Novel Series

The Outsiders

teacher resource

The Center for Learning

The Outsiders

S. E. Hinton

Curriculum Unit
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TheCenterforLearning

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About the Cover
An old, abandoned church provides shelter for two runaway boys and becomes the scene of their heroic efforts to rescue children from a massive fire.

Manufactured in the United States of America.
♻ Printed on recycled paper.

This curriculum unit is a revision of material in the 1994 edition of *The Outsiders/Durango Street* created by Myrna Jean Warren.

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Contents

Introduction

S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* has come to be seen as a classic in young adult fiction. The novel was first published in 1967 and soon caused quite a stir. It was written by a teenager; that teenager was a girl, not a boy. It differed dramatically from other books then being written for young adult audiences, and it changed the nature of those novels forever. Today's middle school and junior high students still love this novel, and they remember it fondly in high school when they hear about *Gone with the Wind* and *Great Expectations* and encounter Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay."

The novel involves rivalry between two classes of people, greasers and Socs (short for socials), who are essentially the haves and have-nots of society. Fighting is a way of life and a necessary skill for the young men in the story, and weapons are commonplace. Why does this story have such great appeal for young readers, most of whom do not belong to street-fighting gangs? One reason is probably that boys and girls alike are well aware of the various cliques that develop in schools, the bullying that often occurs, and the pain that is inflicted on those who are seen as outsiders.

Furthermore, the novel presents the young greasers as multidimensional personalities, aching for love, fiercely loyal to each other, longing for beauty, and capable of heroism. Ponyboy, the narrator and protagonist, prides himself on his street-fighting skills, but he is also an A student who loves to read and idolizes his older brother, Sodapop. The oldest brother, Darry, left with many responsibilities because of the death of their parents, is torn between the demands of duty and love. Johnny Cade, the second youngest of the greasers, is easily victimized and suffers keenly because his parents have no real use for or interest in him.

As the teacher working with this book, you are likely to be moved by the vulnerability and neediness of the ostensibly tough young characters. Teens today experience the same profound need to seem cool and to belong to a group of peers. The novel reminds us of the innocence and potential behind the façades.

The Outsiders continues to find an enthusiastic welcome by young students who do not flinch from examining the real world in which they confront tough challenges and, sometimes, terrible disappointments.

Teacher Notes

The Outsiders is a superb reading choice for middle school and junior high audiences and can work well with reluctant readers in the ninth or tenth grade. Students find it easy to identify and empathize with the young protagonist, Ponyboy. He lives in a tough world and has faced hard times, including the death of his parents in a car accident. He and his brothers do not have a lot of luxuries, unlike the more affluent kids in their town (usually referred to as the "Socs").

Economics separate Ponyboy and his greaser friends from the Socs, but the book makes it clear that they actually have a great deal in common. Still, there is an atmosphere of constant conflict between the young men in the groups, and violence is always on the horizon. The saving grace for the greasers is their loyalty to each other—a top value for most young teens, as well.

This unit begins with pre-reading activities and goes on to take a sequential approach to the novel. The unit emphasizes connections between the students' own lives and experiences and those Ponyboy describes as he comes to grapple with his own family situation, the loss of dear friends, and the tension between his gang affiliation and his sensitive side—a love for books, movies, and natural beauty. Lessons use the following reading schedule.

Lesson 1	Pre-reading and the first few pages of chapter 1
Lesson 2	Chapter 1
Lesson 3	Chapters 2–3
Lesson 4	Chapter 4
Lesson 5	Chapter 5
Lesson 6	Chapters 6–7
Lesson 7	Chapters 8–12
Lessons 8–10	The entire novel

The lessons employ a variety of approaches and stress active learning and peer collaboration as well as individual reflection. Students conduct Internet research, role-play, free write, complete graphic organizers, and consider what-if situations. Students also pay attention to the literary works Ponyboy mentions: Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, and Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay."

Procedures address core language arts standards regarding close reading and using textual evidence to support generalizations. Students articulate themes, understand cause-effect relationships, and analyze characters. Attention is given to both literal and figurative language, as well as to the author/narrator's choices of words and details.

The supplementary materials include a list of suggested culminating activities and an objective quiz, along with answer key.

Answers to handouts will vary unless otherwise indicated. Students may need additional paper to complete some handouts.

