



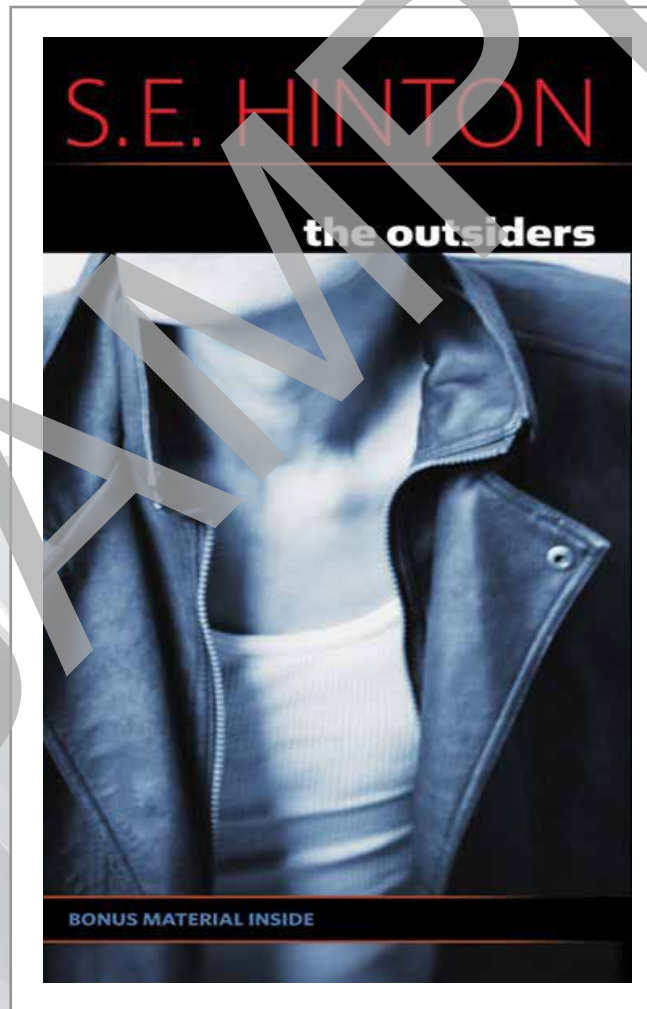
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

The Outsiders

S. E. Hinton



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

The Outsiders

S. E. Hinton

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Comprehension

Creative thinking, identifying attributes, inferences, problem solving, predictions, supporting judgments

Critical Thinking

Analysis, brainstorming, cause/effect, compare/contrast, evaluation, research

Literary Elements

Character analysis, conflict, story mapping, theme, author's purpose, figurative language, point of view

Writing

Creative writing, dialogue, essay, personal narrative, poetry, report, diary entry, newspaper editorial, menu, biography

Vocabulary

Definitions, word maps, slang, compound words, target words

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, dramatization, oral presentation, debate, interview

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—stereotypes, gang culture, history, rodeo, juvenile justice system, runaways, bullying; Health—psychology, family relationships, daydreaming, self-worth; Math—budgeting; Art—illustration, design, poster, model; Literature—Robert Frost; Music—time line, soundtrack; Film—*Gone with the Wind*, *The Outsiders*, James Dean

Genre: young-adult fiction

Setting: 1960s; the Southwest, presumably Tulsa, Oklahoma (the author's hometown)

Point of View: first person

Themes: isolation, identity, friendship, survival, self-esteem, society and class, relationships, violence, death, loyalty, honor, appearances, bullying, making choices, coming of age

