



The Outsiders Discussion Guide

GRADES 7 - 9

Before using this book with your class or recommending the book to students, we suggest reading the book closely to determine if it is a good fit. Consider saying to your students:

"This book contains topics that may be sensitive. Not all books fit all readers. If you are uncomfortable with this book, you have the right to stop reading it, but please pick another."

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Have students complete the [Anticipation Guide](#) to prepare for understanding and connecting with the deeper themes and messages of the story.
- Frontload vocabulary with the [Vocabulary Guide](#).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1 - 3

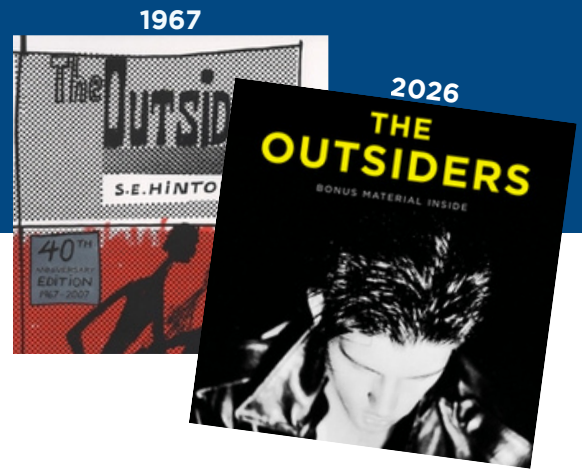
- Ponyboy describes Darry and Sodapop very differently. What does the way he talks about each brother tell you about how he feels toward them at the start?
- When Cherry tells Ponyboy "things are rough all over," what has just happened in their conversation that leads her to say it? What does she want him to understand?
- Ponyboy believes money is the only real difference between greasers and Socs. Cherry disagrees. Whose view does the text support so far, and what evidence points that way?
- The story comes entirely through Ponyboy's eyes. How might Darry tell the story of the night Ponyboy came home late very differently?

Chapters 4 - 6

- Early on, Johnny is described as jumpy and afraid of his own shadow. What choices does he make at the fountain and at the fire that show him changing?
- The killing at the fountain happens fast. What details in the scene help explain why Johnny used the knife?
- Ponyboy reads the Frost poem aloud at the church, and neither boy fully understands it. Why do you think the author places it here, right before the fire?
- When Dally scolds Ponyboy at the church, Ponyboy says he "sounded just like Darry." What does that comparison reveal about how Dally really feels about the boys?

Chapters 7 - 9

- Randy tells Ponyboy he won't go to the rumble. What has changed in him, and what does he reveal that Ponyboy didn't expect a Soc to say?
- Two-Bit says the only thing keeping Darry from being a Soc is the gang. What does that suggest actually separates the two groups — money, or something else?
- In the hospital, Johnny refuses to see his mother. What in the scene shows why, and how does the gang fill the role his parents don't?
- Before the rumble, each gang member fights for a different reason. What does Ponyboy realize about himself when he can't name a good reason to fight?



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During Reading Cont: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 10 - 12

- After Johnny dies, Ponyboy insists he isn't dead and even claims he killed Bob. Why might his mind protect him this way?
- Johnny's last words are "Stay gold." Using the poem from the church, what do you think he's asking Ponyboy to hold onto?
- Ponyboy says one friend died a hero and one a hoodlum, yet calls both "gallant." What does he mean — and do you agree?
- The novel's last sentence is the same as its first. Once you realize Ponyboy has been writing all of this as his English assignment, how does that change the way you read the whole book?

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- Return to Cherry's line, "things are rough all over." Across all three groups, Greasers, Socs, and the "ones in the middle" does the novel prove that idea, or complicate it?
- Which relationship changed the most for you over the book: Ponyboy and Darry, or your own view of the Socs? Point to the moment that shifted it.
- Johnny's letter says there's "still lots of good in the world." After everything that happens, do you find that message convincing? Use the text to defend your answer.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.