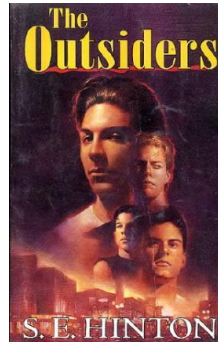


Chapter summaries of.....

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton



Chapter 1

Ponyboy Curtis, the narrator, begins the novel with a story: he is walking home one afternoon after watching a Paul Newman film, and his mind starts to wander. He thinks about how he wants Paul Newman's good looks, though he likes his own greaser look. He also thinks that, although he likes to watch movies alone, he wishes he had company for the walk home.

Ponyboy steps back from his story to explain that walking alone is unsafe for Greasers, the East Side gang of friends to which he belongs. When they walk by themselves, greasers attract the harassment of Socials, or Socs, the rich West Side crowd. Ponyboy says that greasers are poorer and wilder than the Socs, whom the newspapers condemn one day for throwing parties and praise the next day for good citizenship. Greasers wear their hair long and put grease in it. They dress tough, steal, and get into gang fights. They often carry switchblades, mainly to help them stand their ground against the Socs.

Ponyboy says he does not participate in typical greaser mischief because his oldest brother, *Darrel (known as "Darry")*, would kill him if he got into trouble. Ponyboy's parents died in a car crash, so the three Curtis brothers live together by themselves, an arrangement possible only as long as they stay out of trouble. Twenty-year-old Darry acts as head of the family. He is strict with Ponyboy and often yells at him. Despite his intelligence, Ponyboy lacks common sense, which frustrates Darry. Ponyboy feels great affection for his sixteen-year-old brother, *Sodapop*, whose charm and cheerfulness he admires.

Ponyboy returns to the story of his solitary walk after the movies. As he walks, he notices a red Corvair trailing him. He quickens his pace as he remembers how badly the Socs beat his friend *Johnny Cade*. The Corvair pulls up beside Ponyboy and five Socs climb out and surround him. One of them asks, "Need a haircut, greaser?" and pulls out a blade. The Socs begin to beat up Ponyboy, who screams for help. Ponyboy's brothers and the rest of their group appear on the scene and chase away the Socs. Darry starts to scold Ponyboy for walking home alone instead of calling for a ride, but Sodapop tells him to stop nagging.

The brothers and the other greasers make plans for the following night. Ponyboy decides that he and Johnny will go to a double feature at the drive-in with their friend *Dally*. Dally begins to talk about his ex-girlfriend, Sylvia, and Ponyboy thinks about the girls that socialize with the greasers. He wonders what it would be like to spend time with an upper-class Soc girl.

At home, Ponyboy, who loves to read, reads the book *Great Expectations* and thinks about how his life resembles the life of Pip, the main character in *Great Expectations*. Still shaken by his fight with the Socs, Ponyboy climbs into bed with Sodapop. The brothers talk about Sodapop's girlfriend, Sandy, whom Sodapop hopes to marry one day.

Chapter 2

The next night, Ponyboy and Johnny go with Dally to a double feature at the drive-in movie theater. They sit behind a pair of Soc girls, and Dally begins to talk dirty in an attempt to embarrass the girls. The girl with red hair turns around and coolly tells him to stop, but Dally continues to make suggestive remarks. He goes to buy Cokes, and Ponyboy talks to the red-haired girl, Cherry Valance. They talk about the rodeo and about Sodapop, whom Cherry describes

as a “doll.” She asks what became of Sodapop, and although the admission embarrasses him, Ponyboy says that Sodapop dropped out of school to work in a gas station. Dally comes back and offers a Coke to Cherry, but she throws it in his face. Dally tries to put his arm around her. When he will not listen to Cherry’s protests, the usually quiet Johnny stuns Dally by telling him not to bother the girls.