Conflict: person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. society

Style: narrative

Tone: candid, conversational, thought-provoking

Date of First Publication: 1967

Summary

Ponyboy Curtis feels like an outsider, both at home—where he can never seem to please his strict older brother—and with his friends the greasers, a gang of long-haired teens from the poor East Side. Though loyal to his gang, Ponyboy would rather watch sunsets and study than rumble with the Socs, the wealthy teens from the West Side. He does not understand why the Socs, who have everything, enjoy beating up greasers. Then he meets Cherry, a Soc girl, and learns that Socs have problems, too. Cherry's boyfriend and his friends attack Ponyboy and Johnny, the gang's most vulnerable member. Johnny kills Cherry's boyfriend in self-defense. With the help of Dally, the greasers' toughest member, Ponyboy and Johnny hide out in an abandoned church. The church later catches on fire, trapping schoolchildren inside. Ponyboy and Johnny rush into the burning building and rescue the children, but Johnny is fatally wounded. When Johnny dies, a distraught Dally pulls an unloaded gun on police and is shot and killed. Unable to accept his friends' deaths, Ponyboy's life falls apart. Then, Ponyboy finds a letter Johnny wrote stating that saving the children was worth sacrificing his life. Johnny also encourages Ponyboy to value the good things in life, to become the person he wants to be, and to convince the hardened Dally to do the same. It is too late for Dally, but Ponyboy believes he might be able to help numerous underprivileged boys living on the wrong sides of other cities—society's outsiders. Ponyboy decides to write his story from the greasers' perspective for his upcoming English assignment, and so he begins writing *The Outsiders*.

About the Author

Susan Eloise Hinton was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. At the age of ten, inspired by her love of reading, she began writing stories about cowboys and horses. She wrote *The Outsiders* while attending Will Rogers High School in Tulsa. Her publisher, concerned that male critics and readers would not accept a gang story written by a female, suggested publishing under the name S. E. Hinton. In 1970, Hinton received a B.S. in Education from the University of Tulsa. She followed *The Outsiders* with four young-adult novels—*That Was Then, This Is Now* (1971), *Rumble Fish* (1975), *Tex* (1979), and *Taming The Star Runner* (1988)—all of which share the same setting and themes and were named Best Books for Young Adults by the American Library Association. All but *Taming The Star Runner* were made into films with Hinton consulting and occasionally playing cameo roles. She co-wrote the screenplay for *Rumble Fish* with Francis Ford Coppola. Hinton also wrote two children's books, *Big David, Little David* (1995) and *The Puppy*

Vocabulary

gallantly
sophisticated
aloofness
impersonally
elite
wincing
cunning
resignedly
unceasingly
apprehensive
defiance
contemptuously
ruefully
bewildering
reformatory
premonition

2. What is Ponyboy telling Cherry when he says, "Just don't forget that some of us watch the sunset too" (p. 46)? *(Answers will vary. Though ashamed that Cherry will not acknowledge him at school, Ponyboy realizes they belong to different social classes and are expected not to associate. However, Ponyboy wants Cherry to understand that they do have some things in common and that not all greasers are violent and tough. He is reminding her of the connection they made and that, in some ways, all people are the same.)*
3. Why do you think Cherry believes that she could fall in love with Dally? *(Answers will vary. Cherry knows Dally behaves crudely and can be dangerously mean, yet she is oddly attracted to his "bad boy" nature. Cherry sees Dally's pride and respects his defiance and bravery. Dally is handsome and charming in his arrogance. Cherry may also be jealous of how "free" Dally is and wish to share that with him.)*
4. Review how each gang member deals with difficult circumstances and the social inequality with the Socs. Whose method do you think is best? Why don't any of these methods work for Ponyboy? *(Two-Bit accepts how things are without getting*

upset. Soda ignores the unfairness and loves life instead. Dally hardens himself until he no longer cares. Tim Shepard enjoys the excuse to fight with the Socs. Johnny wishes for a place with ordinary people who are not separated by class and do not fight each other. Ponyboy refuses to accept the unfairness, knowing that greasers should have the same rights as Socs. Answers will vary. Intelligence and education may have taught Ponyboy to think logically, to search for ways to correct injustice, and to strive for more in life.)

