PinkMonkey Literature Notes on . . .

http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/

Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.

The Outsiders

by

S.E. (Susan Eloise) Hinton

1967

MonkeyNotes Study Guide by TheBestNotes Staff

http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/

Reprinted with permission from TheBestNotes.com Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved
Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The Outsiders is set in a large, unnamed town in the United States. It is about a gang of teenage boys who are called the Greasers. They live on the east side of the town, also known as the wrong side of town; the eastside neighborhood is described in graphic detail. The story is set in the 1960's and …..

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Pony Curtis - the narrator and protagonist of the story. His elder brother, Darry, brings him up after the death of his parents in a car accident. Though Pony resents him, he is also in awe of him. He also idolizes his middle brother, Soda. All three brothers belong to a gang of poor teenagers called the Greasers, named for their long, oily hair. Their bitter rivals are the Socs, the rich kids living on the west side of town. Pony is involved in the murder of a Soc named Bob. After the killing, he runs away with his friend Johnny to Windrixville. There they hide in an abandoned church. When the church catches on fire, they bravely rescue some children trapped in it. Johnny is badly injured and has to be hospitalized. When he dies, Pony is…….

Johnny Cade - a member of the Greasers whom the other gang members try to protect. His father constantly beats him up, and his mother either ignores his presence or screams at him. He becomes a nervous wreck after he is terribly beaten up by the Socs. He starts carrying a switchblade in his pocket; when he and Pony are attacked by the Socs, he uses the knife to kill Bob in self-defense. He hides with…..

***Dallas Winston* (*Dally*)** - the toughest, coldest, and meanest of the Greasers. He has been in and out of jail since the age of ten. He gives Pony and Johnny a gun and some money when they come to him after Bob's death. He also tells them where to hide. During the rescue, Dally plunges into the ……

Minor Characters

***Darrel Curtis* (*Darry*)** - Pony's oldest brother. After the death of his parents, he takes care of Soda and Pony, his younger brothers. Darry is twenty years old, over six feet tall, and broad-shouldered and muscular. His pale blue-green eyes have a determined set to them. He longs for his brothers and him to rise above being a Greaser; therefore, he encourages Pony to study and get good grades. Pony misunderstands his……

***Sodapop Curtis* (*Soda*)** - Pony's middle brother. He truly loves life even though he is a school dropout who works at a gas station. Pony idolizes him and considers him to be the most handsome……

Steve Randle - Soda's best friend and a member of the Greasers. He works at the same gas station as Soda.

***Two-Bit Mathews* (*Keith*)** - a member of the Greasers who always has to state his opinion (or get his two bits in). He is well known for being a shoplifter and carrying a black-handled……

***Sherri Valence* (*Cherry*)** - a girl who is friends with the Socs. She meets Pony, Johnny, and Two-Bit at a drive-in. She and Pony have a lot in common, but the friendship is not allowed to develop because of their different social status. She is supposedly in love with Bob even though she knows……

Additional characters are identified in the complete study guide.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - The protagonist of a story is the main character who traditionally undergoes some sort of change. Pony Curtis is the teenage narrator and protagonist of the novel. When his parents were killed in a car accident, Darry, his twenty-year-old brother, began to provide for him. He resents Darry's bullying manner, not……

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

Antagonist **-** The antagonist of a story is the force that provides an obstacle for the protagonist. The antagonist does not always have to be a single character or even a character at all. Pony's antagonist is his status in life. Poor and from the wrong side of town, he gets no breaks in life, even though he is a good student and studies hard. He joins the Greasers because it is the thing to do if you live on the……

Climax **-** The climax of a plot is the major turning point that allows the protagonist to resolve the conflict. The climax occurs when Pony reads the letter that Johnny has written to him before his……

Outcome **-** The novel ends as a tragic comedy. Even though Bob, Johnny, and Dally have needlessly perished, Pony overcomes his problems, largely due to Johnny's letter of encouragement. He reconciles with Darry, finally understanding how much his older brother loves and cares for him. He also accepts that…..

SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Pony Curtis is a member of the Greasers, a gang of poor teenagers with long, oily hair and from the wrong side of town. While returning home from the movies one night, Pony is attacked by the Socs, a gang of rich kids from the west side of town. Pony is afraid that they are going to kill him and starts shouting for help. His brothers (Darry and Soda), along with Steve Randle, Two Bit Matthews, Dally Winston, and Johnny Cade, rush to his rescue. After ascertaining that Pony is relatively unharmed, Darry shouts at him for walking alone and tells him that he should use a bit of common sense.

Darry is Pony's oldest brother who has provided for him since his parents were killed in a car accident. Darry knows that Pony is smart and wants him to do well in life. As a result, he constantly nags Pony about doing well in school and making good grades. Pony resents his brother's intrusion in his life and his unemotional ways. In contrast, Pony adores Soda, his middle brother. He is a high school dropout, who works at a gas station with his best friend Steve Randal. Two-Bit Matthews is a member of the Greasers who always tries to have the last word on things. Johnny Cade is another gang member whom everyone tries to protect, because his father constantly tries to beat him up. The toughest character of the Greaser's gang is Dally, who has been in and out of jail since the age of ten.

Pony, Johnny, and Dally decide to go to the drive-in the next evening. There they meet Cherry and Marcia, friends of the Socs. Dally is rude and obnoxious. When Cherry throws a coke in his face, he stalks off in anger. Pony and Johnny are left to watch the movie with the girls, but they are soon joined by Two Bits. After the movie they decide to walk to Two Bits' house to pick up his car in order to take the girls home. Along the way, Pony and Cherry find that they have a lot in common; they are both are …….

THEMES

Major Theme

The major theme of the novel revolves around the purposelessness of any gang of teenagers. The book centers on the foolish gang rivalry existing between the Socs, the rich kids from the west side of town, and the Greasers, the poor kids from the east side.

Pony, the protagonist of the story, is bitter about the fact that the wealthy Socs have nice cars, fancy clothes, and girlfriends; things are simply easier for them than for the Greasers. Because the Socs are convinced that they are better, they constantly pick on members of the Greasers, who fight back. During one squabble, Bob, one of the Socs, is murdered by Johnny in self-defense. Then Johnny, while hiding out in a church, is killed…..

Minor Theme

Related to the major theme of the book is the theme that a teenager can rise above his circumstances through hard work, patience, and determination. Pony is the proof of this theme. Even though he is born into poverty, loses his parents in a car accident at an early age, and participates in the Greasers, by the…..

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

MOOD

When the story opens, the mood is bitter and rebellious. Pony and the other Greasers resent the fact that the Socs have lots of money, nice cars, fancy clothes, and many girlfriends. In contrast, they are poor and must work extremely hard for everything they have. In addition, society is prejudiced against them because of their clothes, long hair, and greasy appearance. In the middle of the novel, the mood becomes increasingly angry. The Greasers are tired of the Socs always picking on them, and the Socs are furious about the……

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Susan Eloise Hinton was born in 1948 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she was raised. She was a good student and attended the University of Tulsa, majoring in education. Her first novel, *The Outsiders*, was written when she was sixteen years old and published in 1967. Though it is her first book, it is probably her best known. The story revolves around two rival gangs, one rich and the other poor. The book is remarkable for its action-packed plot, believable characters, and realistic language. Her second novel, *That was Then, This is Now* (1971), again deals with the problems of teenage boys and drug abuse. *Rumble Fish* (1975) is the story of a fourteen- year-old boy, who tries to emulate his elder brother, a former gang leader. *Tex* (1979) deals with two teenage brothers who have been abandoned by their father. *Taming the Star Runner* (1988) is about……

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Outsiders was published in 1967, a restless time in the United States when teenagers were outspoken and rebellious. They hated the Vietnam War and the establishment that caused it to continue. They resented the fact that young people from minorities and underprivileged backgrounds were not given opportunities to succeed. To voice their dissatisfaction, they had sit-ins and protests; many became hippies, and others turned to drugs. It was this society that formed the background for Hinton's first novel. She was only sixteen years old at the time of its publication. As a result of her being a teenager herself, she was able to……

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 1

Summary

Ponyboy Curtis steps out from a movie theater into the bright sunlight, thinking about Paul Newman and catching a ride home. He never likes to walk alone in town, for he is fearful of being jumped by a rival gang member. Pony is a Greaser, a gang member from the poor, east side of town; his bitter enemies are the Socs, the rich gang of teens from the west side of town. The two groups are constantly picking fights with each other.