Dally stalks off, and Cherry and her friend Marcia invite Ponyboy and Johnny to watch the movie with them. *Two-Bit*, one of Ponyboy’s friends, comes to announce that Dally has slashed Tim Shepard’s tires and is going to have to fight him. Tim Shepard is the leader of another greaser gang. Two-Bit explains the greasers’ two main rules: always stick together and never get caught.

Cherry and Ponyboy go to get popcorn, and Ponyboy tells her about the time the Socs beat up Johnny. The leader of the gang that beat him, Ponyboy says, wore a fistful of rings. Cherry looks distressed and assures him that not all Socs are violent like the Socs that beat Johnny. She also tells him that Socs have problems just as the greasers do, but Ponyboy does not believe her.

Chapter 3

Ponyboy, Two-Bit, and Johnny walk to Two-Bit’s house with Cherry and Marcia so that they can give the girls a ride home. As they walk, Ponyboy and Cherry talk about Ponyboy’s brothers. He notices how easy it is to talk to Cherry. When Cherry asks Ponyboy to describe Darry, he says Darry does not like him and probably wishes he could put Ponyboy in a home somewhere. Johnny and Two-Bit are startled to hear that Ponyboy feels this way, and Johnny says he always thought the three brothers got along well.

After Ponyboy tells Cherry about Sodapop’s old horse, Mickey Mouse, the two move on to discuss the differences they perceive between Socs and greasers. During this discussion, Ponyboy and Cherry find they have a surprising amount in common—for instance, they both like reading and watching sunsets. Ponyboy voices his frustration that the greasers have terrible luck while the Socs lead comfortable lives and jump the greasers out of sheer boredom. Cherry retorts that the Socs’ situations are not as simple as Ponyboy thinks. They decide that the main difference between Socs and greasers is that Socs are too cool and aloof to acknowledge their emotions and that they live their lives trying to fill up their emotional void, while the greasers feel everything too intensely. Ponyboy realizes that, although they come from different classes, he and Cherry watch the same sunset.

A blue Mustang cruises by the group. The Mustang belongs to Bob and Randy, Cherry’s and Marcia’s Soc boyfriends. The Mustang pulls up beside the group, and Randy and Bob get out. Ponyboy notices that Bob wears three heavy rings on his hand. The greasers and Socs nearly get into a fight, but the girls agree to leave with their boyfriends to prevent violence. Before leaving, Cherry tells Ponyboy that she hopes she won’t see Dally again, because she thinks she could fall in love with him.

Ponyboy walks home and finds Darry furious with him for staying out so late. In the ensuing argument, Darry slaps Ponyboy. No one in Ponyboy’s family has ever hit him before, and Ponyboy storms out of the house in a rage. He feels sure now that Darry does not want him around. It is after two o’clock in the morning. Ponyboy finds Johnny in the lot where the greasers hang out, and he tells Johnny that they are running away. Johnny, who lives with his abusive alcoholic father, agrees to run away without hesitating. The boys decide to walk through the park and determine whether they really want to leave.

Chapter 4

The park is deserted at 2:30 in the morning. Ponyboy and Johnny go walking beside the fountain. It is cold out, and Ponyboy is wearing only a short-sleeved shirt. Suddenly the boys see the blue Mustang from earlier that night. Five Socs, including Randy and Bob, jump out of the car and approach them. Presumably, the Socs have come to get even with the boys for picking up their girlfriends. Ponyboy can tell they are drunk. Bob tells Ponyboy that greasers are white trash with long hair, and Ponyboy retorts that Socs are nothing but white trash with Mustangs and madras shirts. In a rage, Ponyboy spits at the Socs. A Soc grabs Ponyboy and holds his head under the frigid water of the fountain. Ponyboy feels himself drowning and blacks out. When he regains consciousness, the Socs have run away. He is lying on the pavement next to Johnny. Bob's bloody corpse is nearby. Johnny says, "I killed him," and Ponyboy sees Johnny's switchblade, dark to the hilt with blood.

