The Outsiders

Reading Questions

Directions: Answer all questions on a separate sheet of notebook paper. If you are unable to finish the questions in class, a copy can be downloaded at: http://mrsauld.wikispaces.com/The+Outsiders. Be sure to carefully number each response. These questions will be checked periodically for homework/classwork points. You will be allowed to use your notes on your final test for The Outsiders.

Chapter One Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the narrator of the novel? How old is he?
2. What happened to the Curtis boys’ parents?
3. Name the two different groups of teenagers in the novel.
4. What is the difference between “tough” and “tuff”?
5. Why did the Socs beat up Ponyboy on his way home from the movies?
6. Why does Ponyboy have a hard time with his oldest brother (Darry)?
7. How does Ponyboy describe himself as being “different” from the rest of the Greasers?
8. Why did “Two-Bit” get his nickname?
9. How does Ponyboy feel about Steve and why?
10. In what ways is Dallas “Dally” different from the rest of the gang?
11. Why does Ponyboy refer to Johnny Cade as “the gang’s pet” and “everyone’s kid brother”?
12. What kind of girls do greasers usually date and why?

Chapter Two Comprehension Questions

13. Where do the Socs hang out?
14. Where do the Greasers hang out?
15. What kind of rules do gang members’ follow in fights?
16. Which Greaser “…had spent three years on the wild side of New York and had been arrested at the age of ten”?
17. Which Greaser looks like “a little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers…”?
18. What is Johnny’s home life like?
19. When Ponyboy and Johnny first meet Cherry and Marcia at the movies, how do the girls react to the Greasers?
20. Why did Cherry and Marcia leave their dates?
21. Why do you think that Johnny spoke up to Dally at the movies?
22. What does Cherry learn about the Greasers while she is at the movies with Ponyboy and Johnny?
23. What does Ponyboy learn about the Socs while he is talking to Cherry?
24. The last two sentences of Chapter Two are an example of foreshadowing. What is the definition of foreshadowing, and what do you predict will happen in the story based upon the sentences from Chapter Two.
Characterization, Chapters 1-2

In the opening of the book, Hinton introduces a number of characters. It is important to distinguish these characters from the start and recognize their relationships to each other. Often character relationships can be better understood when shown on a simple visual diagram.

*Read the descriptions below. Match each description with a character listed and write the character’s name on the blank.*

Characters: Dally, Soda, Steve, Johnny, Ponyboy, Two-Bit, Darry

___________________ A. hardworking head of the house
___________________ B. happy-go-lucky and handsome
___________________ C. smart but no common sense
___________________ D. toughest and meanest of the gang
___________________ E. Soda’s best friend
___________________ F. pet of the gang
___________________ G. wisecracker and shoplifter

1. Which character seems to be the weakest link or the one most likely to desert the group? Explain your answer.

2. What link is there between characters E and B?

3. Give two reasons why you might associate characters C and F.

Explain the relationship between characters A, B, and C.
Chapters 3 & 4 Comprehension Questions

25. What does Cherry tell Ponyboy is the “real” difference between the Socs and the Greasers?
26. Who is Mickey Mouse and why is he so important to Sodapop?
27. Why does Ponyboy remind Cherry that they both watch the same sunsets?
28. Why was Johnny scared when the blue Mustang pulled up next to them on the street when they were walking the girls home from the movies?
29. Name three things Cherry tells Ponyboy before she gets into the car with Bob (45-46/42)? How do they make Ponyboy feel?
30. What happens between Ponyboy and Darry after Ponyboy falls asleep in the park?
31. Why was Darry so upset with Ponyboy?
32. Describe the events that lead up to the death of the Soc.
33. Who do Ponyboy and Johnny turn to when they are in trouble and why?
34. What does Dally Winston give the boys to take with them to Windrixville?
35. What plan is established to help Ponyboy and Johnny “lay low”?
36. Describe where Ponyboy and Johnny hideout.

Chapters 5 & 6 Comprehension & Analysis Questions

1. Do you think that hiding out was the best thing for Ponyboy and Johnny to do? Why or why not?
2. What did Johnny admire about Dally?
3. What drastic change do Ponyboy and Johnny make to their appearance? Why was this so hard for them to do?
4. What item (besides cards) does Johnny buy to help pass the time? How does this item help to disprove a stereotype about Greasers?
5. What do you think is the main idea of the poem on page 77/69? How might the Johnny and Pony connect to this main idea?
6. Name three pieces of news that Dally relays from back home.
7. Why do you think that Cherry chooses to associate with—and later help—Johnny and Ponyboy? Is she really a “spy”?
8. Why do you think that Johnny decided that they should turn themselves in?
9. What bad news does Dally deliver to Johnny about his parents, and how does Johnny react?
10. Summarize the events that occurred at the church when Ponyboy, Johnny, and Dally returned and found it on fire.
11. What does Ponyboy realize about Darry when he sees him at the hospital? What makes Ponyboy realize this and what is his response.
Simile and Metaphor

One characteristic of Ponyboy’s story telling style is the inclusion of many figures of speech, especially similes and metaphors when he is making comparisons.