You may want to show all or part of the 1983 video adaptation directed by Francis Ford Coppola, which is rated PG-13 because of violence. The movie is readily available for both rental and purchase.

Lesson 1

Getting Ready for *The Outsiders*

Objectives

- To reflect on some of the issues that surface in *The Outsiders* as they occur in everyday life
- To read the opening pages of the novel and analyze what we learn about Ponyboy

Notes to the Teacher

The Outsiders deals with issues that confront many people, including young adolescents, in daily life. This lesson begins with reflection and open-ended discussion of some of those concerns: rival cliques; family relationships; violence; chemical abuse. Participation should be totally voluntary, and you will want to moderate carefully to surface concepts and realities of life but also to protect individuals.

Next, students focus on what it means to be an insider or an outsider. Belonging is a major concern for most young adolescents, and few experiences are more painful that those of being on the periphery of things, not really belonging, or worse, being rejected. The most effective defense for outsiders is to bond together to form their own inside group.

Students then read the opening pages of the novel, where they encounter Ponyboy, the young protagonist and narrator of the story. They go on to analyze what they learn about Ponyboy's personality, family, and personal attitudes.

Procedure

1. Explain that the class is going to read a book about a young person about their age or just a little older, but before they start the book, you would like to have them discuss some issues in the novel that may or may not be connected with the students' own lives.
2. Distribute **Handout 1**, and have students complete the activity individually. Tell them that they do not have to put their names on the handout, and they will not be required to share responses with others. If they want to skip one or more of the statements, that is not a problem.
3. Follow with free and open-ended discussion. Facilitate carefully to protect privacy, and use the following statements to help provide commentary.

1. Most families experience both happiness and unhappiness. Many families struggle with illnesses, financial problems, and addictions. Sometimes a family that seems to have everything can be quite unhappy, and vice versa.
2. Many young people try to balance ambivalent feelings about their parents. Dysfunctional families seldom provide a loving environment.
3. Feelings of being unwanted may or may not be accurate. If parents are addicted to drugs or alcohol, the addiction will always take priority over everything else.
4. All schools and neighborhoods have would-be bullies against whom others can feel defenseless.
5. Good grades are a sign of success in school and seem to offer a promise about the future. On the other hand, in some circles academic success is seen as uncool or nerdy.
6. When groups subdivide into gangs or cliques, feelings of animosity sometimes arise even though the individuals actually have a great deal in common.
7. Danger comes in many forms; a polluted water supply can be just as dangerous as a gang of thugs.
8. Whether looking at the stars, gazing at mountain ridges, or marveling at the sunset over the ocean, a person can sometimes find peace and happiness in nature.
9. Getting drunk leads to lack of coordination and inability to speak or think clearly. Some adolescents think that this will make their problems go away; it only causes more.
10. Some students may suggest alternatives: listening to music, computer games, etc.
11. For young adolescents, the desire to belong is very powerful. Cliques consist of people who belong with each other and can easily victimize and even bully outsiders.
12. Even a very brave person can be intimidated by a snarling dog or a tough looking stranger.
13. It all depends on the specific situation and on past experience.
14. Most people like to think they would be capable of heroism but secretly suspect that they might chicken out.
15. Boys especially—and some girls—tend to pride themselves on this kind of prowess. It is a motivating factor for earning a karate black belt or spending time in target practice.

4. Point out that insider and outsider status are everyday realities. People who do not belong to the golf club are not welcome to tee up there;

a Hollywood insider knows a great deal about the lives of the stars. Distribute **Handout 2**, and ask students to complete the graphic organizer individually or with partners. As students are working, be very aware of the presence and feelings of outsiders and insiders in the class itself. Follow with carefully moderated class discussion. (Insiders belong; outsiders do not. Insiders usually have a great deal in common and set standards for behavior and dress. They are able to make outsiders feel inferior and isolated. Insiders may be characterized as having more money, bigger houses or fancier cars, good looks, or special abilities. An outsider may feel lonely, unwanted, and powerless; these feelings can lead to anger.)

5. Have students read aloud chapter 1 of *The Outsiders* up to the point where Ponyboy mentions the red Corvair.
6. Distribute **Handout 3**, and have partners or small groups collaborate to complete the describing wheel. Then conduct a discussion based on students' responses.