Pony notices a red Corvair trailing him. It finally pulls up beside him, and five Socs emerge and surround him. One of them pulls out a knife, flips open the blade, and holds it against his throat, while the others pin him down on the ground. Afraid of being killed, Pony starts screaming for his brothers or anybody else who might be around to help. When the Socs hear shouts and the sound of pounding feet, they run away. Some of the Greasers, including Steve Randle, Two-Bit Matthews, Dally Winston, and Johnny Cade, chase after the fleeing Socs and chunk rocks in their direction.

Darry, Pony's oldest brother, is in the group who has come to his aid. He pulls Pony to his feet and asks him if he is seriously injured. He then berates Pony for going out unaccompanied. Darry, who is twenty years old, is Pony's guardian, for their parents have been killed in an automobile accident. He dropped out of school in order to work and provide for his brothers. Now he pins all of his hopes on Pony, knowing he is bright and a good student. The middle brother, Sodapop, seems to be much kinder than Darry. He notices that Pony is bleeding from a cut on his face and is genuinely concerned. Soda is also a high school dropout and works at a gas station.

In bed that night, Pony wonders why the Socs hate the Greasers so much. He resents that they call him a hood and pick on him constantly. His latest encounter earlier in the evening has really shaken him, and he cannot go

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

to sleep. Soda thinks he is upset because Darry is always hollering at him. He tells him that Darry is really proud of him because he is intelligent, but Pony is skeptical about his oldest brother's affection. To cheer Pony up, Soda lets him in on a secret; he tells him that he intends to marry Sandy after she finishes school.

Notes

From the first page of the novel, it is obvious that Pony is to be the first person narrator and protagonist of the story. It also becomes obvious that he will often shift his story from the present to the past, using flashbacks to give important background information. Pony establishes that he is a poor fourteen-year-old from the wrong side of town. He belongs to a gang of teenagers who are known as the Greasers, because of their long, oily hair. The rival gang to the Greasers is known as the Socs, an abbreviation for the Socials, a rich gang of west side teenagers. They "jump Greasers and wreck houses and throw beer blasts for kicks." Greasers, on the other hand, are blamed for stealing, starting gang fights, holding up gas stations, and driving their old cars dangerously. By the end of the chapter, it is apparent that the author's sympathies are completely with underprivileged, deprived Greasers.

The story is filled with dialogue, including taunts from the Socs to the Greasers. They can often be heard yelling, "We're gonna cut all that long greasy hair off." The language also includes street talk, filled with grammatical errors and slang. Soda talks to Pony about their older brother, saying, "Listen, kiddo, when Darry hollers at you…he don't mean nothin'. He's just got more worries than somebody his age ought to. Don't take him serious…you dig, Pony? Don't let him bug you. He's really proud of you 'cause you're so brainy. It's just because you're the baby—I mean, he loves you a lot. Savvy?" Such slang is typical of the dialogue throughout the novel and adds to the realism of the characters.

Pony, the main character, is described in detail in this first chapter. He has greenish-gray eyes and light brown, almost red, hair, which he wears long and slicked down. Although he belongs to a gang, he is not stereotypical. He often enjoys being alone, away from the gang members, to watch sunsets, to think about life, to read, and to study his schoolwork. He takes pride in being a good student. Sometimes, however, Pony can be stubborn. Darry has warned him not to go out alone because of the Socs, but when the novel begins, Pony has been to the movies by himself and is walking home alone.

Although Pony resents Darry's intrusions into his life, it is obvious that he also stands in awe of this twenty-year-old brother. Pony thinks he is very handsome, for he is six feet two inches tall and has eyes like "two pieces of pale blue-green ice." Pony also appreciates the fact that Darry dropped out of school in order to go to work to support Soda and him. But Pony gets tired of Darry's criticism, especially about studying harder. Though Soda assures Pony that Darry really does love him, the younger brother does not believe him, for Darry never shows him any affection.

Although he is awed over Darry, Pony idolizes his middle brother, Soda, who tries to understand and support Pony. In spite of the fact that he is only seventeen years old, Soda has dropped out of school because he was a poor student. He now works in a gas station with his best friend, Steve Randle. Soda is described as a happy-go-lucky boy who gets "drunk on just plain living," never touching a drop of real alcohol.

