they replace the receiver back on the phone and as they are heading to bed, hear the phone ring again. This time, it is their father, Pop, who tells them he will be coming home the next day. When he arrives, he gets into a fight with Mason and promises to get Negritto back for Tex’s birthday. Mason ends up going for the horse himself and failing to persuade the new owner to sell the horse back. Tex hates his brother for the failure.

Chapter 8. Tex’s internal dialogue reveals seeing his beloved horse again made things even harder on him. He sees Jamie, who he is going out with, as his safe haven. During a basketball game, where Mason gets hurt, a stranger insults Jamie. Tex defends her and causes a huge riot at the game. Tex and Jamie end up in a truck. They have been trying hard to keep the relationship from everyone, especially Cole, Jamie’s father, as he would never approve of his daughter’s relationship with Tex. Jamie opens up about her family and how Cole is disappointed Blackie did not go into sports like Mason. She tells Tex her father would have loved to have had Mason as a son, to which he disagrees. Jamie supports her idea by mentioning Mason at least has his life together, unlike Blackie. Tex tries to take it a bit further but fails after Jamie refuses intimacy. The two end up separating.

Analysis

The brothers get their well-deserved moments of fame on in and out-of-state TV channels, prompting their father to head back home. Mistaking Tex’s birthday, Pop proves he does not care much about his “son,” especially when he fails to fulfill his promise of getting Negritto back. Once again, Mason has to step up and get the horse back, but he fails, evoking Tex’s rage. Mason ends up paying for the price of selling the horses twice, despite the fact he had no other choice. Tex and Jamie’s relationship develops after Mason’s basketball game. However, Tex comes to the realization love is not that simple when Jamie refuses to go any further despite his advances. These events lead to their relationship’s dissolution.

Vocabulary

drawl, dubious, calloused, Uranium, frenzied, awe, ambidextrous



Chapters 9-10

Summary

Chapter 9. Tex and Johnny get into trouble at school right before mid-terms. They break in and glue exploding caps on the typewriters thinking they would not be caught. They also assumed in the worst case scenario, they would have to put up with a lecture in the principal's office. Johnny reminds Tex if they are asked to bring in their parents, he has Cole. Then they start talking about Mason, who has received three sports scholarships. Tex adds despite getting these scholarships, Mason does not seem to be upbeat. The prank eventually gets both boys suspended. Pop deals with the whole situation somewhat lightly, prompting Mason to blurt out it is only natural he would react that way, since Tex is not his biological son. Stunned, Tex runs out of the school.

Chapter 10. As soon as a car pulls up next to him, a desperate Tex jumps in and realizes the driver is Lem. Lem offers to drive Tex where he is going, but Tex tells him he is going wherever Lem is going. Lem is on a drug delivery and should go into the city after that. Lem is stoned and drives slowly to his destination while opening up on his relationship with Mason. The errand Lem is running turns sour when the customer shoots Tex after he tries to leave. He later tells Lem he was shot and calls Jamie to inform her of his whereabouts before passing out.

Analysis

These two chapters provide the main climax of the novel when Tex realizes he was very close to being expelled from school after a stupid stunt. The situation calls for a fatherly presence, but faithful to the image the reader has built, Pop fails to step up in correcting his "son's" wrongs. Enraged and tired, Mason unconsciously blurts out the family secret, revealing Tex has indeed been abandoned by both his biological father and Pop. Devastated, Tex is in denial, rapidly running out. Hinton's perfectly created fictional world thrusts Tex into Lem's hands. After he is shot, Tex experiences one of the most difficult challenges in life: that of fighting death. He comes out bruised and battered from the incident, with only the strength to call Jamie and passing out.

Vocabulary

prodding, skeptically, disrupt, wry, emphasize, enraged



Chapters 11-12

Summary

Chapter 11. Tex wakes up in the hospital in the presence of Mason. Mason assaulted Lem and also got himself hurt. Still dazed, Tex sees the bandage on Mason's head and does not understand why he fought Lem. He asks about Jamie and when he could see her but is told only immediate family members are allowed to visit. He wakes up in more pain a bit later and is subject to an investigation about the incident. Tex answers questions as Lem asked him to and stated the disagreement was about money. Once he hears that, the cop seems to be disinterested. Later on, he talks with Pop, who tells him details about his past. He informs Tex his mother had an affair with another guy when he was in prison.

