

The Outsiders Book Notes

The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton

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Author/Context

Susan Eloise Hinton was born in 1948, and has spent most of her life in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Those who know her work may be surprised that she is a woman, since her narrators are almost always teenage boys. Her simple explanation is, "I've always been a tomboy." She would usually rather talk about her horses than her writing, since she has answered so many of the same questions in interviews over the years. She wrote *The Outsiders* as a sixteen year old loner at a high school where almost everyone belonged to one group or another. After a boy not unlike Dallas Winston was killed by the police, she decided, like Ponyboy at the end of the story, to tell the world about life in her hometown. Though the town is never named in *The Outsiders*, it is recognizable as Tulsa. This is true for most of her books, even when she names the town something else. Her ideas about important stories have never strayed far from home. She remembers herself as able to talk to all different groups in high school, since she didn't belong to any of them. This allowed her to see "the big picture" better than most. She understood that the fighting between gangs was useless, because every kid was an individual, not just a unit in a group. She wanted to write about boys because, she says, at that time girls didn't do much. They waited around for their boyfriends, concentrating on their hair and makeup. She didn't want to be that way, so she spent time with boys and wrote about them. She felt that the books for people her age lacked realism. (She describes them as "Mary Jane Goes to the Prom.") She wanted a book that would reflect the experiences she saw going on around her. No book at that time described what some kids her age had to deal with. She decided to write one.

While today there are many books about drugs, gangs, abusive families, etc., Hinton's stories stand out because they confront issues like these, but they are not *about* these issues. They are about individuals, like Ponyboy and Dallas and Johnny--three very different boys who happen to belong to the same social group. Hinton usually writes her stories in the first person, to reinforce the strong individual identities of her characters. Her other stories include *Tex*, about a teenager who loves horses. When his brother sells his horse to pay the bills, Tex is determined to find the horse and get him back. *Rumble Fish*, another story about teenage life, tells the story of Rusty-James, who fights, gets drunk, and wishes for something better. Hinton says that she wrote Rusty-James' character as different from many of her other narrators. He is not as intelligent or observant. She says that this was very frustrating for her, because she wanted to write beautiful sentences, but she knew he wouldn't say beautiful things. She wanted the story to be realistic. She believes her stories are still relevant today, especially in a time of gang violence and school shootings. She has always believed that teenagers had important thoughts and experiences, and they needed to be treated as important. Hinton has also written several books for young children, inspired by her son Nick. She has said will always find her inspiration in her own experiences.

S.E. Hinton is one of the most popular children's writers, and has been so for decades. Several popular movies have been made of her books. Though she was afraid at first that a movie version would destroy her original intentions for the story, she soon found that wasn't true. The first movie, *Tex*, which starred Matt Dillon, made her realize that

movies could be as effective as books at telling a story. Matt Dillon returned to star in both *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*, and Hinton and the then-young actor became friends. The Outsiders showcased several now-famous actors, including Tom Cruise. Hinton's work became better known because of the movies. She has been accepted as an important writer by both critics and young readers.

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Plot Summary

Ponyboy Curtis and his brothers, Sodapop and Darry, belong to a group of poor teenage boys called greasers. Many of them have led hard lives already, and they are tough, angry and unforgiving. They often fight with the Socs, the group of wealthy, privileged boys who beat them up for fun. Ponyboy is shy and quiet. He gets good grades and likes to draw and read. His oldest brother Darry takes care of the family, since their parents died in a car crash. He is very serious, works most of the time, and is very hard on Ponyboy. He often yells at him to do better in school. Soda, the middle brother, is happy most of the time, and is very handsome and likable. The family often gets into fights over Ponyboy's future.

There are a few other members of their gang, including Dally and Johnny. Dally is one of the oldest, and certainly the toughest. He seems to enjoy being a criminal. He thinks the law is a joke. Johnny is even shyer than Pony. His parents abuse him, so he always seems scared. He is the pet of the group. Recently, Johnny was beat up very badly by a Soc wearing heavy rings. One night, Dally, Johnny and Pony meet two beautiful Soc girls, Cherry and Marcia. Cherry is smart and dreamy like Ponyboy, and they have a good conversation. On the way home, the girls' boyfriends catch them all together. It turns out that Cherry's boyfriend is Bob, the same boy who beat Johnny up. Later that night, Ponyboy comes in late and gets into such a fight with Darry that he runs to the park with Johnny just to get away from the house. Bob and his friends find Pony and Johnny there, and nearly drown Pony in a fountain. Terrified and angry, Johnny stabs Bob to death. The two boys run to find Dally, knowing he will know what to do. He gives them money and tells them to hide in a church a short distance out of town. They stay there for a few days, reading to each other and talking about poetry and sunsets. (Johnny is thoughtful like Pony, and they get along very well.) When Dallas comes to find them, they tell him they want to turn themselves in. Before they can, however, the church catches fire and several small children are trapped inside.

Without thinking, the boys rescue them, and a large piece of burning wood falls on Johnny and breaks his back. Pony spends a short time in the hospital, then gets to go home. That evening there is a big fight between the greasers and the Socs, which the greasers win. One of Bob's friends does not fight, because he is sick of all the hate and anger around him. Cherry, meanwhile, has become a spy for the greasers, which pleases Ponyboy but also angers him: he doesn't want charity. After the rumble, Dally and Ponyboy go to see Johnny, who dies, telling Pony never to lose his spirit. Dally is overwhelmed, and runs out of the hospital. Soon after, back at home, Darry and the others get a phone call from Dally. He has robbed a liquor store. The boys run out to find him and hide him, but the police are chasing him. He pulls out a gun. Ponyboy knows it isn't loaded, but he knows that Dally knows the police think it is. The police shoot Dally, and Pony knows Dally wanted to die. Pony faints and stays sick for nearly a week. Ponyboy is so upset by Johnny's death that for weeks he pretends to himself (and everyone else) that he himself killed Bob, and that Johnny is still alive. After the trial, however, when the judge decides that Ponyboy did nothing wrong, Pony begins to admit to himself that Dally and Johnny are both dead. He decides to write about himself

for a class assignment, so he can let other people know what life for a greaser is like. He is sure that there are many boys across the country just like him. He also recognizes, finally, that Darry loves him. He sees that Darry was just being overprotective when he yelled at him. He feels that, for the first time, he and his two brothers form a family.