Within the chapter, other Greasers are introduced and developed. Two-Bit Mathews, is still a junior in high school even though he is eighteen and a half years old. He is infamous for having the last word, shoplifting, getting in fights, and using his black-handled switchblade, which he has stolen. Another gang member is Dallas Winston, usually called Dally. His meanness is reflected in his eyes, which are 'blue, blazing ice, cold with a hatred of the whole world.' He first went to jail at the age of ten and has been in and out of prison ever since; he is known for drinking too much, riding in rodeos, rolling drunks, and cheating. Dally is also respected, for he has spent three years on the wild side of New York and is known for his meanness.

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

Everyone in the gang is protective of Johnny Cade, who has the look of a small puppy that has been kicked too often. His father constantly beats him, and his mother either yells at or ignores him. The Greasers have become his substitute family, trying to care for him and to answer his needs. Unfortunately, when the novel opens, Johnny has already been jumped and severely beaten by the Socs, an action that caused his nervousness to increase and his sense of insecurity to flourish.

CHAPTER 2

Summary

The following night Dally, Johnny, and Pony go to the drive-in movie. They sneak in over the back fence, because Dally does not like to do things the legal way. They seat themselves behind two girls who are friends of the Socs. Dally, tries to provoke them by speaking in an abusive manner and putting his feet up on the back of one of their chairs. The girl threatens to call the police if they are not left alone.

When Dally goes to buy cokes, Pony talks to one of the girls, whose name is Cherry Valance. When Dally returns with the cokes and gives Cherry one, she throws it in his face. When he tries to put his arm around her, Johnny stops him. Dally stalks off in anger. Pony and Johnny then go and sit next to the girls and learn that they had come to the movies with some boys from the Socs, but had left them because they had sneaked alcohol in with them. As they are all watching the movie, someone places a hand on the shoulders of Johnny and Pony and says, "Okay, Greasers, you've had it." Thinking that it is a Soc, Pony is terrified and Johnny goes white with fear. To their relief, they discover that it is Two-Bit, a fellow Greaser who is playing a joke. Two-Bit informs them that Dally, in his anger, has slashed Timothy Shepard's car tires.

When Cherry and Pony go to buy some popcorn, he tells her about how four members of the Socs had jumped Johnny and severely beaten him. He explains that ever since then, Johnny has been very nervous. Cherry tries to convince Pony that not all Socs are alike and that they have a lot of problems. Pony cannot understand why they have any concerns since they have "good grades, good cars, good girls, madras, Mustangs, and Corvairs."

Notes

This chapter continues to highlight the differences between the Greasers and the Socs. The Socs' hangouts are The Way Out and Rusty's, while the Greasers patronize The Dingo and Jay's, which are more rowdy and rough. Pony cannot understand how the Socs could have any worries or problems since they are known for having good grades, good cars, good girls, and good clothes.

The character of Dally is also further developed. He likes to defy the law and proper behavior. That is why he sneaks over the fence into the drive-in movie, talks abusively to the Socy girls, puts his feet on one of their chairs, and tries to put his arm around Cherry. It is obvious that his attempts to gain attention are a means of covering up his sense of inadequacy. When Cherry throws a coke in his face, Pony and Johnny are very worried, for they know that Dally can be dangerous when someone opposes him. Johnny tries to calm him down and tells him not to bother the girls. Pony and Dally are shocked at Johnny's standing up for Cherry and Marcia, for he is the most timid member of the Greasers and really thinks of Dally as a hero. Dally, however, is upset by the whole incident and leaves in anger; he goes out and slashes the tires of Tim Shepard, a member of another gang.

Although Pony and Johnny are Dally's buddies, they are not crude like he is. They treat the Socy girls with respect. It seems, in fact, that Pony would like to be more like the Socs, for when Cherry and Marcia speak in a derogatory manner about the Greasers, Pony feels inadequate; however, when Cherry calls Dally 'trash,' Pony takes up for him saying, "I'm a grease, same as Dally. He's my buddy." There is obviously a strong feeling of camaraderie and loyalty among the gang members.
Cherry Valence seems to be different from other Socy girls. When Pony and Johnny are nice to her, she becomes friendly to them. She even apologizes for criticizing Dally in front of them. She is also shocked to

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

hear how Johnny has been beaten by the Socs and points out that not all Socs are alike. Like Pony, she has a sense of allegiance to her gang.