Ponyboy panics, but Johnny remains calm. They decide to go to Dally, thinking he might be able to help them. They find Dally at the house of Buck Merrill, his rodeo partner. He manages to get the boys fifty dollars, a change of clothing for Ponyboy, and a loaded gun. He instructs them to take a train to Windrixville, where they can hide in an abandoned church. Ponyboy and Johnny get on a train, and Ponyboy goes to sleep. When they get to Windrixville, they hop off the train and find the church, where they collapse into exhausted sleep.

Chapter 5

The next morning, Ponyboy wakes in the church and finds a note from Johnny saying that he has gone into town to get supplies. When Johnny returns, he brings a week's supply of baloney and cigarettes, and a paperback copy of *Gone with the Wind*, which he wants Ponyboy to read to him. Ponyboy makes a wisecrack and Johnny tells him he is becoming more like Two-Bit every day. Johnny insists that they cut their hair to disguise themselves, and he bleaches Ponyboy's hair.

For the next week, the boys hide out at the church, reading *Gone with the Wind*, smoking, and eating sandwiches. The boys admire the southern gentlemen in *Gone with the Wind*, and Johnny points out that they remind him of Dally. Ponyboy disagrees. He prefers the other greasers to Dally. Most of the greasers remind Ponyboy of the heroes in novels, but Dally is so real he is frightening. Later, Ponyboy recites a Robert Frost poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." The poem touches Johnny.

After about five days, Dally shows up at the church with a letter to Ponyboy from Sodapop. Dally says the police approached him about Bob's murder and he told them that the perpetrators fled to Texas. He takes Johnny and Ponyboy to the Dairy Queen and tells them that a state of open warfare exists between the greasers and the Socs, who are furious about Bob's death. He also lets slip that Cherry Valance, feeling responsible for the murderous encounter, has been acting as a spy for the greasers. He adds that in a day's time the two groups will meet for a rumble.

Chapter 6

Johnny shocks Dally by telling him he wants to go back home and confess to his crime. Dally tries to change Johnny's mind, telling him he never wants to see Johnny hardened the way prison would harden him. Johnny is adamant and points out that his own parents would not care what happens to him, but Ponyboy's brothers care about him and want to see him. Swearing under his breath, Dally begins to drive Johnny and Ponyboy home. As they drive

past the church where Ponyboy and Johnny have been staying, they see that it is on fire. Ponyboy thinks he and Johnny must have started the fire with a cigarette butt, so the boys jump out of the car to examine the blaze.

At the church, they find a group of schoolchildren on a picnic. Suddenly, one of the adult chaperones cries out that some of the children are missing, and Ponyboy hears screaming from inside the church. Acting on instinct, he and Johnny climb into the burning building through a window. At the back of the church, they find the children huddled together and terrified. As he runs through the smoky inferno, Ponyboy wonders why he is not scared. He and Johnny lift the children out of the window. Dally appears and yells that the roof is about to cave in. As they lift the last child out the window, the roof crumbles. Johnny pushes Ponyboy out of the window, and then Ponyboy hears Johnny scream. Ponyboy starts to go back in for Johnny, but Dally clubs him across the back and knocks him out.

When Ponyboy wakes, he is in an ambulance, accompanied by one of the schoolteachers, Jerry Wood. The teacher tells him that his back caught on fire and that the jacket he was wearing, which Dally lent him, saved his life. He says that Dally was burned but will probably be fine. Johnny, however, is in very bad shape—he was struck by a piece of burning timber as it fell, and may have broken his back. The man jokingly asks Ponyboy if he and Johnny are professional heroes. Ponyboy tells him that they are Greasers.

Ponyboy has suffered mild burns. Jerry stays with him while he is in the hospital, and Ponyboy confides the story of Bob's death. Jerry agrees that Johnny killed Bob in self-defense. He tells Ponyboy he shouldn't smoke, something that no one has ever said to Ponyboy before. Darry and Sodapop arrive. Sodapop hugs Ponyboy, and Darry cries, shocking Ponyboy. The anger he has felt toward Darry dissolves. Ponyboy realizes that Darry does care about him; Darry is strict because he loves Ponyboy and wants him to succeed. Ponyboy runs across the room and embraces his brother, thinking that everything will be fine once he gets home.