Major Characters

Ponyboy Curtis: A dreamy fourteen year old boy who belongs to a gang of greasers. He is the most thoughtful of his gang, and the story is told from his point of view. He wonders why life is so much more difficult for him and his friends than it is for their rivals, the Socs. He wishes his parents were alive again to take care of him. He loves his brother Sodapop, who is kind and loving and understanding, but he doesn't get along with his older brother Darry, who he sees as a bully. Though he wants to be part of the gang, he doesn't always agree with their violent ways: he is quiet and shy, and prefers talking to a Soc named Cherry about sunsets. He knows he is innocent and naïve--he doesn't always know what to do or say--but he believes it is important to be tough, and to belong. Still, he doesn't take his situation for granted: when Johnny and Dally die, he writes the story of their lives--which becomes the book *The Outsiders*.

Sodapop Curtis: Ponyboy and Darry's brother. Sodapop is sixteen and very likable: he is handsome, kind, fun-loving and understanding. He loves horses and wants to take care of Ponyboy. He hates it when Ponyboy and Darry fight. He wants to marry his girlfriend Sandy, even when he finds out she is pregnant by another man, but she rejects him. Even then, however, he is pretty easy-going. He is hurt by Sandy, but he is able to forget her. He has no attention span and tons of energy.

Darrel ('Darry') Curtis: Twenty years old and the head of the family since their parents died, Darry is overworked and overserious. He desperately wants Ponyboy to have the opportunities he doesn't have, so he pushes him until he begins to act like a bully. Still, he loves both his brothers. Taking care of them is his greatest priority. He likes to fight because he likes feeling strong (which he is). He is also very handsome, like Sodapop.

Johnny Cade: Small, frightened, and childlike, Johnny is the baby of the gang even though he isn't the youngest. His parents abuse him, and the gang always wants to take care of him. No one can get mad at him, not even Dally. He is one of Pony's closest friends. They look at sunsets together, and talk about poetry--something neither of them can do with anyone else. Johnny understands why Pony likes Cherry Valance. He rescues children from the burning church and thinks it's worth it when he dies from his injuries.

Dallas ('Dally') Winston: Tough and angry, Dallas is the most dangerous member of the gang. He lived as a serious criminal in New York City for a while. Though he cares about Johnny, he believes it is important to be tough and mean so that you won't get hurt, so he tries not to be emotional about anything. However, he is so hurt by Johnny's death that he gets himself killed.

Minor Characters

Steve Randle: Soda's best friend, and a member of the Curtis brothers gang. Steve can be sensitive--he cries when Dally dies--but he usually just tries to be tough. He thinks of



Ponyboy as a baby, calling him a tag-along when Soda invites Pony places. Because of this, Pony sometimes hates him.

Two-Bit Mathews: A member of the Curtis brothers gang. Two-Bit, whose real name is Keith, loves to tell jokes--he can't help himself. Pony likes him because he is both funny and realistic. He can take a simple fact and see the funny side of it.

Cherry Valance: Bob's girlfriend. From the first moment they meet, Pony and Cherry realize they have a lot in common. They are both smart and like poetry and sunsets. Neither of them like fights. Still, Cherry tells Pony she cannot be his friend, because they are from different social classes. However, once Bob is killed, she becomes a spy for the greasers, telling them what the Socs will do next.

Tim Shepard : An associate of Ponyboy's gang, if not a friend. Tim is likable, but his gang is violent and more uncontrollable than Ponyboy's. They are only part of the same crowd because they are both poor and they both hate the Socs. They just use Tim's gang as backup when they need them--although Dally and Tim are close.

Bob: Cherry's boyfriend, Randy's best friend. Bob wears several rings on his hands and he uses them to beat Johnny very badly. When he tries to drown Pony after Pony talks to Cherry, Johnny stabs him to death. Though all the greasers hate Bob at first, Pony begins to understand that Bob was not all bad. He had problems like everyone else. Pony knows that there must be a reason why Cherry and Randy liked him.

Randy: Bob's friend. After Bob dies, Randy wants the fighting to stop forever. Though he used to help Bob beat up greasers, after Bob dies he visits Ponyboy when he is sick and talks to him like a friend. He also refuses to fight in the rumble.

Buck Merril: Dallas' friend. Ponyboy has promised never to go near this cowboy/criminal, and he has no problem with that. He doesn't like anything about Buck, including his taste in music. Still, after Pony and Johnny kill Bob and need to see Dallas, they go to Buck because they know Dallas is with him.

Objects/Places

Greasers : The gang of young boys that Ponyboy and his friends belong to. They are poor, and many of them are abused. They are called greasers because of the hair oil they use. Most of the town thinks they are bad, even though they are no worse than their rivals, the clean-cut Socs.

Socs: The rich enemies of the greasers. The Socs, or 'Socials,' are often considered an asset to society even though they are violent, immature, and misdirected. They are often crueler than the greasers, attacking boys much smaller than themselves. However, Ponyboy is able to make friends with a few of them.

Mickey Mouse: Sodapop's horse. Though the horse belonged to Soda's boss, Soda felt like he was his, because he only obeyed Soda. When the boss sold the horse, Soda cried for days. Ponyboy sees this as terribly unfair: Soda cared about the horse, but the boss had the power to sell him anyway.

Blue Mustang: Like many Socs, Bob drives a Mustang. His is blue, and it is a source of great fear for Johnny and Ponyboy. Johnny recognizes it because Bob beat him up before.

Church : The abandoned church in Windrixville is where Johnny and Pony hide after Johnny kills Bob. They sleep on the cold floor and eat baloney sandwiches. They play cards and, most importantly, read *Gone with the Wind*. They also watch the sunset from the steps of the church.

Gone with the Wind: The book that Johnny and Pony read together when they are hiding in the church. Johnny loves the idea of the Southern gentleman, and Ponyboy realizes that Johnny idolizes Dallas, thinking of him as a gallant gentleman. Johnny gives Pony the book before he dies, with a note that tells him not to give up.

Quotes

Quote 1: "How'd you like that haircut to begin just below the neck?" Chapter 1, pg. 5

Quote 2: "And you can't win against them no matter how hard you try, because they've got all the breaks and even whipping them isn't going to change that fact." Chapter 1, pg. 11

Quote 3: "They were the only kind of girls that would look at us, I thought. Tough, loud girls who wore too much eye makeup and giggled and swore too much." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Quote 4: "They are right. You are a hood." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Quote 5: "He liked to show he didn't care whether there was a law or not." Chapter 2, pg. 20

Quote 6: "It's not just money...We're sophisticated to the point of not feeling anything. Nothing is real with us." Chapter 3, pg. 38

Quote 7: "He's as hard as a rock and about as human...he thinks I'm a pain in the neck. He likes Soda--everybody likes Soda--but he can't stand me." Chapter 3, pg. 42

Quote 8: "I could fall in love with Dallas Winston. I hope I never see him again, or I will." Chapter 3, pg. 46

