

Name
Date
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Companion Book
The Outsiders

Introduction:

The Outsiders is about two rival groups in the late 60's. The main character Ponyboy, is a part of the group called the Greasers. Rough, tough, and dedicated to one another, this group is seen as the "hoods" of the town. The rival group, the Socs or socials, are from the richer West side of town. They are considered to have everything and like to cause trouble just because they can. In the book, we watch what happens when the two groups interact. Friends are made in unexpected places and friends are lost. Ponyboy Curtis figures out what it means to be a greaser and that his gang will always be there for each other no matter what happens. This companion book will break down the theme, characters, character relationships, and setting in the story. It will explain how each part plays into one another and why each part is significant.

Chapter 1: Analysis of Themes

There are many themes in *The Outsiders*. So many, that I am only going to really highlight a few key themes. The first theme that I want to touch on is, things are not always as they appear. This theme first shows up in the book when Cherry tells Ponyboy that, "Things are rough all over," on page. Cherry was explaining to Ponyboy that even though the Socs seem to have everything they could ever want, they have problems too. This theme is also apparent when characters in the story act differently or opposite of how they'd normally act. For example in chapter 4 when Johnny kills Bob, this is totally out of character for Johnny. This part in the book showed a whole new side to Johnny; a side that no one expected him to have. Other examples of this are when Darry hits Ponyboy and when Dally first acts kind and caring towards Johnny.

Now that I've highlighted on how characters change, I want to describe another theme that is found throughout the book, stay true to who you are. This is a very important theme, primarily for the main character Ponyboy. The book starts off with explaining how Pony is different from the others, on page 2, he says, "...so I'm not like them. And nobody in our gang digs movies and books the way I do. For a while there, I thought I was the only person who did. So I loned it." Later on in the book on page 77, Ponyboy tells Johnny a poem written by Robert Frost, "Natures first green is gold." In the hospital, while on his deathbed, Johnny later tells Pony to "Stay gold." meaning, stay true to who you are and never lose your innocence. This theme is significant because it

follows Pony throughout the story where he is faced with many obstacles, but overcomes them, all while staying true to who he is.

Social class effects the groups you are placed in or the groups you join, is another theme found in the Outsiders. This theme is shown between the two rival gangs, the greasers and the socs. In the book, the greasers are of the lower income East side, whereas the Socs are from the more wealthy West side. The two groups distinguish themselves from one another by more than just their money. Looks and attitudes also play a large role in how each group identifies themselves.

There are many other themes that are shown throughout the book. Themes that involve loyalty, self-sacrifice, honor, and violence. Because the book touches on so many universal truths, it is very relatable to a wide variety of readers. Most readers can form a connection to the book in one way or another.

Chapter 2: Character Development

As we follow Ponyboy through the book, we see the challenges he faced and the decisions he had to make. In the very beginning of the story, he is aware that he is different from the others in his group. Even though he knows this, he is not confident in how he *does* fit within the group. “ “ page. This statement is showing that he knows that he is different from the rest and because of that, he often “lones” it.

After Cherry says, “Things are rough all over,” Pony has a realization that even though the Socs and Greasers seem very different from each other; maybe they weren’t so different after all. “Maybe the two different worlds we lived in weren’t so different. We saw the same sunset” page 54. This moment was when Pony really started seeing the Socs in a different light. In chapter 7 in the book, Pony reflects back to what Cherry had said about things being rough all over. When he did this he thought, “Things were rough all over, but it was better that way. That way you could tell the other guy was human too.” He realized that the Socs are people too and they have problems just like anyone else.

When Ponyboy and Johnny are jumped by the Socs, he experiences another life altering event. Johnny stabs Bob and Pony chooses to run away with him without any hesitation. When he does this, we see how loyal Pony is to Johnny. Pony also shows his aversion to the violence by the way he acts right after Johnny stabbed Bob. Pony repeatedly asks, “What are we going to do?” and he gets sick when he first sees Bob. This shows Pony’s innocence by how he is not reacting well to the situation. Being the youngest member of his gang, Ponyboy is less aware of the violence that can come

about from situations like this. He also shows his aversion to violence on page, where he tells Cherry, "I could never hold a blade to someone."

Immediately after knowing there were children in the burning church, Pony ran in without worrying about his own safety. He felt as though it was there fault for the fire and because of that he needed to save the children. "I realized the church was on fire because of the cigarette butts we left" page. Johnny followed him in, to help the children as well. Johnny, Dally, and Pony were all injured from this at varying degrees of severity. Johnny ends up dying from his injuries. Before he dies, he tells Pony to, "Stay gold.." Meaning, stay true to who you are. He recognized Pony's innocence as a positive attribute and wanted Pony to always keep that part of himself.

