

***The Outsiders*—Reading Guide**

As you read this novel over the summer, answer the following questions on notebook paper.

Your answers should be complete sentences. Your handwriting should be neat and legible.

These questions are due on the first day of class. We will test over the book during the first week of school.

Chapter 1:

1. What makes Ponyboy different from the rest of the crew? Why are these good traits for a narrator to have?
2. How do Ponyboy's relationships with Darry and Soda differ? Explain.
3. What has Johnny learned from the gang that he could not learn from his parents?
4. Do you think Darry loves Pony? Why does he treat Pony the way he does?
5. At the end of the chapter, Ponyboy says, "I lie to myself all the time. But I never believe me" (18). Explain what he means. Have you ever done this?

Chapter 2:

1. Ponyboy and Sodapop are the boys' actual names. What does this show us about their parents?
2. Ponyboy does not like to talk about Soda as a dropout. Why? How does this label fit Soda? How does it not?
3. Why was Dally especially bothered by Johnny's attack?
4. How does Pony define the difference between a "gang" and a "pack"?
5. When Dally brings the girls each a soda, what do Cherry and Marcia do? Explain the difference in the girls. Whom does Pony respect more?

Chapter 3:

1. Cherry explains that part of the difference in Greasers and Socs is that Greasers are too emotional and Socs are too numb. Which extreme do you see as being better? Why?
2. Why would Cherry be attracted to Dally?
3. How long ago did the Curtis boys' parents die? How might this amplify all the emotions the boys are dealing with?
4. What happens when Ponyboy comes home at 2am?
5. Why does Johnny like it better when his father hits him than when he ignores him?

Chapter 4:

1. If you were on a jury and saw a video of Johnny killing Bob, how would you sentence Johnny? Why?
2. Ponyboy says "the fight for self-preservation had hardened [Dally] beyond caring." Is this also true for Ponyboy? For Johnny?
3. What is the irony of Ponyboy's dream of living in the country finally coming true in this chapter?

4. The boys have many euphemisms for “drunk.” What are some of them? What does this show us about their life?
5. Define premonition.
6. The use of the word premonition at the end of the chapter is foreshadowing. Define foreshadow.

Chapter 5:

1. After shouting and crying in the church, Pony feels stronger and more in control of his emotions. Explain how this is similar to Steve and Soda’s need to fight or race cars.
2. Why does Johnny buy a copy of *Gone With the Wind*? What does this tell you about Johnny?
3. Why is Johnny so upset about having to cut his hair?
4. Why might Johnny’s grades and schoolwork not be representative of his intellect?
5. Ponyboy has trouble understanding the meaning of Frost’s poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay.” In your own words, explain what you think the poet means.
6. Who is the spy for the Greasers?

Chapter 6:

1. Dally says that he is not bothered by his parents abandoning him. Do you believe him? How does the similarity between Dally and Johnny and their life circumstances affect their relationship?
2. Why does Dally not want Johnny to turn himself in?
3. How is Johnny in the fire different from the usual Johnny? Why does he react this way?
4. Pony and Johnny hide in an old church. People say they were “sent from heaven” to save the kids. Pony calls the fire a “red hell.” Why are we given this religious imagery?
5. What makes Ponyboy realize and understand that Darry loves him?
6. Define paradox.
7. Look for two paradoxical statements in the R. Frost poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay.”

Chapter 7:

1. How would being in a wheelchair or being paralyzed be worse for Johnny than it might be for someone else?
2. Ponyboy notices that people often look younger when they are asleep. Why is this true?
3. Two-Bit takes issue with the paper saying the boys “turned heroes,” saying “Y’all were heroes from the beginning.” How might Two-Bit’s family life color his view of Johnny and Ponyboy?
4. What is a catch-22? Explain Randy’s catch-22 in regards to the rumble.
5. After talking with Randy, Ponyboy says “Socs were just guys afterall.” Why does he say this now?

Chapter 8:

1. Ponyboy says, " We needed Johnny as much as he needed the gang...And for the same reason." Explain.
2. Ponyboy defends Darry's tough love. How does he explain to Two-Bit why Darry is harder on him than his parents were?
3. Why would Darry probably be a Soc if not for Soda and Pony?
4. Explain Cherry's conflicted feelings about Johnny and Bob.

Chapter 9:

1. Soda fights for _____.
Steve fights for _____.
Darry fights for _____.
Two-Bit fights for _____.
2. What is the difference between the Shepard gang and Darry's gang? What advantage might this give the boys later in life?
3. Define irony:
4. What is ironic about Paul Holden stepping up to Darry's challenge?
5. How does the beginning of the rumble remind Ponyboy of a Jack London novel? Why is this an appropriate description?
6. What were Johnny's last words to Ponyboy? What did Johnny mean?

Chapter 10:

1. Define symbol as it relates to literature.
2. What is a symbolic message that we can take from Ponyboy's conversation with the man who drives him home?
3. Describe three actions that prove Dally wanted to die.

Chapter 11:

1. Why do you suppose Pony would rather have someone's hate than their pity?
2. Define unreliable narrator.
3. Ponyboy has been the voice of reason as a narrator, but at the end he becomes an unreliable narrator. How and why?

Chapter 12:

1. Define acquitted.
2. Why is this sentence appropriate?
3. How does Ponyboy "stay gold" in the parking lot scene?
4. Explain the truth in Darry's statement, "You don't just stop living because you lose someone."
5. What are your feelings about the ending of the novel? How is the ending foreshadowed?