Quote 9: "It was my house as much as Darry's, and if he wanted to pretend I wasn't alive, that was just fine with me." Chapter 3, pg. 52

Quote 10: "I had to. They were drowning you, Pony They might have killed you." Chapter 4, pg. 57

Quote 11: "The fight for self-preservation had hardened him against caring." Chapter 4, pg. 59

Quote 12: "This church gave me a kind of creepy feeling. What do you call it? Premonition?" Chapter 4, pg. 67

Quote 13: "We're all cried out now. We're getting' used to the idea. We're gonna be okay now." Chapter 5, pg. 75

Quote 14: "That was the first time I realized the extent of Johnny's hero-worship for Dallas Winston." Chapter 5, pg. 76

Quote 15: "So Cherry Valance, the cheerleader, Bob's girl, the Soc, was trying to help us. No, it wasn't Cherry the Soc who was helping us, it was Cherry the dreamer who watched sunsets and couldn't stand fights." Chapter 6, pg. 86



Quote 16: "That was the only time I can think of when I saw him without that defeated, suspicious look in his eyes." Chapter 6, pg. 92

Quote 17: "I had taken the long way around, but I was finally home. To stay." Chapter 6, pg. 99

Quote 18: "I wanted to cry, but Greasers don't cry in front of strangers. Some of us never cry at all. Like Dally and Two-Bit and Tim Shepard--they forgot how at an early age." Chapter 7, pg. 102

Quote 19: "Randy was supposed to be too cool to feel anything, but there was pain in his eyes." Chapter 7, pg. 116

Quote 20: "Things were rough all over, but it was better that way. That way you could tell the other guy was human too." Chapter 7, pg. 118

Quote 21: "Let them go in. He's been asking for them. It can't hurt now." Chapter 8, pg. 119

Quote 22: "I wouldn't mind it so much if there wasn't so much stuff I ain't done yet and so many things I ain't seen. It's not fair." Chapter 8, pg. 121

Quote 23: "You're a traitor to your own kind and not loyal to us." Chapter 8, pg. 129

Quote 24: "What kind of world is it where all I have to be proud of is a reputation for being a hood, and greasy hair?" Chapter 9, pg. 132

Quote 25: "He wasn't going to be any hood when he got old. He was going to get somewhere. Living the way we do would only make him more determined to get somewhere." Chapter 9, pg. 138

Quote 26: "You get tough like me and you don't get hurt. You look out for yourself and nothin' can touch you..." Chapter 9, pg. 147

Quote 27: "How can I take it? Dally is tougher than I am. Why can I take it when Dally can't?" Chapter 10, pg. 152

Quote 28: "I looked at the picture and I could begin to see the person we had killed. A reckless, hot-tempered boy, cocky and scared stiff at the same time." Chapter 11, pg. 162

Quote 29: "I had the knife. I killed Bob." Chapter 11, pg. 165

Quote 30: "My first trip to the zoo. Oh boy, oh boy." Chapter 12, pg. 170



Topic Tracking: Innocence

Chapter 1

Innocence 1: Ponyboy is very innocent and immature. He tries to figure out why Socs and Greasers fight, why his brother is overworked, and why they don't have any money. He does not understand any of these complex issues. He feels uncomfortable around girls. He wants to fit in with his gang but he doesn't like some of the things greasers do. When Socs attack him, he is helpless.

Chapter 2

Innocence 2: In his innocence, Ponyboy believes that the Socs are different and more privileged than the greasers. When Cherry Valance tries to tell him that Socs have problems too, he doesn't believe her. By the end of the chapter, however, he lets the reader know that he knows more about these subjects than he used to.

Chapter 3

Innocence 3: Pony bitterly remembers a time when he was so innocent he thought he could buy Mickey Mouse back for Soda. In a way, he seems to wish that he had always been tough and cynical, so he never would have been hurt.

Innocence 4: Two-Bit is no innocent: he knows that no matter how much Marcia might like him, they can never date, because they are too different. He will always be a greaser, and she will always be a Soc. He can have fun with her for an evening, but unlike Ponyboy with Cherry, he does not seem to care when he has to say goodbye to her for good.

Chapter 4

Innocence 5: At the age of sixteen, Johnny is a murderer. Ponyboy knows that Johnny would never have hurt anyone, until he was nearly beaten to death by Bob and his friends. When he meets Bob again, he kills him. Fear and anger have taken the innocence he was once able to hold onto, despite his unhappy home.

Chapter 8

Innocence 6: Johnny is just experienced enough to know how innocent he is about so many things. He doesn't want to die before he can experience those things, but he is not innocent enough to think that he will be able to. He knows he is going to die while he is still young, before he has really learned or seen anything, and it seems very unfair to him.

Chapter 9



Innocence 7: Johnny realizes that Ponyboy is innocent in a way that none of the other boys can be. Not naïve or stupid, but innocent. He believes that the Socs and the greasers could get along if they just talked to each other. He believes the fighting doesn't have to go on forever, and he talks to Cherry and Randy as friends. He even understands that Bob wasn't entirely bad. He has a childlike view of the world, and Johnny wants him to stay that way.

Chapter 10

Innocence 8: In his innocence, Ponyboy thinks that by ignoring the fact that Johnny and Dallas are dead, he can change reality. Especially after he gets sick, he convinces himself that as long as he doesn't think about it, it won't be true.

Chapter 11

Innocence 9: Randy is innocent about how hard life can be. He assumes that the worst that could happen to Ponyboy is what might happen to him: he will make his parents angry or sad. When he hears that Ponyboy might be taken away from his only family, and be forced to live in someone else's house, he is shocked.

Chapter 12

Innocence 10: Ponyboy loses his innocent, immature desire to pretend that his friends haven't died. He accepts it, losing his innocence, but not his hope. Terrible things do happen, he now understands, but they can have good effects. Ponyboy decides to try to change things, rather than hide from the truth.



Topic Tracking: Loneliness

Chapter 1

Loneliness 1: Ponyboy feels alienated from everyone around him: he may be united with the greasers against the Socs, but he doesn't feel like he can really talk to even the greasers. People at school, even his teachers, are afraid of him, and though he loves Sodapop, he knows that Soda doesn't really understand him. He feels alone in the world.

Chapter 3

Loneliness 2: As Cherry and Pony talk, they immediately find that they have a lot in common, despite their different backgrounds. Cherry says that while sometimes she lies to her friends without even thinking, she can be honest with Ponyboy. Pony can talk to Cherry about things he knows his gang would never understand.

Chapter 4

Loneliness 3: Ponyboy tries to detach from his family, but he feels uncomfortable doing it. He tries to tell himself that he doesn't care if Darry worries about him or not, but he knows he does care. He tries not to think about Sodapop, but he can't help himself. Even before he gets to the church, he wants to go home.