The last sentence in the chapter, "I know better now," shows that Pony is a wiser person when he is writing the story than when he lived it. Time and distance have helped him to mature morally and emotionally……..

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Ponyboy Curtis - Pony is a fourteen-year-old boy with greenish gray eyes and light brown hair, which he wears long. His parents were killed in a car accident, so he lives with his two brothers, Soda and Darry. All three of them belong to a gang known as the Greasers, which is comprised of teenagers from the poor east side of town.

Unlike most of the Greasers, Pony is a sensitive teenager. He often likes to be by himself to think or to read. He also enjoys going to the movies alone. His older brother, Darry, often screams at him for being by himself outside the house; he feels it is too dangerous, for the Socs, the rival gang, are always looking for a Greaser to jump. Darry also worries about Pony's grades. Although he is a good student, Darry wants to make certain that Pony does his best in school so that he can rise above being a Greaser and make……

Johnny Cade - Johnny, the meekest member of the Greasers, is slightly built, with big-black eyes in a dark tanned face and long, jet-black hair heavily greased and combed to the side. He has the appearance of "a little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers." He always seems to be cringing and uncertain of himself, largely because he is a battered child. His father frequently beats him, and his mother ignores him except to scream at him about something. As a result, the Greasers are always trying to protect Johnny. Dally, in particular, watches out for him, and Johnny, in return, idolizes…..

Dallas Winston - Dally, the meanest and most cynical member of the Greasers, has an elfish face, high cheekbones, a pointed chin, small, sharp animal-like teeth, and ears like a lynx. His long blond hair is not greased, and his cold blue eyes capture the hatred and resentment that he feels for the whole world. Dally's life has been particularly hard. He drinks excessively, lies, cheats, steals, rolls drunks, and jumps small children. His life of crime began very early, for he was jailed at the age of ten and has spent……

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The Outsiders, from the beginning to the end, is centered on the gang rivalry between the underprivileged Greasers from the east side of town and the rich Socs from the west side. In particular, the plot is about the development of one of the Greasers, Ponyboy Curtis, as he journeys down a path of self-discovery. The story unfolds in classical form. Chapters 1-3 serve as an introduction; the main characters are described and the conflict is established. Chapters 4-11 present the rising action, including Bob's murder, Pony and Johnny's flight to Windrixville, the rescue of the children from the burning church, Johnny's death, and Dally's death. The climax occurs late in the novel, during the last and final chapter. After reading Johnny's letter written to him before his death, Pony at last accepts that his friend is gone and decides to follow his …….

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The novel deals with the needless pain and violence caused by gang rivalry. The entire book centers on the animosity that exists between the Socs, the rich kids from the west side of town, and the Greasers, the impoverished teenagers from the east side. Because the Socs think they are superior, they jump on the Greasers at every opportunity. Before the book actually begins, they have beaten up Johnny Cade, the meekest Greaser, for absolutely no reason. Then in the first chapter of the book, the Socs jump Pony, the main character, as he walks home from the movie theater alone. Such needless violence leads directly to……

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.

OTHER ELEMENTS

AUTHOR'S STYLE

Hinton wrote *The Outsiders* when she was just sixteen years old. The plot and the language are, therefore, not very complicated, reflecting the author's immaturity. But because she understood gang rivalry on a firsthand basis, she realistically captured the problems in the novel. She carefully pointed out that underprivileged children, like Dally, Two-Bit, and Johnny, have a great chance of becoming juvenile delinquents if people do not pay attention to their problems.

There are several interrupters in the plot that are not realistic. After killing Bob, the meek and mild Johnny seems much too calm and able to function. Even more unbelievable is the sudden fire……..

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the Socs and the Greasers.
2. Which gang is portrayed more favorably and how?
3. Describe Pony as a character during most of the book. What change does he undergo during the novel and why? What is he like at the conclusion of the story?
4. Compare and contrast Soda and Darry. Why are they both important to Pony's development?…..

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS

http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/

Copyright ©2003 TheBestNotes.com.
Reprinted with permission of TheBestNotes.com. All Rights Reserved.
Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

TheBestNotes.com. Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved. No further distribution without written consent.