Suggested Responses

- Ponyboy is intelligent, a good student, and a fan of books and movies. He sometimes likes to be alone.
- He has often been told that, smart as he is, he does not think before he acts. He needs to use his head.
- He is a greaser, lower middle class, and has long hair and friends who do things like fight and rob gas stations.
- His parents died in a car accident; they must have had a sense of humor, to name one son Sodapop and another Ponyboy.
- He resents the people he calls "Socs," who are wealthy and snobbish; male Socs enjoy opportunities to beat up greasers.
- He lives with his two older brothers, but that arrangement can only last as long as they do not get in trouble with the law.
- The oldest brother, Darrel, is usually called Darry. He is about twenty years old and has taken on the role of parent. He works long hours and has grown up too soon; Ponyboy seems to have mixed feelings about Darry.
- The second brother is Sodapop, usually called Soda. Ponyboy idolizes Soda, a handsome sixteen-year-old who quit school early and seems happy and carefree.

7. Assign students to complete the reading of chapter 1.

Reflections

Directions: Indicate whether you agree (A), disagree (D), or are undecided (U) about each of the following statements.

_____ 1. I would describe my family as generally happy.

_____ 2. My parents love me very much, and I love them.

_____ 3. I have at least one friend who feels unwanted at home.

_____ 4. Sometimes I wish I could carry a weapon for self-protection.

_____ 5. I feel a lot of pressure to get good grades.

_____ 6. There are some people that I consider my enemies.

_____ 7. My neighborhood can be a dangerous place to live.

_____ 8. I like to stay out at night to look at the stars and think.

_____ 9. Most boys like to get drunk.

_____ 10. Books and movies help me to escape from my problems.

_____ 11. The kids in my school tend to divide into rival cliques.

_____ 12. Sometimes, when I am walking alone, I feel vulnerable and a little scared.

_____ 13. I view the police as friendly helpers.

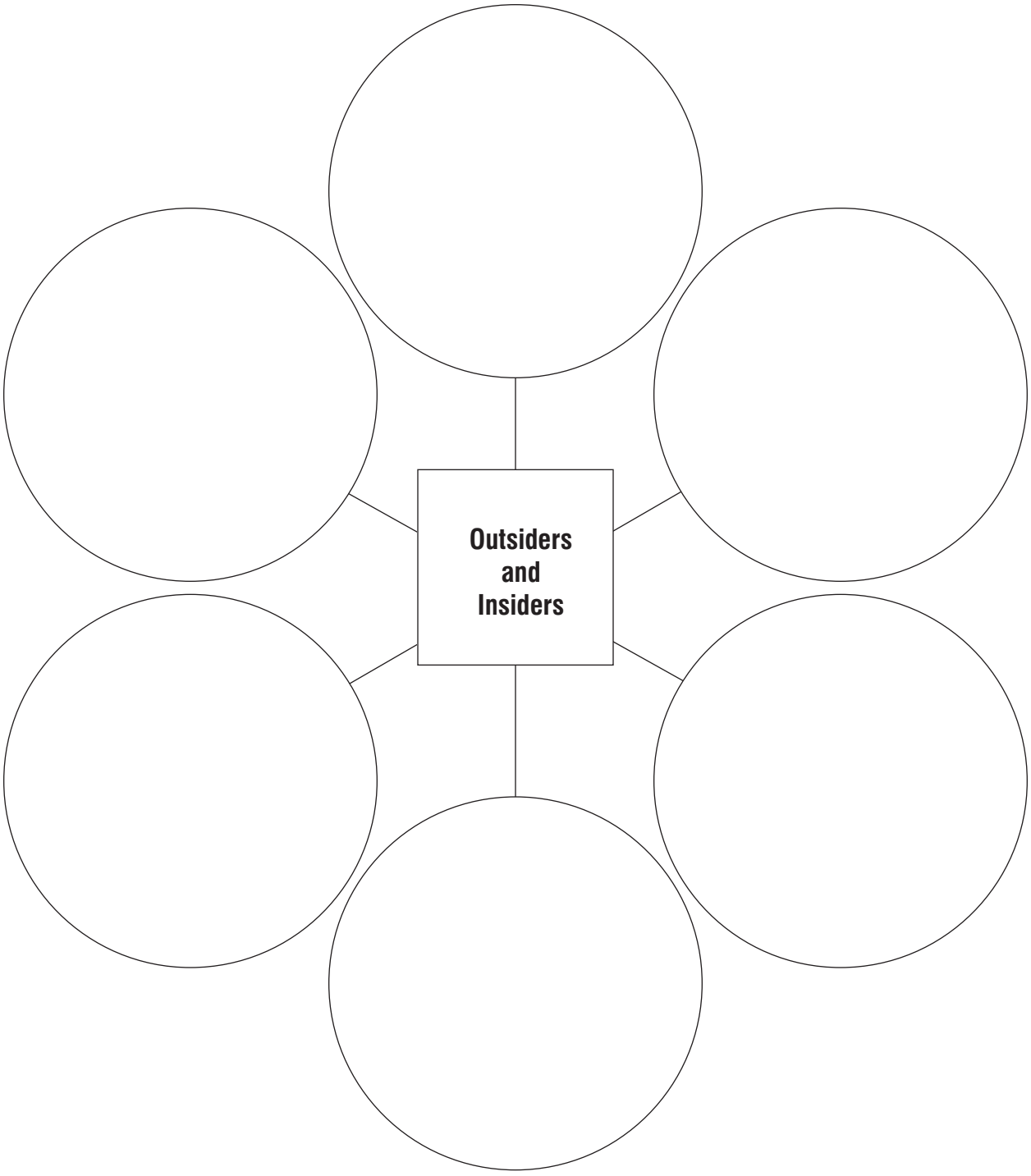
_____ 14. If I saw a house on fire, I would rush in to rescue a child.