Chapter 5

Loneliness 4: Johnny and Ponyboy consider that they cannot talk about nature or poetry with their other friends. While this has made them feel lonely in the past, it now gives the two of them a connection. They no longer feel silly thinking about art and beauty--now, they think the others are silly for not thinking about those things.

Chapter 6

Loneliness 5: When Ponyboy finally realizes that Darry loves him and cares about him, he doesn't feel so lonely anymore. He feels, for the first time since his parents died, that his house is really home.

Chapter 7

Loneliness 6: Ponyboy feels less lonely and confused when he learns that Randy the Soc sees things the way he does. Now he feels that, rather than trying to be a greaser who hates Socs, he can just be a person who has friends of all social classes. He sees that "the other guy is human too."

Chapter 8



Loneliness 7: Just as Ponyboy realizes how much he cares about Johnny, he learns Johnny is going to die. He says that they have always been close, but their time alone in the church together brought them even closer. Ponyboy thinks that none of the gang can survive without Johnny, and he personally doesn't know what he will do without their conversations.

Chapter 9

Loneliness 8: Ponyboy feels lonely, because everyone else likes to fight and he doesn't. The only people he knows who don't like fights are both Socs: Randy and Cherry. He feels left out of his gang, because he knows that one of the most important things about being a greaser is liking to fight. He doesn't really want to be a greaser in that way, but he doesn't know what else to be. He feels left out.

Chapter 10

Loneliness 9: Ponyboy realizes how lonely it must be for Darry sometimes. He wants to become friends with Darry, but he doesn't know how. He is very worried that he didn't ask for Darry when he was sick. He wants them all to be a family together, instead of Sodapop being the only link between them. He wants Darry to be more than just their older brother who works to keep them together: he wants to bring Darry into the family.

Chapter 12

Loneliness 10: Ponyboy feels very lonely after Johnny dies. He even tries to pretend that Johnny isn't dead at all. After a while, though, he accepts that he must go on living even though one of his best friends is gone. Instead of trying to live in the past with Johnny, he uses Johnny's advice from the note to reach out to other people. He doesn't see himself as alone anymore. He knows there are many people just like him across the country.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding

Chapter 1

Misunderstanding 1: Sodapop tries to explain to Ponyboy that Darry really does love him--he just doesn't know how to show it. Pony refuses to believe it, seeing Darry's love and concern as anger and over-protectiveness.

Chapter 3

Misunderstanding 2: Pony and Cherry try to piece together an understanding of the Socs and the greasers. It's hard for them, because all their lives they've been taught to hate the gang they don't belong to. They begin to realize that the two groups aren't nearly as different as they thought they were.

Chapter 5

Misunderstanding 3: Most people, Ponyboy included, always thought Johnny was dumb because he didn't do well in school. When they read *Gone with the Wind* together, though, Ponyboy realizes that sometimes Johnny has a very deep understanding of things--he just takes a little longer to come to it.

Chapter 6

Misunderstanding 4: Dally has no idea how Cherry feels about him. He doesn't really think about her at all, despite her strange behavior (Socs and greasers barely speak to each other, let alone help each other out.) He simply thinks of her as beautiful and high-spirited, never wondering what she is really like.

Misunderstanding 5: Ponyboy never considered that Dally might know what has happened to him. Pony always thought that Dally was just a thug who liked being a thug. He didn't understand that Dally became a thug because he had to protect himself, physically and emotionally. When Pony hears Dally telling Johnny never to become hard like him, Ponyboy is shocked, because he never knew about that side of Dally's personality.

Misunderstanding 6: Ponyboy is so used to people thinking of him as a criminal that when someone sees him as a hero, he thinks they're confused. For him, greasers can't be heroes--at least not to the people who called them greasers in the first place. When someone sees him clearly for the first time (as a boy who would risk his life to save someone else) Ponyboy thinks they have misunderstood him.

Chapter 8

Misunderstanding 7: Two-Bit willfully misunderstands when Ponyboy tells him he has a bad feeling about the fight for that evening. He pretends he thinks Ponyboy is being a



coward. Unlike Ponyboy, who wants to understand clearly why things are the way they are, Two-Bit likes to pretend that things will be okay if you say they will be.

Chapter 9

Misunderstanding 8: Dally thinks that no one will accept how much he cares about his friend Johnny. He thinks he has to threaten the doctor with a knife in order to get into Johnny's hospital room when he is dying. The doctor surprises Dally, telling him that he will let him and Ponyboy into Johnny's room not because of the knife, but because he can see what good friends they are.

Chapter 10

Misunderstanding 9: Ponyboy misunderstands Dallas. He thinks because Dally is tough and mean, he can handle anything. As it turns out, Ponyboy is stronger than Dallas. When Johnny dies, Ponyboy can handle it, because he has inner strength he was never even aware of. Dally, on the other hand, is weak in a way Ponyboy never knew about.

Chapter 12

Misunderstanding 10: Ponyboy wants to change the way people think about greasers. He knows that many people think that greasers are bad just because they wear a lot of hair oil. He also knows that many greasers think of themselves as bad, believing they have no future. He wants to correct these misunderstandings, and show people the truth: greasers are individuals, and have to be judged as individuals.

Chapter 1

Ponyboy Curtis, the narrator of the story and a fourteen-year-old boy, is walking home alone, wishing he looked handsome and tough like Paul Newman. He wears his hair long, like most of the other people from his neighborhood. He calls himself a greaser--one of the poor, tough gang of boys who fights with the Socs, ("Socials") a gang of rich, violent boys. He walks alone because he is coming home from the movies. He can't go to the movies with his friends because he likes to get lost in the story, and no one else he knows does that. His sixteen-year-old brother Sodapop doesn't care about books or movies, and his twenty-year-old brother Darrel works too hard to be interested in anything. Ponyboy likes Sodapop because Soda tries to understand him. Darrel, or Darry, is always yelling at Ponyboy and never seems to try to understand him. As he walks, Ponyboy starts to get nervous: greasers get beat up by the Socs if they are caught alone on the street. Socs are wealthy and high-class. They attack Greasers for fun. For Greasers, however, crime is more of a way of life: they steal things and have gang fights. Ponyboy doesn't do those things, though. His parents were killed in a car crash, and he is only allowed to stay with Darry and Soda if they all behave. Darry would be furious if he misbehaved, and he knows it. Pony gets good grades and everyone thinks he is smart, but sometimes Darry gets frustrated with him because he doesn't have common sense. He doesn't think before he acts. When he is almost two blocks from home he sees a Corvair following him. The car is full of Socs. Pony thinks about how his friend Johnny was attacked by Socs. Johnny came from a rough home, and he was used to beatings, but the way the Socs beat him had made him break down and cry. Pony just stands there, trying to think of what to do. The Socs tease him, asking him if he needs a haircut, then saying, "How'd you like that haircut to begin just below the neck?" Chapter 1, pg. 5