Chapter 7

The reporters and police interview Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry in the hospital waiting room. Sodapop jokes with the reporters and hospital staff, keeping the mood light with his antics. The doctors finally emerge and say that Dally will be fine but that Johnny's back was broken when the roof caved in. Even if Johnny survives, they add, he will be permanently crippled.

The next morning, Ponyboy is making breakfast when Steve Randle (Sodapop's best friend) and Two-Bit come in with the morning papers. The papers portray Ponyboy, Johnny, and Dally as heroes for rescuing the schoolchildren. They also mention Ponyboy's excellent performance on the track team and in school. The papers mention that the state will charge Johnny with manslaughter and send both Ponyboy and Johnny to juvenile court, from which Ponyboy might be sent to a boys' home. The other boys reassure Ponyboy that his family will stay together. Ponyboy tells them he had his recurring nightmare—which first occurred on the night of his parents' funeral—the previous night. He never remembers the dream, but it makes him wake up in intense panic.

Ponyboy asks Sodapop about Sandy and learns that she got pregnant and moved to Florida. Her parents refused to let her marry Sodapop because of his age, so Sandy left to live with her grandmother. Sodapop and Darry go to work, and Two-Bit and Ponyboy go to get Cokes at the Tasty Freeze. A blue Mustang pulls up to the restaurant, and in it they see the group of Socs that jumped Ponyboy and Johnny in the park. Ponyboy feels an immediate and intense hatred for them.

One of the Socs, Marcia's boyfriend, Randy, comes over to Ponyboy. Two-Bit reminds him that no fighting is allowed before the rumble, but Randy says he wants only to talk. He asks Ponyboy why he saved those children and says he would never have thought a greaser could do such a thing. Ponyboy says that it didn't have anything to do with his being a greaser. Sick about the violence and Bob's death, Randy says he does not intend to fight at the rumble.

Randy explains that Bob was his best friend, a good guy with a terrible temper and overly indulgent parents. Ponyboy feels reassured by his talk with Randy and realizes that Socs can be human and vulnerable.

Chapter 8

Two-Bit and Ponyboy go to see Johnny and Dally in the hospital. Johnny, weak and pale, whispers that he would like Ponyboy to finish reading *Gone with the Wind* to him. His mother shows up to visit, but she is a mean-spirited, nagging woman and Johnny refuses to see her. As Ponyboy and Two-Bit leave, she accosts them and blames them for Johnny's condition, and Two-Bit insults her.

Dally is recovering nicely in the hospital, and for the first time ever Ponyboy feels warmly toward Dally. Dally says that Tim Shepard, the leader of another gang of greasers, came in to talk about the rumble. Dally asks for Two-Bit's black-handled switchblade, and Two-Bit gladly hands over his prized possession without even asking why Dally needs it. On the way home Ponyboy and Two-Bit see Cherry Valance in her Corvette. She says that the Socs have agreed to fight with no weapons. Ponyboy asks her to go see Johnny, but she says she cannot because Johnny killed Bob. She says that Bob had a sweet side and was only violent when drunk, as he was drunk when he beat up Johnny. Ponyboy calls her a traitor, but he quickly forgives her. He asks her if she can see the sunset on the West Side, and when she says she can, he tells her to remember that he can see it on the East Side, too.

Chapter 9

Feeling sick before the rumble, Ponyboy swallows five aspirin and struggles to eat his dinner. The boys have bathed and made themselves look "tuff," and leave for the rumble excitedly. Ponyboy feels a sinking feeling when he sees the other greasers. Tim Shepard's gang and the others seem like genuine hoods. Twenty-two Socs arrive in four carloads to fight the twenty greasers. Darry steps forward to start the fight, and Paul Holden, Darry's high school friend and football teammate, steps up to challenge him. As Paul and Darry circle each other, Dally joins the group. As Dally arrives, the fight breaks out in full. After a long struggle, the greasers win.

