

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**That Was Then, This is Now**

by S. E. Hinton

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## Background Information

Note to teacher: The novel, narrated by Bryon, the main character, contains content—both language and actions—that is true to the life of a 1970's city kid and to groups removed from society's mainstream. Some of the language and concepts are objectionable, but they are relevant and necessary to the overall point of the novel.

Other novels by S.E. Hinton:

- *The Outsiders* (written when Hinton was sixteen years old)
- *Rumble Fish*
- *Tex*
- *Taming the Star Runner*

S.E. Hinton was born in 1950, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated from the University of Tulsa, married, and continues to live in Tulsa. As a young novelist, Hinton's goal was to provide literature for teenagers that was about teenagers. As a teenage writer, though, she did not have to rely on memory to create teenage characters that were accurate. She was able to portray the social games and need for "coolness" that teens deal with in their lives.

To talk to teens directly about issues of concern, Hinton uses teen narrators who give a first person account of what they feel, experience, and think. Specifically, she wrote:

in the natural dialogue of teens, to explore the discrepancy teens often perceive between what is considered ideal and what is real, and to show some of the disillusionment young people face as they struggle to mature and form their identities and moral codes.

All references come from the Puffin Books edition of *That Was Then, This Is Now*, copyright 1971.

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. identify the causes and the consequences of the protagonist's inner conflict.
2. contrast the values and actions of the two major characters.
3. discuss the following themes in this novel, citing comments and incidents in the story to support the following:
  - a change in values often is the result of maturity and a growing awareness of reality.
  - the consequences of personal choices and moral judgments are often difficult to live with.
  - guilt and loss can create such intense grief that an individual is left emotionally detached.
  - a growing sense of responsibility is an important part of maturing.
  - an early childhood scarred by violence and rejection may leave a child without a sense of morality.
4. compare and contrast the behavior and relationships teenagers had with adults in the 1970's to the present.
5. point out the ways that this novel is and is not a good example of the coming-of-age genre.
6. define the following terms and give examples from the novel to support the definitions:
  - Dynamic and static characters
  - Stereotypical characters
  - Foreshadowing
  - Metaphor
  - Allusion
  - First-person narrator
7. draw inferences about plot and character from comments that only suggest, rather than explicitly say what they mean.
8. list the major incidents in the plot, and identify those incidents that are (1) Exposition (2) Rising Action (3) Climax (4) Falling Action and (5) Denouement.
9. explain the significance of the title of this novel, and discuss how the title relates to the major themes in the novel.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. In what ways is this novel like and unlike the usual coming-of-age story?
2. Explain why you would describe this novel as having either an optimistic or pessimistic view of life. Support your position.
3. Dynamic characters are characters who change substantially in the course of the story, while static characters do not change. Identify the dynamic characters, and state how they change.
4. Stock or stereotype characters are characters who are predictable because the reader immediately recognizes them as a “type of person,” not a real person. Did you think that any of these characters were stereotypes?
5. Identify at least three instances of foreshadowing in the novel.
6. Explain the animal metaphor that is used throughout the novel to describe Mark.
7. State the significance the of this novel has to the developing themes in the book.
8. Discuss the limitations and advantages of the first-person narration.
9. How well do you think the author recreated the language of teenagers?
10. Analyze the author’s ability to portray the actions and thoughts of teenagers of the 1970’s. How similar are teenagers of today to teenagers of the 1970’s?
11. Discuss how the following themes are developed in the novel. Cite comments and incidents from the novel to prove the point.
  - A. Changes in values often are the result of maturity and a growing awareness of reality.
  - B. The consequences of personal choices and moral judgments are often difficult to live with.
  - C. Guilt and loss can create such intense grief that an individual is left emotionally detached or unable to feel.
  - D. A growing sense of responsibility is an important part of maturing.
  - E. An early childhood scarred by violence and rejection may leave a child without a sense of morality.

# That Was Then, This is Now

## Chapter 1

### VOCABULARY

**glumly** – sadly  
**gritted** – clenched tightly  
**hacked** – slang for being annoyed with  
**hustle** – slang for fooling people into doing something or giving something  
**mugged** – slang for being beaten up  
**profound** – deeply intelligent  
**rumbles** – slang for gang fights  
**sprawling** – slang for being thrown down  
**taunting** – teaching with a mocking attitude  
**trailing** – following  
**wincing** – jerked slightly because of pain or distress  
**wistful** – melancholy

1. Why are Bryon and Mark able to “hustle a lot of pool games”?  
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2. What kind of person is Charlie? List his traits and copy two quotations that describe Charlie.  
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3. How do you suppose that Charlie’s comment about Bryon and Mark hustling pool could be an example of foreshadowing?  
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4. According to Bryon, what “gift” does Mark have? Give an example.  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 3**

VOCABULARY

**contorted** –distorted  
**flounced** – pranced  
**groggy** – mentally hazy or fuzzy  
**smirk** – a sarcastic grin  
**sympathetically** – having pity or compassion

1. Why does Charlie think that Bryon has not been able to get a job?

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2. Why is Bryon surprised that Charlie agrees to let him use his car?

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3. Who is Angela Shepard? How do Bryon and Mark feel about her? What had Mark been “right” about?

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4. Who is Curtis? How does Bryon feel about him?

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5. What does Mark do that makes Bryon think of him as a good friend?

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**Chapter 8**

VOCABULARY

**cooler** – slang for prison or reformatory  
**guzzle** – drinking quickly  
**hedging** – not coming to the point

1. Why do Mark and Bryon almost have a fight?

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2. How did Bryon know Mark had been to the hippie commune many times?

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3. Tell three things about the hippies that reveal some of their ideas.

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4. What two things do you find out about M&M?

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