The Socs beat him to the ground and hold a knife against his throat. He nearly passes out, then hears people running all around him. Darry pulls Pony to his feet, asking him urgently whether he's okay, and shaking him. Pony knows Darry doesn't mean to hurt him, but it bothers him just the same, because Darry always hurts him by accident. Pony sometimes thinks that Darry is cold and unfeeling. Soda and Darry clean Pony up. Soda is handsome, like Darry, but he is a warm, happy, lovable person. Darry and Soda get along: Darry, who is always serious, doesn't mind when Soda, who is always joking, teases him. The other four members of their gang, who were chasing the Socs away, return. Steve Randle is Soda's best friend, but Pony doesn't like him--Steve thinks Pony is a baby. Two-Bit Mathews never stops joking around. Dallas Winston is tougher and meaner than the rest of them: he is angry at the world and enjoys being a criminal. "Dally" spent time in rough neighborhoods in New York, but now he fights the Socs. Ponyboy thinks, "And you can't win against them no matter how hard you try, because they've got all the breaks and even whipping them isn't going to change that fact." Chapter 1, pg. 11

Finally, there's Johnny Cade, the sad, small, frightened pet of the gang. As the boys talk about the attack on Pony, Darry starts yelling at Pony, angry that he never seems to think to protect himself. Soda tells Darry to stop, and though Darry grumbles, they all

know that he listens to Soda. Pony and Johnny decide to go to the movies with Dally tomorrow night. Soda and Steve are taking their girlfriends out. "They were the only kind of girls that would look at us, I thought. Tough, loud girls who wore too much eye makeup and giggled and swore too much." Chapter 1, pg. 15 Pony feels bad that nice girls won't look at boys like him. When he was dissecting a worm in science class and pulled out his switch blade to use as a blade without thinking, a girl near him said, "They are right. You are a hood." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Thinking about that makes Pony feel terrible. That night, Pony wonders why the Socs hate the Greasers so much, and why Darry has to work so hard. Life seems unfair. Soda tells Pony not to take Darry's nagging seriously: Darry works too hard, and is only trying to protect Ponyboy. Pony wishes he believed that Darry really loved him.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 1

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 1

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 1

Chapter 2

Pony goes to the movies with Dally and Johnny. First, however, they shop-lift from the drug store and watch a fight at a diner. When they get to the theatre, they sneak in, because Dally hates to obey the law. "He liked to show he didn't care whether there was a law or not." Chapter 2, pg. 20 At the theatre, Dally sits behind two girls and talks dirty loudly until one of them tells her to leave them alone. Dally walks away, and when Pony promises the girl he won't act like his friend, she smiles. Pony thinks she is beautiful, and she doesn't make fun of his name. She tells him her name is Sherri Valance, but people call her Cherry. Dally comes back with Cokes, but when he tries to put his arm around Cherry, she throws hers in his face. Suddenly Johnny tells Dally to leave Cherry alone. Ponyboy is shocked: Dally is dangerous, and no one ever tells him what to do. Johnny is everybody's pet, though, and Dally can't hit him. He just walks off angrily. The girls invite Johnny and Pony to sit with them, telling them they can tell they are much nicer than Dally. Just then Two-Bit comes up behind them, pretending to be a Soc. Even after they see who it really is, Pony can see that Johnny is shaken. He cannot get over the beating the Socs gave him that one night. Two-Bit explains that Dally will probably get beaten up by Tim Shepard's gang, because he slashed the tires of one of their cars. However, Tim Shepard and his gang are still their friends, and Pony's gang would fight on their side tomorrow if they were asked to. Cherry and her friend, Marcia, are a little scared at such a violent way of life. Cherry and Pony go to buy popcorn, and Cherry says she can tell something bad happened to Johnny, and asks what it was. Pony feels nervous because people are staring at him and Cherry, but he tells her the story. One day he was walking with Steve and Soda when they found Johnny lying on the ground, beaten so badly that Pony almost threw up when he looked at him. The other boys seemed to sense something had happened, because within minutes they were all there. Even Dally was very upset, and Pony wondered why. Johnny slowly recovered enough to tell them that a group of Socs had pulled up in a car and all beaten him at once. One boy who wore lots of rings had been especially brutal. Johnny had been beaten by his father many times, but this beating was worse, because the Socs had threatened him with everything they could think of before they beat him. Now, Johnny is so afraid that he carries a switchblade, and Pony knows Johnny would rather die or kill someone than be beaten like that again. Cherry and Pony go back to the movie, and they all watch it together. Pony enjoys watching a movie with a nice girl, who doesn't swear or try to kiss him. Looking back on that night, he realizes that he had no idea how tough the Socs' lives really were.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 2

Chapter 3

After the movie, Marcia and Cherry need a ride home, so Two-Bit convinces them to let him drive them. As Pony talks to Cherry, he realizes that she is not so different from a Greaser. He asks her if money is the only thing that separates them. She says, "It's not just money...We're sophisticated to the point of not feeling anything. Nothing is real with us." Chapter 3, pg. 38 Cherry and Pony realize that they can talk to each other more personally than they are used to. On the ride home, Pony tells Cherry about Sodapop's horse, Mickey Mouse, a story he never tells anyone. Mickey Mouse belonged to a man who Soda worked for, but the horse only loved (and only obeyed) Soda. When Mickey Mouse was sold, Soda cried all night long. Cherry doesn't ask for the rest of the story, which is good, because Pony doesn't want to tell it--it makes him too sad. He had been ten years old at the time, and had saved his allowance for a year, thinking he could buy the horse back for his brother. Cherry tells Pony that she can see he is a thoughtful person.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 3

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 2

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 2

Just then, Marcia sees a blue Mustang coming toward them. It is their boyfriends' car. At first everyone freezes, but then the car drives by. Cherry asks Pony about Darry, and suddenly Pony explodes. "He's as hard as a rock and about as human...he thinks I'm a pain in the neck. He likes Soda--everybody likes Soda--but he can't stand me." Chapter 3, pg. 42 Everyone looks at Ponyboy, shocked. When Johnny protests that he thought the three brothers got along well, Pony gets angry at himself for complaining and yells at Johnny. Two-Bit slaps Pony, telling him not to treat Johnny that way. Pony cries about how unfair their lives are--how hard they all have to work, how so many of the Greasers are abused by their parents, and how easy the Socs have it. Suddenly, the Socs reappear in the blue Mustang. One of them wears many rings on his fingers, and Pony realizes that this is the boy who beat Johnny up. He feels Johnny trembling next to him. Two-Bit is ready to fight, but Cherry says she hates fighting, so she and Marcia go off with the Socs. Before she leaves, Cherry tells Pony that she can't talk to him at school--they just aren't part of the same world. Then she tells him, "I could fall in love with Dallas Winston. I hope I never see him again, or I will." Chapter 3, pg. 46 As the Greasers walk home together, Two-Bit tears up the phone number Marcia gave him. He assumes it's phony.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 4

