

The Outsiders - Session 2

- What is the story about?
- How does the story start?
- What happens next...?
- What is the climax of the story?
- How does the book end?
- What length of time does this book cover?

Story synopsis - <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/o/the-outsiders/book-summary>

The Outsiders is about two weeks in the life of a 14-year-old boy. The novel tells the story of Ponyboy Curtis and his struggles with right and wrong in a society in which he believes that he is an outsider.

Ponyboy and his two brothers — Darrel (Darry), who is 20, and Sodapop, who is 16 — have recently lost their parents in an automobile accident. Pony and Soda are allowed to stay under Darry's guardianship as long as they all behave themselves. The boys are greasers, a class term that refers to the young men on the East Side, the poor side of town. The greasers' rivals are the Socs, short for Socials, who are the "West-side rich kids."

The story opens with Pony walking home alone from a movie; he is stopped by a gang of Socs who proceed to beat him up. The Socs badly injure and threaten to kill Ponyboy; however, some of his gang happen upon the scene and run the Socs off. This incident sets the tone for the rest of the story, because the event tells the reader that a fight between these two groups needs no provocation.

The next night Pony and two other gang members, Dallas Winston (Dally) and Johnny Cade, go to a drive-in movie. There they meet Sherri (Cherry) Valance and her friend Marcia, who have left their Soc boyfriends at the drive-in because the boys were drinking. Dally leaves after giving the girls a hard time, but another greaser, Two-Bit Mathews, joins Pony and Johnny. The boys offer to walk the girls home after the movie, but along the way, the girls' boyfriends reappear and threaten to fight the greasers. Cherry stops the fight from happening, and the girls leave with their boyfriends.

Pony and Johnny go to a vacant lot to hang out before heading home. They fall asleep, and when Johnny wakes Pony up it's 2 a.m. Pony runs home, because the time is way past his curfew, and Darry is waiting up. Darry is furious with Pony and, in the heat of the moment, he hits him. Pony runs out of the house and returns to the lot to find Johnny. Pony wants to run away, but instead they go to the park to cool off before heading back home.

At the park, Cherry's and Marcia's boyfriends reappear. Pony and Johnny are outnumbered, and the Socs grab Ponyboy and shove him face first into the fountain, holding his head under the water. Realizing that Ponyboy is drowning, Johnny panics, pulls his switchblade, and kills the Soc, Bob.

Ponyboy and Johnny seek out Dally for help in running away to avoid being arrested for Bob's murder. He gives them \$50 and directions to a hideout outside of town. The boys hop a freight train and find the hideout where they are to wait until Dally comes for them. Hiding in an abandoned, rural church, they feel like real outsiders, with their greased, long hair and general hooded appearance. They both cut their hair, and Pony colors his for a disguise. They pass the time in the church playing cards and reading aloud from *Gone with the Wind*.

Dally shows up after a week, and takes them to the Dairy Queen in Windrixville. Thanks to Dally, the police think that the boys are headed for Texas. Dally also brings them the news that Cherry Valance is now being a spy for the greasers, and helping them out against the Socs. She has also testified that Bob was drunk the night of his death and that she was sure that the killing had been in self-defense.

Johnny decides that he has a chance now, and announces that he wants to turn himself in. They head back to the church and discover that it is on fire. A school group is there, apparently on some kind of outing, and little kids are trapped inside. Without thinking, Pony and Johnny race inside and rescue the kids. As they are handing the kids outside to Dally, the burning roof collapses. Pony barely escapes, but a piece of timber falls on Johnny, burning him badly and breaking his back. The boys, now viewed as heroes, are taken via ambulance back to town, where Pony reunites with his brothers.

Johnny dies of his injuries. Dally is overcome with grief, and he robs a grocery store. He flees the police and calls the gang from a telephone booth, asking them to pick him up in the vacant lot and take him to a hiding place. The police chase Dally to the lot, and as the gang watches, Dally pulls a "black object" from his waistband and the officers shoot him.

The senselessness of all the violent events traumatizes Pony, but he deals with his grief and frustration by writing this book for all of the "Dallys" in the world.

Watch: Different Types of Characters in Literature - www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lfs53c7axWk (5mins)

Talk through: Handout 2

- **Under each character, list whether they are primary, secondary or tertiary characters.**
- **Write if they have a specific character role within the story.**
- **Also write if they are static/dynamic/flat/round/stock/symbolic characters.**
- **Who is the Antagonist?**
- **How have our lead characters changed over the course of the book?**

Extra Character Info:

<http://sehinton.com/misc/faq.html>

Q: Why are all of your main characters male? (Question submitted by Jennifer)

A: I started using male characters just because it was easiest. I was a tomboy, most of my close friends were boys, and I figured nobody would believe a girl would know anything about my subject matter. I have kept on using male characters because (1) boys have fewer books written for them (2) girls will read boys' books, boys usually won't read girls', and (3) it is still the easiest for me. My elementary age book, *The Puppy Sister*, is told from a female point of view. Female puppy, that is, if that counts.

Q: I just read *The Outsiders* in school, and I couldn't get over the names. Why was there such vivid names? (Question submitted by Theo)

A: I do remember at that age everyone wishing they were named something else, probably part of establishing an identity other than the one your parents have for you. The strange names seemed to fit the characters, though, so I left them.

Talk through: Homework 1

In your homework from the last session you were re-constructing the story of *The Outsiders*, in a different place, time, etc. You had planned out who your gangs would be, and how those key scenes would play out, taking inspiration from any cultural reference you fancy, including film, TV, music, literature and theatre.

- Talk through your story outline
- Who are your lead characters?
- Using the character profiles sheets, create your lead characters

Read:

In 1980, Lone Star Elementary School librarian Jo Ellen Misakian wrote to director Francis Ford Coppola, saying that the students and faculty of her school wanted him to make a movie from the book *The Outsiders*, by S. E. Hinton. Unsure of Coppola's address, Misakian sent the letter, along with a copy of the book and a petition signed by the students, to the New York offices of Paramount Pictures, the studio that had produced two of Coppola's films, *The Godfather* and its sequel. The letter was received and investigated by Coppola, and two years later, he began filming *The Outsiders* in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lone_Star_Elementary_School)

- Why would the school want the book made into a film?
- Why would Coppola take it up?
- What is the books appeal?

Homework 2:

The Elevator pitch

In the time it would take you to take a ride in a lift (30 seconds to two minutes), 'sell' the idea of your story to a director or film producer, writing down what the story is about, why it would make such a good film, and why they should make it.

Tips:

- Introduce yourself and your story.
- Give it a 'working' title - a title that can be used until the final title is decided upon.
- Speak in the present tense - it is more urgent and exciting!
- What genre would it fall into?
- Give a synopsis of your story, detailing the key characters, the setting and **the plot**.
- How does the story end?
- Is it like other stories the producer would know, e.g. *The Simpsons* meets *Hamlet*.
- Use lots of descriptive and persuasive language.
- Rhetoric questions can be engaging.