Chapter 12. Once home, Tex receives a letter from Lem, who apologizes about the shooting incident and asks him to keep his whereabouts a secret. Tex does not tell Mason about the letter. Mason thinks Tex is going hunting, because he sees him cleaning his rifle in the kitchen. Tex informs him he is going for a walk and will be taking the rifle with him but he has no intention of using it. He has decided never to shoot anything after having been on the receiving end of a bullet. Tex has secured a summer job working with horses he loves. Mason is getting his chance to pursue his basketball dream at college. The two brothers have reconciled.

Analysis

These two chapters bring the novel to an end. Mason gets his revenge from Lem, who fought back hurting him in the process. Tex only brings himself to ask about Jamie who he sees a bit later. He exhibits his country values when he covers up for Lem during the police investigation. He shows he is not the kind who forgets good times and companionship, proving he has succeeded in his challenges by not losing himself despite the heavy costs.

Tex finally knows who he is at the end of the novel. His identity is ironically revealed to him by the person he thought was his father. Finding out about his mother's lover, he reconciles with his past. Lem also sends him a letter apologizing for the mishap. As everything turns full circle, Tex decides never to use a gun again after having been on the wrong side of it. Most importantly, he reconciles with his brother, acknowledging the heavy burden he has endured. Tex is maturing when he accepts the fact his brother has to leave to pursue his dreams of becoming a collegiate basketball player. As for him, he is staying in the countryside where he was brought up in an attempt to become a responsible young man. The bonus for him is during that summer, he will be working with the animals he loves best: horses.

Vocabulary

regretted, grudgingly, defiant, blubbering, exert, desperation



Characters

Tex McCormick

Tex is the fifteen year-old protagonist of the novel. He has brown hair, a scar over his right eye, and a chipped tooth. He loves horses, has a carefree attitude and occasionally gets into trouble. He is innocent, sweet and referred to as Bambi by another character. His best friend is Johnny Collins and his bigger brother is Mason. His heroics save his and his brothers' life in the middle of the novel.

Mason McCormick

Mason is Tex's seventeen year-old brother. He carries the burden of the household in the absence of the father. He is tall, strong and has black hair, prompting Tex to equate him to a "proud hawk". He indulges in activities, like fishing and basketball.

Jamie Collins

Tex's childhood sweetheart, Jamie is also Johnny's sister. She gets into her fair share of trouble and is frequently grounded by her father Cole. She is sarcastic, controlling, flirty and believes in women's rights.

Johnny Collins

Johnny is Tex's best friend. They are frequently in trouble. Johnny has a motorbike which is one of the sources of their trouble.

Cole Collins

Cole is the father of Blackie, Charlie, Bob, Johnny, and Jamie Collins. The Collins are rich unlike the McCormicks. His kids call him by his first name. He is strict and controlling, not hesitating to ground and spank his kids, especially Jamie. He blames the McCormicks for their bad influence on his kids. Mason eventually changes that during an argument after Tex and Johnny get suspended from school.

Blackie Collins

Blackie refuses to live up to the expectations of his demanding father, Cole. Instead of enrolling in college, Blackie runs off to San Francisco.



Charlie Collins

Charlie is the perfect son. He lives in an apartment in the city and is a medical student. He is the oldest of the Collins' children and gets into trouble with his father when the McCormicks come to his place and get drunk during a party.



Objects/Places

Rural America

Unlike S.E. Hinton's usual writings where peer-group gangs in urban areas are abundant, *Tex* takes place in rural America. In this world, a love of the outdoors and of horses pervades. The setting, Garyville, provides Tex with a natural and simple environment that serves as a safe haven and keeps him within his comfort zone.

Urban America

Hinton subtly uses the hostility and dangers of the city as a counterbalance for the idyllic setting of country life. The inimical and mischievous environment of city life brings nothing but mayhem to the main characters. This is evident in Tex and Mason's almost-fatal visit to the city, Lem's risky life as a drug-dealer there, and the party which gets everyone in trouble with Cole.

Horses

Negritto, the horse, is Tex's best animal friend. Nowhere else in the work do Tex's passionate feelings reach a high than when he talks about horses, especially when he yearns to be reunited with Negritto. Formally, horses are important in the novel because they are mentioned in the first chapter as well as the final one. They form the framework of the novel, giving Tex happiness when they are around at the beginning, and providing him with consolation when his brother leaves at the end. They are also symbolic of an essential lesson in life: that you do not always get what you want and major sacrifices have to be made from time to time.