_____ 15. In any fight situation, I can handle myself very well.

Name:

Outsiders and Insiders

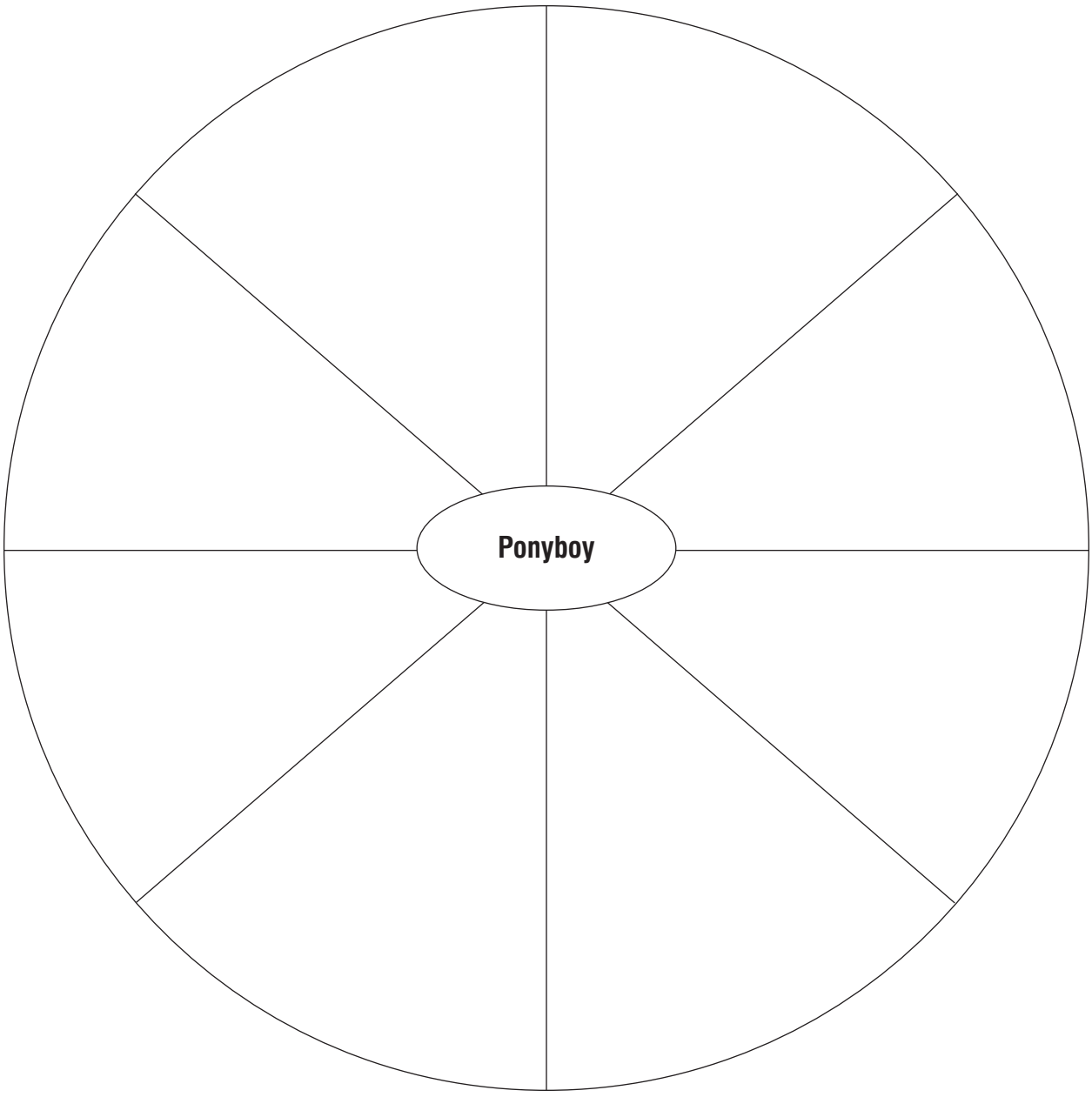
Directions: Before you start to read S. E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders*, give some thought to what it means to be an outsider or an insider. Complete the graphic organizer with definitions, examples, causes and effects, and feelings associated with being an insider or an outsider.