That night, Pony lies under the stars with Johnny, wondering why life for Greasers is so hard. Johnny agrees: he feels like he can't take it anymore. Pony daydreams about living out in the country, about his parents being alive again...and then he falls asleep. When he wakes up it's the middle of the night. He runs home, and sure enough, Darry is waiting up for him, very angry. They yell at each other, then Darry slaps Pony hard. Shocked, Pony runs out of the house, finds Johnny in the field, and runs with him as far

as he can. When they are tired, Pony explains what happened. Johnny says that he feels rejected too, since his parents don't notice whether he comes home or not. Pony finally decides to walk around the park once and then go home. "It was my house as much as Darry's, and if he wanted to pretend I wasn't alive, that was just fine with me." Chapter 3, pg. 52

Chapter 4

As they walk through the park in the darkness, they hear a car horn. Five Socs hop out of their blue Mustang, and Pony can see they are very drunk. Johnny's face goes blank--only Pony can see the fear in his eyes. The boy with the rings, Bob, and his friend Randy, threaten Pony and Johnny, and the two of them try to act tough. One of the boys pushes Ponyboy into a fountain, holding his head under the water. He falls unconscious and when he wakes up, Johnny tells him he killed Bob. Johnny holds a bloody knife, and Ponyboy looks down to see Bob lying on the pavement in a pool of blood. Johnny says, "I had to. They were drowning you, Pony. They might have killed you." Chapter 4, pg. 57

Topic Tracking: Innocence 5

Ponyboy panics, but Johnny seems calm. He says that Dallas will tell them what to do. They know they can find him at Buck Merrill's place. Buck Merrill is a cowboy and gambler, and Ponyboy has been forbidden to go near him, but they need to see Dally. There is a rough party going on at Merrill's place, but Dally is sober. He listens to their story and simply congratulates Johnny on killing Bob. "The fight for self-preservation had hardened him against caring." Chapter 4, pg. 59 Dally gives the boys some money and a gun, and worries about what Darry and Sodapop will say when they find out about this. Pony tries to convince himself he doesn't care if Darry worries or not. Dally tells them to hop on a train to a nearby city, and stay in an abandoned church. He instructs them to buy enough food for a week and then stay hidden in the church at all times--he will come get them as soon as he can.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 3

The boys find the church, and Ponyboy remembers going to church with Johnny. They both enjoyed the sermons. Then one day they brought Soda and Steve and Two-Bit, who would not stop talking and joking during the service. Pony was so embarrassed that he never went back to church. He thinks about where he is now: "This church gave me a kind of creepy feeling. What do you call it? Premonition?" Chapter 4, pg. 67 The boys are so tired that they fall asleep almost immediately.

Chapter 5

When Ponyboy wakes up, he finds a note from Johnny, saying he has gone to get supplies. When he returns, he has brought food, a copy of *Gone with the Wind* (he knew Ponyboy wanted to read it) and hair bleach. Ponyboy is horrified: he loves his hair! But Johnny insists that they have to disguise themselves. With his hair lightened, Ponyboy is miserable. He thinks he looks like a wimp. The boys are suddenly very homesick and scared. After crying for a while, though, they realize they are becoming confident. Johnny says, "We're all cried out now. We're getting' used to the idea. We're gonna be okay now." Chapter 5, pg. 75 For the next few days, they read *Gone with the Wind* and talk. Ponyboy is surprised at how smart Johnny is: he has never done well in school, and people have usually thought of him as dumb. Still, Johnny understands the ideas in the book about Southern gentlemen very well. He thinks Dally is like one of those men: he would never sacrifice a friend to save himself, for example. Ponyboy thinks, "That was the first time I realized the extent of Johnny's hero-worship for Dallas Winston." Chapter 5, pg. 76 Ponyboy doesn't like Dally, because Dally is just too real for him: he doesn't joke or tell stories, he just lives his hard life as a tough man.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 3

One morning, the boys watch the sun rise. When Johnny comments on how beautiful it is, and how he wishes it would stay that way all day, Ponyboy recites a poem he read once. The poem describes how the most beautiful aspects of nature are the shortest lived: "nothing gold can stay." Johnny is awed that the poem reflects just what he was thinking about. The boys talk about how they could not talk about poetry with any of their other friends.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 4

On the fifth day, Dally arrives. He tells them it's safe for them to come out of the church, because Dally has told the police they've run away to Texas. He informs the boys that there is an all-out war going on between the Socs and greasers. Dally himself has even started carrying a gun--though it isn't loaded. Also, Cherry Valance has offered herself as a spy for the greasers. She feels like the whole problem is her fault.

Chapter 6

Pony thinks to himself, "So Cherry Valance, the cheerleader, Bob's girl, the Soc, was trying to help us. No, it wasn't Cherry the Soc who was helping us, it was Cherry the dreamer who watched sunsets and couldn't stand fights." Chapter 6, pg. 86 Pony wonders what Dally thinks about Cherry helping them, but Dally seems to have forgotten about it instantly.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 4

The three boys continue their lunch, then Johnny announces that he and Pony are going to turn themselves in. This is news to Ponyboy, but he doesn't disagree. He wants to go home too. Johnny reasons that the murder was self-defense, so he might not be punished too severely. At first Dally is angry, then he starts pleading with Johnny. He has been in prison, and he knows how terrible it can be. He says he knows he has become a hard, unhappy person, and he doesn't want that to happen to Johnny. Ponyboy listens to this, amazed. He never knew Dally thought that way.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 5

Before Dally can say any more, the boys see that the church is on fire. Ponyboy immediately thinks that he or Johnny must have started the fire with a lit cigarette. At first, everyone just stands watching the building burn, but then someone realizes that children are inside the church! Without thinking, Ponyboy and Johnny run toward the fire. Inside the church, Pony notices that Johnny doesn't seem like the shy, scared boy he usually is. "That was the only time I can think of when I saw him without that defeated, suspicious look in his eyes." Chapter 6, pg. 92 He orders the children around, taking charge of the situation. Everything is confused, and Ponyboy gets a few kids out before he leaps out the window himself, burning wood falling all around him. He hears Johnny scream inside the church. Then Dally hits him across the back and he passes out. When he wakes up, he's in an ambulance. A man tells him that Dally is all right, but Johnny has a broken back and was burned badly. Ponyboy passed out because Dally hit him to put out the flames on his back. The whole town thinks the boys are heroes. Pony begins to laugh at that idea.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 6