Directions: Read each phrase below and decide if it is a simile or metaphor, then underline the two things being compared.

1. Dally grinned wolfishly
2. The cinders and embers sting and smart like ants
3. Ponyboy sees a ribbon of highway
4. The water is like liquid ice
5. Explosions from the fire sound like gunfire
6. Living with his haircut is like living in a Halloween costume Ponyboy can’t get out of
7. Pony fears he'll drown in the smoke
8. Dally’s word is law
9. The horizon was a thin golden line
10. Being in a burning ember is like being in a red hell
11. As in waves, memories rushed over Pony

In chapter five, Ponyboy recites Robert Frost’s “Nothing Gold Can Stay.” Reread the poem and notice how Frost expresses his message with the help of metaphors.

1. List two ways in which youth might be compared to gold
2. List two ways that youth might be compared to a flower.
3. Do you agree with Frost’s metaphors that “youth is gold” or “youth is a flower?” Why or why not?
4. Write another simile or metaphor for youth. Explain why your comparison is appropriate.
Chapters 7 & 8 Comprehension & Analysis Questions

1.) What news does the doctor report about the medical condition of Johnny and Dally?

2.) What is a juvenile delinquent? If you are unsure ask a parent or look it up online.

3.) Summarize the newspaper article “Juvenile Delinquents Turn Heroes” which Ponyboy reads in Chapter 7.

4.) Describe Ponyboy’s dream and explain how this may be a premonition.

5.) What inference can you make about Soda based on the following lines found on page 113/100?
   “Bye,’ I said. I heard our Ford’s vvvrrrooooom and thought: Soda’s driving. And they left.”

6.) Explain what Randy thought was Bob’s “real” problem.

7.) Why do you think Randy doesn’t want to fight in the rumble?

8.) After his conversation with Randy, why does Pony think it is better to see Socs as "just guys"?
   What do you think he means by this?

9.) What does Pony mean when he says, “We needed Johnny just as much as he needed the gang. And for the same reason”?

10.) What causes Johnny to pass out while Ponyboy is visiting?

11.) What item does Dally borrow from Two-Bit?

12.) Explain the fine line that Darry walks between being a Greaser vs. a Soc.

13.) What news does Cherry deliver to Ponyboy and Two Bit about the upcoming rumble?

14.) What does Cherry mean when she says Bob "wasn't just anyone" on p.129?
Understanding More about Conflict

This book is packed with many different conflicts. **Conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces.** It is the basis for plot and serves to drive the action of the story forward. Five types of conflict are defined below:

**EXTERNAL CONFLICT**
1. **Character vs. Character** - the character has a problem with one or more characters in the story
2. **Character vs. Society** - the character has a problem with a part of society (government, school, tradition, etc.)
3. **Character vs. Nature** - the character has a problem caused by some force of nature (cold, storm, etc.)
4. **Character vs. Fate** - the character has a problem with a force such as fate or luck

**INTERNAL CONFLICT**
5. **Character vs. Self** - the character has a physical problem or an inner mental or emotional problem

Example:
To save Pony from being drowned, Johnny stabs Bob
Conflict: **Character vs. Character**  Johnny vs. Bob

1. When Pony and Johnny run away from the crime, the face being hunted down by the police.
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

2. Johnny tries to look tough in front of the Socs, but there is panic in his eyes and he is white with fear.
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

3. Pony tries to keep himself warm in the cold evening air
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

4. Pony feels bitter because the Socs enjoy a rich, easy life, while the greasers are poor and have all the rough breaks.
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

5. Cherry finds herself raving about a beer blast when she doesn’t really think it’s “supercool.”
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

6. Darry is so angry at Ponyboy for staying out late that he slaps Pony hard.
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

7. Pony and Johnny fight their sleepiness as they climb the hill to the church
Conflict: Who or what is involved in the conflict?

- **Review your reading up to this point. Predict what you think will be the main conflict of the novel. Then identify what type of conflict this is.**

Main conflict:
Type of Conflict:

The main conflict gives a valuable clue as to what message about life, or theme, the author is trying to express. Based on your prediction above, explain what you think the message or theme of the novel will be.
Chapters 9-10 Comprehension & Analysis Questions

1.) Why does each of the Greasers fight?

