

**Reflections:**

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *The Outsiders*

*by S. E. Hinton*

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## **Chapter 1**

1. Ponyboy likes to go to the movies alone because he can really get into the movie when there aren't other people talking and fooling around. Have you ever felt angry when people talk during a movie? What did you do?
2. Do you know anyone like Ponyboy, who is different from the other people in a group because he or she likes to read? Does he or she downplay any interest in reading when with the group?
3. Ponyboy says Dallas grew up too fast, Sodapop never grew up at all, and he doesn't know which is best. What's your opinion?
4. Ponyboy states, "I could have gotten one of the gang to come along, one of the four boys that Dallas, Soda, and I have grown up with and consider family." In your journal explain to a classmate how having close friends can feel like "family" and relate it to your own experience.
5. When Ponyboy speaks about his tight-knit neighborhood, it reminds me of a comment the rapper, Ice Cube, made about the South Central L.A. neighborhood where he grew up. He said that movies depict living there as a grim existence, but there were a lot of good times in the neighborhood. How would you rate your neighborhood in this regard?
6. Ponyboy says, "If it hadn't been for the gang, Johnny would never have known what love and affection are." Although you hear it said a great deal, I find it difficult to believe that a gang provides a person what he or she might not get at home. What's your opinion?

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## Response Journal

7. It's clear why the greasers resent the Socs, but as Ponyboy asks, "Why did *they hate us* so much? We left them alone." Write the dialogue that takes place between Ponyboy and a Soc when Ponyboy asks that question.

**Ponyboy:** Why do the Socs hate us?

**Soc:**

8. " 'Hhhmmm.' He sighed happily, 'it's real nice.' " This is the way Soda describes being in love with Sandy. Consider a time in your life when you felt you were in love; how did it make you feel?

## Chapter 2

9. Assume you have just met Ponyboy. Write a letter to your cousin describing him. Include what you like about him, what you don't like about him, and why you would or would not want him to be your friend.
10. Ponyboy describes Marcia and Cherry as not being "our kind." Describe an incident from your life in which someone considered you as not being "our kind." How did it make you feel? What, if anything, did you do to change that situation?
11. Cherry tells Ponyboy that the "West Side Socs" have "troubles you've never even heard of." Describe the possible Soc problems that Cherry is referring to and contrast/compare them to a greaser's problems. Do you think one group has it worse than the other?
12. At the end of chapter two, Ponyboy dismisses the Socs' problems as being confined to, "good grades, good cars, good girls, madras, and Mustangs and Corvairs." Assume you are a Soc; write a letter to Ponyboy explaining why he is wrong. Do some research and explain what "madras" and "Corvair" relate to.

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13. Ponyboy seems to be prejudiced against greaser girls; he seems to see mostly negative things about them and positive things about Soc girls. Assume you are a greaser girl who looks the way Ponyboy describes. Write a letter trying to get him to understand greaser girls and why they look and act as they do.
14. The book presents stereotypical pictures of “greasers” and “Socs.” Describe the picture presented of each group and, if you can, point out why these portrayals are stereotypes.

### **Chapter 3**

15. Cherry says that the Socs always try to be cool and act like nothing makes a difference to them. Maybe you know someone like that. Why do you suppose people would want to act like that?
16. Ponyboy says it’s not just money that separates the Socs from the greasers; “it’s feelings—the Socs don’t feel anything and the greasers feel too violently.” If you agree with this, give examples; if you don’t agree with it, tell why you disagree.
17. Cherry says that she and her middle-class friends are caught up in a rat race of wanting possessions and never being satisfied with them when they get them. What do you find right or wrong about that statement?
18. Because Ponyboy feels he made a fool of himself in front of everyone with his outburst, he turns on someone weaker than himself, Johnny, and lashes out at him. Relate a time when you saw someone lash out at someone else who was weak simply because the first person was feeling foolish or threatened.

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*Response Journal*

19. Speaking of the financial inequity in life, Ponyboy says, “It ain’t fair.” Two-Bit says, “That’s the way things are, like it or lump it.” I suspect that life won’t always be that way for Ponyboy, but it will be for Two-Bit. What do you think?
20. Although it is popular to say that opposites attract, many people do not find it believable that Cherry could be attracted to Dallas. What do you think?
21. In chapter three, we learn that Ponyboy feels he and Dallas do not get along. Assume you are Ponyboy and write a letter to Dallas explaining what you think is wrong with your relationship and provide possible solutions.
22. As Ponyboy, respond in a dialogue to Cherry after she says:
- Cherry:** “I mean... if I see you in the hall at school or someplace and don’t say hi, well, it’s not personal or anything, but...”
- Ponyboy:**
23. Ponyboy runs out of the house after Dallas hits him. Do you have an older brother or sister who is tough on you? If not, do you know someone that does? What kind of relationship exists between the siblings?
24. Johnny says, “It seems like there’s gotta be someplace without greasers or Socs, with just plain people.” Describe what this place would look like.

## **Chapter 4**

25. Referring to Dallas, Ponyboy states, "It would be a miracle if Dallas could love anything. The fight for self-preservation had hardened him beyond caring." Do you think a person could really be too hardened to love?
26. Discuss how Johnny reacted the night he and Ponyboy were attacked by the Socs. Would you have handled the situation differently? If so, how?

## **Chapter 5**

27. Early in chapter five, why is Ponyboy reluctant to have his hair cut? Why it is so important to him? Is there anything in your appearance about which you feel that strongly?
28. Ponyboy recites Robert Frost's poem, *Nothing Gold Can Stay*. If you understand this poem and you can you relate it to the story, explain it to a classmate who is having trouble seeing the meaning and relationship.
29. Johnny thinks that Dallas is gallant because when he was arrested for something Two-Bit had done, Dallas just took the sentence without mentioning anything he knew. Some people would say Dallas was stupid for going to jail for something Two-Bit had done. What's your opinion?