In the waiting room of the hospital, Pony sees that Dally is all right, but Johnny is severely hurt. Darry and Soda come wait with him to hear more about the other two boys, and he is very happy to see them. When he sees Darry's face, he knows that Darry does love him after all--he is just overprotective, because he wants Pony to be successful. He bosses him around because he cares about him. Pony realizes, "I had taken the long way around, but I was finally home. To stay." Chapter 6, pg. 99

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 5

Chapter 7

While the brothers wait in the hospital to see how Johnny and Dally are, reporters interview them. Soda charms everyone, and Darry intimidates them. After the reporters finally leave, the boys convince the doctors to tell them about Dally and Johnny. Dally is burned but will be okay in a few weeks. Johnny's back is broken and he is badly burned--he may die. "I wanted to cry, but greasers don't cry in front of strangers. Some of us never cry at all. Like Dally and Two-Bit and Tim Shepard--they forgot how at an early age." Chapter 7, pg. 102 There is nothing for the brothers to do but go home. The next morning, Pony is making breakfast (whoever wakes up first makes breakfast, and the other two do the dishes) when Steve and Two-Bit show up. They tease him about his hair, but he is happy to see them anyway. Then they tell him the newspapers have been calling him a hero. Pony reads in the paper that Cherry and Randy, Bob's friend, both support the greasers, saying that Johnny had killed Bob in self-defense. Everyone is impressed with the greasers, but some officials are still thinking of taking Soda and Pony away from Darry. Reading this, Pony remembers that he had a nightmare the night before. Since his parents died, he has been having the same nightmare every so often, and he can never remember it. It terrifies him anyway. He quickly changes the subject, asking Soda about his girlfriend. Everyone falls silent, and finally Steve explains that Sandy got pregnant and had to go live with her grandmother, because her parents wouldn't let her marry Sodapop. Pony knows how much Soda loved her, and he feels bad. Everyone goes off to work, leaving Two-Bit to take care of Ponyboy during the day. Pony likes Two-Bit: he sees things realistically, and he tells funny jokes. They go to get ice cream, and the blue Mustang pulls up near them. Randy pulls Ponyboy aside. He tells him he doesn't want to fight anymore. "Randy was supposed to be too cool to feel anything, but there was pain in his eyes." Chapter 7, pg. 116 Randy says that fighting doesn't do any good--it only hurts people. After talking with Randy, Pony decides, "Things were rough all over, but it was better that way. That way you could tell the other guy was human too." Chapter 7, pg. 118

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 6

Chapter 8

At first, the nurses won't let the boys see Johnny, but then a doctor tells them, "Let them go in. He's been asking for them. It can't hurt now." Chapter 8, pg. 119 Only Ponyboy realizes that this means Johnny is going to die. Two-Bit runs off to buy Johnny another copy of *Gone with the Wind*, so Ponyboy and Johnny are left alone together. Johnny tells him he's very scared, and Pony pretends he has nothing to be scared of. Johnny knows he's going to die, though, and he tells Ponyboy, "I wouldn't mind it so much if there wasn't so much stuff I ain't done yet and so many things I ain't seen. It's not fair." Chapter 8, pg. 121

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 7

Topic Tracking: Innocence 6

Ponyboy thinks about how Johnny's life has been so hard, so full of sadness, and that he has never experienced real happiness. Just then the nurse tells him his mother wants to see him. Johnny refuses to see her. Finally, he passes out from exhaustion. As Pony and Two-Bit go to see Dally, they run into Johnny's mother in the hallway. She blames all her son's problems on them. Two-Bit starts to yell at her, but Pony stops him. In Dally's hospital room, they find him arguing with the nurses, who won't let him smoke. They know then that he is okay. When he asks about Johnny, they soften things for him, telling him that they aren't sure what will happen with Johnny. Still, Dally understands how bad things are, and he gets very angry. He takes Two-Bit's fancy knife, planning to get even with the Socs in the rumble that night. On the way home, Pony tells Two-Bit that he has a bad feeling about the fight. Two-Bit pretends not to understand. They run into Cherry, and she tells Pony that although she feels bad about Johnny, she can't go see him, because he killed Bob. Ponyboy gets angry, telling her, "You're a traitor to your own kind and not loyal to us." Chapter 8, pg. 129 He knows he still likes her though--he doesn't really believe in hating someone just because they're part of a group you're supposed to hate.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 7

Chapter 9

Ponyboy comes home late for dinner and secretly takes several aspirins. He often does that--he gets headaches, and he doesn't sleep well. The boys all get dressed up before the rumble: they want to show the Socs that they are just as good as them. Still, Ponyboy wonders, "What kind of world is it where all I have to be proud of is a reputation for being a hood, and greasy hair?" Chapter 9, pg. 132 Pony asks the other boys why they like fighting. They tell him they like the contest of it, and they like being strong. Ponyboy doesn't like to fight.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 8

Darry suddenly says that Ponyboy may be too weak and tense to fight, but Ponyboy begs him until he lets him fight anyway. All of them are excited about the rumble, and begin doing acrobatic tricks that Darry taught them a few years ago. Darry cautions Ponyboy to yell if he needs help during the fight, and to run if the police come--the other boys might be jailed, but he and Soda could be put in a boys' home. Ponyboy looks at the other boys who join his gang for the rumble. They all look like hoods (tough criminals), and he knows they will be hoods their whole lives. Then he looks at Darry. "He wasn't going to be any hood when he got old. He was going to get somewhere. Living the way we do would only make him more determined to get somewhere." Chapter 9, pg. 138 Ponyboy is uncomfortable around the other boys. They are associates of the greasers, but they are real criminals. Pony doesn't like them. When the Socs show up, Ponyboy realizes once again why greasers get blamed when fights like this happen: the Socs dress like they might be going to the movies, while the greasers look tough and dangerous. Darry steps forward and offers to begin the fight with anyone there. A boy Darry used to be friends with comes forward, looking at Darry with hate, and Pony wonders why: is it just because Darry is a greaser? Pony worries that Darry might get beaten up, even though it has never happened before. Pony realizes he doesn't hate Socs anymore and he doesn't want to fight like this. He wants people to be friends as individuals, not hate each other in groups. At the last moment, Dally shows up--he forced a nurse to let him leave the hospital--and the fight begins. Though the greasers get beaten up badly, they win the fight. As soon as it's over, Dally drags Ponyboy to see Johnny, who, he says, has gotten much worse. On the way to the hospital, Dally tells Pony that he has changed his mind: Johnny should have gotten hard and mean, like Dally himself. If he had never tried to help those little kids, he never would have gotten hurt. "You get tough like me and you don't get hurt. You look out for yourself and nothin' can touch you..." Chapter 9, pg. 147 At the hospital, they find out that Johnny is dying. He finds the strength to tell Ponyboy to "stay gold," like in the poem, and then he dies. Dally becomes hysterical, crying and beating his fist against the wall. Then he runs out of the room.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 7