When the rumble ends, Dally and Ponyboy go to the hospital to see Johnny. A policeman stops them, but Ponyboy feigns an injury, and the officer gives them an escort to the hospital. Ponyboy and Dally find Johnny dying. Johnny moans that fighting is useless, tells Ponyboy to "stay gold," and then dies. Dally is beside himself with grief and runs frantically from the room.

Chapter 10

After Johnny's death, Ponyboy wanders alone for hours until a man offers him a ride. The man asks Ponyboy if he is okay and tells him that his head is bleeding. Ponyboy feels vaguely disoriented. At home, he finds the greasers gathered in the living room and tells them that Johnny is dead and that Dally has broken down. Dally calls and says he just robbed a grocery store and is running from the police. The gang rushes out and sees police officers chasing him. Dally pulls out the unloaded gun he carries, and the police shoot him. Dally collapses to the ground, dead. Ponyboy muses that Dally wanted to die. Feeling dizzy and overwhelmed, Ponyboy passes out.

When Ponyboy wakes, Darry is at his side. Ponyboy learns that he got a concussion when a Soc kicked him in the head during the rumble, and that he has been delirious in bed for three days.

Chapter 11

Ponyboy is restricted to bed rest for a week after he wakes up from his concussion. He finds a picture of Bob the Soc in Sodapop's high school yearbook. Bob's grin reminds him of Sodapop's grin. Ponyboy wonders if Bob's parents hate him, saying he prefers their hatred to their pity. Looking at the photograph and remembering conversations with Cherry and Randy, Ponyboy concludes that Bob was cocky, hot-tempered, frightened, and human.

Randy arrives at the house to talk to Ponyboy and behaves with shocking insensitivity. Not thinking of what Ponyboy has suffered, Randy says he is worried about being associated with the violence. They discuss the hearing scheduled for the next day. Ponyboy, in a delirious state, says that he killed Bob himself and that Johnny is still alive. Darry asks Randy to leave.

Chapter 12

Ponyboy does not have to speak much at the hearing, since his doctor has spoken to the judge about Ponyboy's condition. The judge asks Ponyboy a few gentle questions about his home life and then acquits him of all wrongdoing and allows him to return home with his brothers. After the hearing, Ponyboy becomes detached and depressed. His grades suffer, he loses his coordination, memory, and appetite, and he resumes fighting with Darry. Ponyboy's English teacher, Mr. Syme, says that although Ponyboy is failing, he can raise his grade to a C by writing an outstanding autobiographical theme.

The next day at lunch, Ponyboy goes to the grocery store with Steve and Two-Bit for candy bars and Cokes. When a group of Socs accosts him, he threatens them with a broken bottle, saying he refuses to take any more of their intimidation. Ponyboy's uncharacteristic show of hostility alarms Steve and Two-Bit, and they warn Ponyboy not to grow hard like Dally was. They are relieved when Ponyboy bends down to pick up the broken glass, not wanting anyone to get a flat tire.

That night as Ponyboy and Darry fight about Ponyboy's grades, Sodapop runs out of the house, upset that Sandy has returned a letter he wrote her unopened. Darry explains that Sodapop is not the father of Sandy's child and acts puzzled that Sodapop never told Ponyboy. Ponyboy reflects that he probably acted uninterested when Sodapop tried to talk about his problems. Worried, Darry and Ponyboy go find Sodapop. He tells them their constant fighting is tearing him apart. Sobbing, he asks them to try to understand each other and stop fighting. They promise to try. Ponyboy thinks that Sodapop will hold them together.

The boys run back home. Ponyboy looks at Johnny's copy of *Gone with the Wind*. He finds a handwritten note from Johnny urging him to stay gold and saying that the children's lives were worth his own. Ponyboy realizes that he wants to tell the story of his friends so that other hoodlums will not nurse their anger at the world and ignore the beauty in it. He begins to work on his English theme, starting with the words that begin *The Outsiders*: "*When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home.*"