5. Why does Johnny feel that the gang cannot replace a caring family? Why might he prefer being hit by his father to being ignored by both his parents? *(Answers will vary. Johnny craves his family's attention and considers negative attention better than none at all. Discussion should cover that while most teenagers prefer to spend time with friends, they still depend on parents for love and security.)*
6. Why do the Socs come after Ponyboy and Johnny? What does Ponyboy mean when he thinks, "[the Socs have] gone too far" (p. 56)? *(The Socs are retaliating because the greasers were talking to Cherry and Marcia at the movies. They probably feel insulted and embarrassed that the girls would rather talk to greasers than their own boyfriends. The Socs, especially Bob and Randy, are too angry or too drunk to stop at just beating up Johnny and Ponyboy. They are willing to drown Ponyboy.)*
7. Do you think Johnny meant to kill Bob? Did he have any other options? *(Answers will vary. Most students will believe Johnny killed Bob in self-defense and that, if he had not, he and Ponyboy would have died. Others may feel that because Johnny carries a switchblade, he was prepared to kill anyone who bothered him [especially since he had been severely beaten before].)*
8. Why do you think Johnny and Ponyboy go to Dally for help following Bob's death? *(Answers will vary. Johnny looks up to Dally, and Ponyboy is terrified to tell Darry what happened. The boys know that Dally will be willing and able to hide them. The boys believe that because of Dally's connections and his "criminal mind," he will know what to do. As Ponyboy remarks, he and Johnny believe "Dallas Winston could do anything" [p. 58].)*

9. Explain the irony of Johnny killing Bob. (*It is ironic that Johnny, the smallest, gentlest, shyest, and most law-abiding member of the gang, commits the most serious crime. The reader would expect Dally to be the gang member to kill a Soc.*)
10. Why doesn't Ponyboy like being in the country? What does he mean by, "There are things worse than being a greaser" (p. 65)? (*Eluding the police is much different than the idyllic country life Ponyboy had imagined. Contrary to his dreams, Ponyboy is away from his family and friends. He realizes that being a fugitive is worse than being a greaser.*)
11. **Prediction:** What does Ponyboy's "creepy feeling" in the church foretell?

Supplementary Activities

1. Comprehension/Writing/Art: Write a poem or create a collage depicting Cherry's questions to Ponyboy: "Did you ever hear of having more than you wanted? So that you couldn't want anything else and then started looking for something else to want" (p. 38)?
2. Art: Illustrate a sunset simultaneously viewed by two people with different perspectives.
3. Critical Thinking: Design a Web site to help teenagers who are thinking about running away from home. Include the causes and effects of running away as well as statistics on teen runaways.
4. Health: Ponyboy daydreams that his life would be better if he lived in the country. Research how daydreaming can affect a person's health. Then, lead a classroom discussion based on your findings.
5. Creative Writing: Choose one of the following, and write a dialogue between the characters: a) Darry and Soda discussing Ponyboy running away after Darry slaps him or b) Randy and the other three Socs discussing Bob's death.

Chapters 5–6

Ponyboy and Johnny reluctantly change their hair to disguise themselves. To pass the time, Ponyboy reads *Gone with the Wind* to Johnny, who compares the gallant Southern characters to Dally. Ponyboy also recites Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." A week later, Dally takes them to a Dairy Queen, where Johnny announces his intention to turn himself in to the police. Returning to the church, they find the old building on fire with schoolchildren trapped inside. Ponyboy and Johnny rescue the children. However, a falling beam breaks Johnny's back and Dally is burned pulling Johnny from the church. At the hospital, the boys are hailed as heroes. Ponyboy reconciles with Darry, realizing Darry's strictness comes from love.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast Ponyboy's and Johnny's reactions to hiding in the old church. Why do you think Johnny takes the lead? (*Ponyboy falls asleep every chance he gets and, when he is awake, either pretends Bob's death did not occur or allows his overactive imagination to make the situation worse. Johnny plans and then takes action, making sure they reach the church and have supplies and the means to disguise themselves. Both boys begin crying, Ponyboy because he is frightened and Johnny over the enormity of taking a human life. After this emotional release, both boys accept the circumstances and are ready to face whatever happens next. Answers will vary. Johnny accepts sole responsibility for killing Bob and acknowledges he will be forever changed. He realizes that Ponyboy should be home with his family instead of hiding out with him.*)

Word Map

Directions: Complete the word map below for each of your chosen vocabulary words.

<p>Synonyms</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Magazine cut-out, drawing, or symbol that shows what the word means</p>
<p>Word</p> <hr/>	
<p>Definition in your own words</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Word used in a sentence</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Story Map

Directions: Fill in each box below with information about the novel.