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 8

Chapter 10

Not knowing what to do, Ponyboy walks home alone. In a daze, he convinces himself that Johnny isn't dead. A man picks him up and drives him home, concerned about his cuts and bruises from the fight. Back at his house, Ponyboy is amazed at how beat up and sad everyone looks. He tells the other boys that Johnny is dead, and that Dally ran off, unable to deal with it. Ponyboy wonders, "How can I take it? Dally is tougher than I am. Why can I take it when Dally can't?" Chapter 10, pg. 152 Just then, Dally calls. He has robbed a grocery store and the police are chasing him. The boys run to meet him at a vacant lot, so they can help him hide. No one seems excited or thrilled, the way they were before the rumble.

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 9

When they get to the lot, the police are already there. Dally pulls a gun from his waistband, and Ponyboy realizes it is the gun Dally had recently told him wasn't loaded. Ponyboy knows that the police don't know the gun is unloaded, and he knows Dally knows that too. The police shoot Dally, killing him, and Pony knows that that is just what Dally wanted. Ponyboy faints.

He wakes up several days later. He has been in the hospital, but he doesn't remember it. No one is sure whether the three brothers will be able to stay together or not. Pony worries that when he was delirious, he only called for Soda and his parents--not for Darry. He wants to have a good relationship with Darry, but he always just feels uncomfortable.

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 9

When Soda comes in, looking like he hasn't slept the entire time Pony was sick, Pony asks him if he asked for Darry at all when he was sick. Soda reassures him that he did. Pony doesn't want to talk much about the events of the past few days. He wants to pretend Johnny isn't dead.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 8

Chapter 11

Ponyboy stays in bed for a week, recovering. Bored, he draws, reads, and looks through Soda's yearbook. Suddenly he sees a picture of Bob. For the first time, he thinks about who Bob really was. "I looked at the picture and I could begin to see the person we had killed. A reckless, hot-tempered boy, cocky and scared stiff at the same time." Chapter 11, pg. 162 Just then, Randy comes over. Ponyboy realizes that while he was embarrassed about his house when his other friends visited him (he knows his family is obviously poor) he doesn't care what Randy thinks. Randy looks uncomfortable. He reminds Pony that they have to go to trial tomorrow. They will have to explain to a judge exactly what happened the night Bob died. He tells Ponyboy he feels bad for his parents: he didn't want to hurt them by getting in trouble like this. Ponyboy tells him that his parents are dead and he could be taken away from Darry and Soda, and Randy is shocked. He had no idea Ponyboy's life could be so damaged by this ordeal. He tries to tell Ponyboy that there's no reason for him to get into trouble, but Pony says, "I had the knife. I killed Bob." Chapter 11, pg. 165 He tells Randy that Johnny is not dead. Randy gives him a strange look. Just then, Darry comes in, and Pony overhears him whisper to Randy that the doctor says Pony is still very upset about the killings, but he will get over it if they give him time. Darry speaks kindly to Pony, and Pony realizes that he is beginning to treat him the way he treats Soda.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 9

Chapter 12

The courtroom is nearly empty: just a few Socs, their parents, and friends of Ponyboy are there. Ponyboy is surprised to hear that all the Socs think that Johnny killed Bob, but he decides he will tell the judge that he, in fact, was the murderer as soon as he is called up. When he is called, however, the judge doesn't ask him very many questions. He just tells him he's free to go. Later, Ponyboy finds out that the doctor has talked to the judge, telling him that Ponyboy is too ill and upset to answer serious questions. Over the next few weeks, Ponyboy's entire life is affected by his sadness, confusion and anger. He stops eating. He can't even keep track of where his shoes are. He starts doing poorly at school. Finally, his English teacher tells him he will fail him unless he writes a good essay about something from his own life. Ponyboy thinks to himself sarcastically, "My first trip to the zoo. Oh boy, oh boy." Chapter 12, pg. 170 That afternoon at lunch time, Ponyboy is with a few friends when a car full of Socs pulls up. When they threaten Ponyboy, he breaks a bottle and makes it clear that he will cut them with one end of it if he has to. They get scared and drive away. Two-Bit and Steve are concerned--they don't want Ponyboy to be a thug like them. They know he is different and they want him to stay that way. When he starts cleaning up the glass from the bottle, though, they know he is still his old self.

That evening, Soda comes into Pony's room. Pony has been trying to write something for English class but he can't think of anything. It seems like something is wrong with Soda, but he won't talk, so Ponyboy just lets it go. After dinner, Pony and Darry get into a fight--they've been having them a lot lately. Suddenly, Soda gets upset and runs out of the house. He drops a letter. It is a letter he wrote to his girlfriend, returned unopened. Darry tells Pony that Soda was not the father of the girl's baby. Soda loved her and wanted to marry her anyway, but she clearly did not feel the same way about him. Ponyboy feels very guilty. He knows Soda probably tried to tell him about this, but he was too busy or daydreaming. Darry and Pony go after Soda, and when they catch him, he tells Pony that he feels caught in the middle of all their fighting. They agree not to fight anymore, and race home together. Ponyboy admits to himself that he always knew Johnny was dead, and that Johnny killed Bob. He had known it even when he had pretended he hadn't. He still isn't used to the fact that Johnny is dead, but he understands now. He picks up the copy of *Gone with the Wind* that Johnny wanted him to have. A note from Johnny is inside the book. It tells Ponyboy not to stop looking at sunsets, and to tell Dally to look at one sometime too. Johnny writes that his death is worthwhile, because he saved those children. He assures Pony that he doesn't have to be a greaser forever. He can be whatever he wants. Reading this, Ponyboy sees that the problems in his life aren't personal. There are boys all across the country who feel hopeless, scared, angry and violent. Ponyboy decides to write his essay for English class about what has happened to him and his friends over the past week. The story ends up as the book *The Outsiders*.

Topic Tracking: Innocence 10

Topic Tracking: Misunderstanding 10

Topic Tracking: Loneliness 10