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The Outsiders
S. E. Hinton



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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 down-play any interest in reading when with the group?
3. Ponyboy says Darry 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 Darry, 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?

The Outsiders

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.

Chapter 6

30. When she is acting as a spy for the greasers, do you think Cherry is doing the right thing? Is it something you would do under the same circumstances?
31. Johnny considers turning himself in to the police. If you had been there and he asked for your opinion, what would you say?

Johnny: “What should I do?”

You:

Chapter 7

32. Randy tells Ponyboy, “You can’t win, even if you whip us, you’ll still be where you were before—at the bottom. And we’ll still be the lucky ones with all the breaks.” Assuming that Randy is correct, why is the rumble so important to the greasers?
33. What is Randy’s dilemma about the rumble that night? What would you say to Randy if he asked you for advice?
34. As a newspaper reporter, write an article about Johnny and Ponyboy saving the children from the burning church.
35. Randy’s friend Bob was kind of wild, and Randy seems to be blaming Bob’s parents because they never set limits on Bob. According to Randy, that’s what Bob wanted. With how much of what Randy said can you agree?

Chapters 11 and 12

55. Early in chapter twelve, Soda runs out of the house because Darry and Ponyboy are arguing. Later, Soda tells the two that he feels he gets caught in the middle and that their arguments are tearing the family apart. Has there been an incident in which you may have been caught in the middle and were forced to choose sides? How did you deal with it?

Wrap Up

56. The gang fight in the park and the earlier stabbing death, particularly since it took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and not Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York City, might attract the attention of a news magazine show like *60 Minutes*. Choose a show of this type and write a scenario. Include the name of the interviewer, the person he or she interviews, the scenes and locations televised, and the opening and closing editorial comments of the interviewer.
57. What did you think was done well or not so well in this novel?
58. If you were in a one-on-one conversation with the author, what would you say?
59. When you read the short biography of the author at the end of the novel, were you surprised by anything?
60. When you read the last page of this novel, what were your thoughts and/or feelings?