Name:

Meet Ponyboy

Directions: The opening pages of *The Outsiders* introduce the main character, Ponyboy. Fill in the describing wheel with information about his situation, personality, family, and friends.



Lesson 2

Greasers vs. Socs

Objectives

- To summarize events in chapter 1 of *The Outsiders*
- To differentiate the members of Ponyboy's gang
- To consider the significance of names and nicknames

Notes to the Teacher

In chapter 1, Ponyboy is attacked by four Socs who arrive in a red Corvair. There is no personal reason behind the attack—just the normal behavior between greasers and Socs. Ponyboy is helpless and could have been injured severely, even killed, but his gang members, all older than Ponyboy and very tough, come to the rescue.

We learn more about his two brothers. Ponyboy is clearly ambivalent about Darry, whom he really does not understand. He hero-worships Soda. The two older brothers are a study in contrasts—one serious and tense, the other warm-hearted and prone to jokes.

We hear about seventeen-year-old Steve Randle, gifted with cars and Soda's best friend, a gang member Ponyboy dislikes. He does like Two-Bit (Keith) Mathews who is a jokester. Dally Winston came from New York and, according to Ponyboy, is tough, cold, and mean; compared to New York gang warfare, the fights in the Southwest seem mild. Johnny Cade, the one closest to Ponyboy's age, has never fully recovered from a vicious Soc attack.

Ponyboy mentions that he is reading *Great Expectations* in his English class, an allusion that is certain to mean more to the teacher than to most middle school/junior high students reading *The Outsiders*. His comments reveal intelligence and a strong ability to relate texts to his own life.

In this lesson, students first summarize events in chapter 1. (The reading check in procedure 1 is intended to enforce students' accountability. You can use it for discussion or as a quick quiz.) They then differentiate the members of the gang and discuss the significance of names. The lesson ends with oral reading of the first few pages of chapter 2.

Procedure

1. Ask the following questions.
    - What weapon do the Socs have when they attack Ponyboy? (They have a knife.)
    - How does he feel during the attack? (He feels helpless and frightened.)

- What happens to keep him from getting seriously hurt? (His brothers and the rest of the gang arrive and chase the Socs away.)
- Where do Johnny and Ponyboy plan to go the next night? (They plan to go to the drive-in movies with Dally.)