Motorbike

The motorbike frequently gets both Tex and Johnny into trouble. Having been the source of great fun during the previous summer, the motorbike is also the boys' means of transportation to and from school. However, the motorbike gets confiscated by Cole Collins after he finds young Johnny drunk at his brother Charlie's city apartment.



Themes

Coming of Age

Coming of age is a major and important theme in the novel “Tex” by S. E. Hinton. “Tex” is ultimately a story of growing up, learning, and maturing –the process of coming of age. In the novel, Tex experiences numerous changes and tries to deal with them in a typical teenage ways: he avoids them, ignores them, or simply refuses to deal with them. He ditches his responsibilities by attending county fairs, riding horses, and indulging in good times with ‘good’ company. He is also annoyed at his brother’s prospective scholarship that would take him away from home and mean he would no longer take him to the fairs. Rejecting adulthood, he exclaims “I ain’t going to outgrow [the fair/childhood]”. Ironically, at the fair itself, a fortuneteller tells Tex change is inevitable, adding it won’t have to change him though. However, change does take hold of Tex in the end, as he undergoes some of the most intensive and roughest weeks of his life. The reader eventually sees Tex comes to a new realization of himself and of his surroundings, yet he retains his sweetness. This is subtly achieved by Hinton as she takes him through his first love, his first experiences with hatred, and his first real loss. Despite all the emotional pain he endures, Tex does come out stronger.

Alienation

Alienation is an important and driving theme in the novel “Tex” by S. E. Hinton. “Tex” is a story of abandoned orphans, loners, and troubled youths –all alienated, or products of alienation in some form or another. Alienation deals with an individual being isolated for various reasons from others, including family, friends, groups, or society at large. Hinton is able to clearly express her favorite theme of alienation, especially through the character of Tex. Tex feels disconnected and apart from his world, which seems to be beyond a stone’s throw away. Although Tex gains a new father, attains a new sense of family, resolves his issues with Mason, and initiates a romance with Jamie, he still complains in the end, blaming life for being too complicated. He concludes life should be a simple thing and animals do not complicate it like humans, who get things so mixed up. While Tex feels alienated from humans, he is able to call his horse, Negritto, his best friend.

Violence

“Tex” follows Hinton’s tradition of including an abundance of violent action in her work, and thus violence becomes a major theme in the novel. Hinton deems violence as an omnipresent part of life and imposes this reality on her main character. From the very beginning of the novel, violent actions play a major part in the novel as Tex is delivered a punch by Mason that leaves a permanent scar over his right eye. Among the multiple climaxes in the novel, the most notable ones involve a hitchhiker who aims his gun at



the McCormicks, and the quasi-fatal encounter with the drug dealer, which left another permanent bruise on Tex's body. The scars will remain with him as a reminder yet Tex faces all this violence stoically, avoiding jail, and succeeding in his struggle against death. Violence only further serves to alienate Tex (see the theme "Alienation") and contributes to Tex's growing up (see theme "Coming of Age").

Social Standing

Social standing is an important theme in the novel "Tex" by S. E. Hinton. Hinton obliquely refers to the dichotomy of social class or poverty between the character of Tex, and through Cole, the father of the very wealthy Collins family. Tex has fallen in love with Cole's girl, Jamie, but Cole does not see Tex as a proper social fit for her despite their young age, for various reasons. Lem is also depicted as a previously poor friend of Mason's, who leaves the rural town to make a decent middle-class life in the city. His pursuits and endeavors to earn money and liberate himself from poverty push him to put his life in jeopardy constantly as a drug dealing middleman. Whereas Lem has pursued dishonest means of making a more comfortable life for himself, Mason has opted for a better, honest way. Tired of the poor rural environment he has grown up in, Mason shows a keenness to leave the humble setting of the town and pursue a more successful life elsewhere through a sound education and through earning his way to the top by way of a scholarship. Tragically, Tex seems to embrace his rough-and-tumble life, and seems generally satisfied with things the way they are.



Style

Point of View

The story in "Tex" is told from the protagonist's perspective as the events unfold before his eyes and the ideas pop up in his mind. This simple first person narration ensures that the action is fast-paced and everything relates to the plot. The dual monologue, dialogue-filled novel does not have any superfluous tricks or backgrounds, as the reader is in sync with Tex, knowing exactly what he knows.

Setting

Hinton has handpicked her characters to go hand in hand with an effective setting in her efforts to guarantee a cohesive message. The setting is that of a fictional rural suburb of Tulsa, Oklahoma, called Garyville. The majority of the novel's occurrences occur in the country side, with a minority of events happening a few miles away in the city. The choice of both rural and urban settings is extremely important; the former represents space and peacefulness and the latter is full of cars, people, and danger. However, both settings come with their share of challenges, which Tex succeeds in facing in the end.