Pony does stay true to himself through the book, but there are some things that changed in him resulting the death of Johnny and Dally. The first change was when he realized that Darry really does care about him and makes a conscious effort to not fight with him as much. Pony also changes in the way he carries himself in the group. At first he was a loner and felt out of place. By the end of the story, he feels secure in the group and knows that he is a valued member of it. He also is more confident in himself, which is seen when he stands up to the Socs at the end of book with a broken bottle. The broken bottle signifies his transition from being against violence to using it to defend himself. This change came about from losing Johnny and Dally. It also came from witnessing more violence than he previously had and participating in the rumble. By the end of the book, Pony still had his love of books and movies, but he is more confident in who he is and where he fits in the world.

Chapter 3: Character Relationships

There are many characters in the book *The Outsiders*. Steve and Two-bit are members of Pony's gang. Steve is his least favorite person in the crew. Pony doesn't understand how his brother and favorite person, Soda, can be best friends with someone like Steve. Steve's rough demeanor and don't care attitude was what made him Pony's least favorite. This is probably because it contrasted Pony's personality so much. Two-bit is the jokester of the group and is not someone who Pony strongly likes or dislikes. He is more of a neutral member when it comes to Pony.

Soda on the other hand is Pony's favorite person. His happy nature helps lighten the mood and Pony relies on him to be the buffer between him and his other brother Darry. Soda is an advocate for Pony and is always coming to his defense, especially when it comes to Darry. Soda is Pony's favorite because he can depend on him to always have his back and put a smile on his face.

For most of the book, Pony feels as though Darry, his oldest brother and guardian, is constantly getting after him for no reason. His cold and tough demeanor

only adds to this. Darry is not open about his love for Pony and in doing so, gives Pony the impression that he doesn't actually love him. It isn't until the end of the book when Pony sees that Darry does care about him and is harder on him because he is afraid to lose him like their parents. After understanding this, Pony and Darry's relationship begins to change.

Dally begins as someone who Pony is not very fond of. It is only after he sees Dally having a kinder side towards Johnny and helping them when Bob was murdered, that Pony develops a respect for him. Dally appears as someone who doesn't really care about anyone or anything. We see though that he does care a lot about Johnny, Pony, and the gang, as he risks his own safety for others. He saves Pony and Johnny during the church fire and helped them run away to begin with. Pony's feeling towards Dally developed in a more positive light after he had repeatedly showed he cared about people other than himself.

Pony's best friend, Johnny, had the most similar demeanor to Pony. Both were slightly out of place in the crew and had more reserved or quiet personalities. Pony and Johnny both showed the utmost loyalty to one another when agreeing to run away together without any hesitation. First was when Pony told Johnny they'd run together after Darry hit him. The second was when Pony ran away with Johnny right after he had killed Bob. Johnny appreciated the childish innocence that Pony had. He understood him in a way that others did not. When Johnny told Pony to, "Stay gold..." he was telling him not to lose that innocence and to stay true to who he was.

Cherry Valance is a Soc girl who teaches Pony that they weren't as different as he thought. She taught him that everyone has problems and that looks can be deceiving. Cherry had a maturity to her that allowed her to look past appearances and beyond their differences. By doing this she taught Pony a valuable lesson that helped shape who he was by the end of the book.

The Socs and Greasers fought throughout the whole book. Even though Pony began to see that the two groups weren't that much different from one another, he still stood by his gang as they fought the Socs.

Chapter 4: Setting

Set in rural Oklahoma in the 1960's, the characters in the book, act, dress, and speak in a way that is authentic to that time and place. The time that the book was set in is especially apparent in how they dress and talk. The separation of the town is also significant because it distinguishes the two groups, the socs and greasers, from one another. Although this book is set many years ago, many of the problems and social issues are still very relevant today. Our society still has social separation based on

money, race, and where you live. The separation of these groups is part of the main theme and plot in the book.

Conclusion:

The Outsiders covers a broad range of themes, making it relatable to many people. When the reader is able to make a connection to those themes they can develop a better understanding of the book and topics covered. Being divided, loss, and being true to yourself are all things that can be found in the book. Ponyboy and his relationships with his gang help shape the story by showing their undying loyalty for one another and the strength of their friendships. Pony learned many valuable lessons as he discovered more about who he was and where his place was within the group and the world. Many readers can understand the feelings and emotions that Ponyboy goes through in some capacity. Even though the book was written and set many years ago, the messages behind the text are still relevant and impactful today.