2.) What does Ponyboy’s reason for fighting tell you about his character?

3.) How is Tim Shepard’s gang different than the Curtises’ group of Greasers?

4.) What feelings does Ponyboy recognize in Darry as he prepares to fight Paul? Why might Darry be feeling these emotions?

5.) What are Johnny’s last words to Ponyboy? What do you think he meant?

6.) Explain how Ponyboy’s comment: “I wondered vaguely why no one was doing somersaults off the steps this time” (153/133), describes the change in mood.

7.) Why do you think Dally may have wanted to die?

8.) Describe the circumstances when Dally encounters the police.

9.) How does Pony’s dreaming, or lying to himself, finally work in this chapter?

10.) Why is Ponyboy concerned about what he may have called out while he was sick and delirious?

Conflict Review

In chapters 9 and 10 several conflicts arise that threaten the characters in the book.

A person may be threatened by either outer or inner forces. When a character struggles against some outer force (another person, group, or force of nature), this is known as external conflict. When a character struggles against a force within himself or herself (a decision, moral choice, or handicap), it is an internal conflict.

Directions: Choose the character that best matches the conflict. Then identify it as internal or external.

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against his desire to fight the Socs.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against the policeman in the vacant lot.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against Dally’s belief that beating the Socs is important.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against the world’s injustice in taking away the only thing he loves. - Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against headache, concussion, and fever.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against his painful memories of Dally’s and Johnny deaths.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against a former high school friend named Paul.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against fatal injuries received in rescuing the children.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against his desire to keep Johnny from getting tough.- Internal or external conflict?

(Darry, Pony, Johnny, Dally) struggles against Pony’s desire to participate in the rumble.- Internal or external conflict?
Chapters 11-12 Comprehension & Analysis Questions

1.) What are some of the thoughts that go through Ponyboy’s head as he looks at Bob’s picture in the yearbook?

2.) Why does Randy come to visit Ponyboy?

3.) Explain why Pony would prefer anyone’s hate over their pity.

4.) Why did Ponyboy say that he’d killed Bob and the Johnny wasn’t dead?

5.) Explain why Darry calling Ponyboy “little buddy” was important.

6.) To what “circumstances” does Ponyboy’s teacher refer when he talks to him about his grade in English? To what circumstances does Ponyboy think his teacher is referring?

7.) Make an inference. What did the doctor tell the judge during his testimony?

8.) Make another inference. Why does the judge call Darry and Sodapop to the stand to testify?

9.) Name some ways that Ponyboy has changed since the beginning of the story. Do you think these changes will be permanent? Why or why not?

10.) What came in the mail and caused Soda to get very upset? What did this make Ponyboy realize?

11.) Explain how Pony and Darry were playing “tug of war” with Soda. What effect did this have on Soda?

12.) What do we learn was so special about Johnny (178/154)?

13.) What does Ponyboy write about for his English assignment? Why?
Symbolism

There are several important symbols used in this book that help the author communicate on a deeper level. A symbol is an object or action that stands for itself and yet also suggests another meaning. For example, a dove is a type of bird. But it can also be used to suggest the idea of peace.

Understanding the use of symbols in this book provides important clues for determining the theme, or message of the novel.

Directions: Choose the appropriate symbolic meaning listed below for each symbol. Then give evidence from the novel to support your choice.

Example:
Symbol: baloney
Meaning: unfulfilled dreams
Evidence: After Johnny’s death, Pony denies he ever liked baloney. The baloney reminds Pony of the week he spent with Johnny in the church and the fire that fatally injured Johnny.

1. Symbol: sunset (C. 3, 8, 12)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

2. Symbol: Mickey Mouse (C. 3)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

3. Symbol: the country (C. 3)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

4. Symbol: abandoned church (C. 4, 5)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

5. Symbol: cut hair (C. 5)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

6. Symbol: Gone With the Wind (C. 5, 8, 12)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

7. Symbol: gold (C. 5, 9, 12)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

8. Symbol: burning church (C. 6)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

9. Symbol: rumble (C. 9)
   Meaning:
   Evidence:

10. Symbol: unloaded gun (C. 5, 10)
    Meaning:
    Evidence:

Short Answer

The Outsiders begins with a symbolic action: Pony leaves the darkness of a movie theater and steps out into the bright sunlight.

In at least three paragraphs, explain how this action is symbolically developed in the novel. How does Ponyboy go from an unreal to a real world during the novel? In what ways does Pony’s story reflect a movement from the dark into the light?