Language and Meaning

In this classic novel, the writing style is straightforward. In terms of language, it is simple and shares numerous other commonalities in style, set-up, and character with Hinton's numerous other writings.

The book is written with dialogue that sounds like any small town in the American West. Gripping until the end, the work is full of a mixture of emotions. The diction and cultural significance the novel bears are just right for Middle and High School students (7th – 12th).

Structure

"Tex" follows a fine and solidly-constructed plot where a clear series of events are mounted on top of each other to deliver a crash ending. The plot takes several intriguing twists, making for a very engrossing story. The novel contains an abundance of climaxes, taking both the emotional and actual climaxes to a number of crisis points. The two main climaxes occur during the incident with the hitchhiker, and most importantly, when Tex realizes he barely escaped being expelled from school and witnesses the revealing discussion occurring between Mason and Pops. The novel succeeds best in its combination of complex characterization and accurate themes, leaving the reader wondering how all might be worked out. Although the ending is not unexpected, Hinton resolves the various strands of the novel without making a clear

indication of whether Tex will end up safe or in the gutter later on. Yet, readers know he has overcome the trials and tribulations heaved at him in this fictional setting.

Quotes

I hate getting embarrassed. The more you think about it the worse it gets.

If you didn't know any better, you'd think stores multiplied like rabbits.

I didn't know what to tell him. I reckon only people who have both been snake-bit can tell each other how it feels.

I find it real hard to live politely.

Did you ever think that all those people in those cars have a whole separate story to them, that it's just as important to them as our stuff is to us, and we don't know anything about it. Maybe sometime we'll run across somebody and two years ago they were driving past us on the highway and we never knew it. Like sometimes we meet people and bump off of them and never see them again, and we never know why paths cross.

I saw he had a gun pointed at Mason's ribs. He kept staring ahead of us, down the highway, a funny kind of little grin on his face, and I saw that I'd been wrong about him being not too much older than Mason. You don't have to live a long time to be old.

I put my arm across his should and patted him, and he was stoned enough to let me. Poor Mason had been through a lot that day, what with his ulcer and Lem and that hitchhiker and being on the news. So I didn't argue with him about Pop. He was wrong, though. I was pretty sure he was wrong.

Man, I didn't know anything like that was going to happen! Honest, Tex he was on something. Holy cow! I really kid, I been doing this stuff for a year now and I never saw nobody pull a gun before! God Almighty! What if he hadn't missed?

Well, ol' Smoky, he had some bad things happen to him, had the heart knocked clean out of him. But he hung on and came out of it okay. I've been bashed up pretty good, Mason, but I'm going to make it.

It was weird being lonesome in a place full of people.

I had a knot in my throat. Lem wasn't the kind of person you could cry over-but still he had always been around, always been part of my life, and it's hard to let go of a part of your life.

Man, you were on his case because he didn't come home, and now you don't care if he does. Make up your mind, will ya?



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Hinton is considered the most successful writer for young adults in contemporary times. In fact, she is often credited with creating the genre of "young adult literature" as a viable and attractive genre for junior high and high school audiences. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Topic 2

Critics have compared Hinton favorably with Ernest Hemingway in terms of sentence structure, minimal description, and the exploration of conventional male and female roles. In your opinion, to what extent is this valid?

Topic 3

In *Tex*, S.E. Hinton has created another engaging character—a carefree, easy-going, fifteen-year-old who learns some hard lessons on the road to maturity. Hinton's skillful handling of the first-person narrative easily involves the reader in Tex's changing feelings and relationships with his brother, his father, and his friends. Discuss the benefits of first person narration in *Tex* and allude to other narration techniques and why they might have been beneficial or handicapping in this novel.

Topic 4

Do you think the balance and ease of mind Tex finds in the end of the novel will endure for a long time, or is he destined to come across more challenges in life? Discuss.

Topic 5

Throughout S.E. Hinton's novel *Tex*, the narrator, Tex McCormick, divides the people he meets into two groups: those who go and those who stay. In the beginning, this seems like a straightforward division, but by the end of the novel, it is clear that the question of whether to go or to stay is a complex one. Discuss.

Topic 6

How do each of the characters in the novel - Tex, Mason, and Lem - attempt to improve their social standing? Do they attempt it at all? Are any of these paths to improvement better than the others? Explain.