2. Distribute **Handout 4**, and have small groups complete the chart.

Suggested Responses

1. *Sodapop*—seventeen years old; extremely handsome, dark gold hair, expressive brown eyes; a caring older brother; not school smart; in love with Sandy; good-natured
2. *Johnny Cade*—sixteen years old; small for his age, soulful black eyes, black hair; fearful, shy, and rather quiet
3. *Two-Bit Mathews*—eighteen years old; tall and stocky, gray eyes and long sideburns; always joking, still in school for the fun of it; a shoplifter
4. *Dally Winston*—no age is given so far, but likely seventeen; blonde hair and an elfish face, cold blue eyes; New York tough with a police record
5. *Darry*—twenty years old; dark hair, handsome, tall; serious, hard-working, and perhaps hard to understand
6. *Steve Randle*—seventeen years old; tall and thin, thick styled hair; a good mechanic; little patience with Ponyboy as a tagalong

3. Ask students to give reasons for Ponyboy's attitude toward each gang member. (Soda is a caring big brother who makes Ponyboy feel good about himself and whom Ponyboy greatly admires. Johnny Cade is closest in age and serves as a sort of best friend whom everyone else in the gang wants to protect. Ponyboy enjoys Two-Bit's humor. His attitude toward Dally is not quite clear yet, but he knows that Dally can be dangerous. Ponyboy is torn about Darry; he wants not to care about his older brother and he often feels that Darry does not care about him. Ponyboy's dislike for Steve may result from his closeness to Soda and reluctance to accept Ponyboy as an equal.)
4. Conduct an open-ended discussion about which gang member(s) students find most intriguing.
5. Distribute **Handout 5**, and have students complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion. State that Sodapop and Ponyboy would not seem strange as nicknames, but they are highly unusual choices for birth certificates. Ask for other choices that might be amusing but equally strange (Bubblegum, Cheesecake, Bronco, Safari, etc.). Point out that throughout the novel Ponyboy is always called by his full name and not by any nicknames. Perhaps it is so unusual that no diminutives seem necessary or desirable.

6. Have volunteers read aloud chapter 2 up to the point that the girl tells Dally to get his feet off of her chair. Ask the following questions.
    - Why do Dally, Johnny, and Ponyboy sneak into the drive-in instead of paying their way? (for the fun of it, to beat the system)
    - What subject clearly holds a lot of interest for Ponyboy, even though he has very little experience? (pretty girls)
7. Assign students to read the rest of chapter 2 and chapter 3.

Name:

Our Gang

Directions: List the other members of Ponyboy's gang in the order in which he likes them, with his favorite first and the one he likes least last. Then fill in the columns with information from chapter 1.

Gang Member	Age/Appearance	Character/Personality
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Names and Nicknames

Directions: Use the following activity to think about the significance of names.

1. Think about the names of the three brothers: Darrel, Sodapop, Ponyboy. Do they seem strange to you? Why?

2. Identify your favorite and least favorite of the following names for boys.

Albert	Joshua	Richard	Walter
David	Kyle	Timothy	Zachary

3. Indicate your favorite and least favorite of the following names for girls.

Alicia	Chelsea	Rachel	Tiffany
Brittany	Kendra	Sandra	Veronica

4. Indicate your favorite and least favorite of the following unisex names.

Angel	Dallas	Jordan	Taylor
Brett	Delaney	Riley	Whitney

5. Why do we give people nicknames?

6. Why doesn't Ponyboy have a nickname?

Lesson 3

From the Drive-In to Running Away

Objectives

- To understand events and characters in chapter 3 of *The Outsiders*
- To analyze cause-effect relationships

Notes to the Teacher

Chapter 3 ends with foreshadowing, as Ponyboy indicates that things are about to get even worse. The evening has had its ups and downs—meeting two pretty Soc girls at the drive-in and starting to walk them home, looming conflict with their drunk boyfriends, falling asleep looking at the stars, getting home way after curfew, being slapped by an angry Darry, and running away from home with Johnny in tow.

It is evident that the Soc girls do not have the same antipathy toward the greasers that the boys do. The boyfriends are drunk and very threatening, but danger seems to be averted when the girls leave. We see that Ponyboy is a very emotional person, deeply upset by the confrontation, nostalgic for the imagined peace of country life, and hot-headed in his relationship with Darry. We learn more about Johnny—his vicious beating by the Socs, his feeling of rejection by his parents, and his depression.

In this lesson, students discuss cause-effect relationships in events in chapters 2 and 3. They then analyze Johnny Cade and consider the nature of foreshadowing.

Procedure

1. Ask students to identify the main events in chapters 2 and 3 (talking with the Soc girls, encountering their boyfriends, falling asleep watching the stars, Darry slapping Ponyboy, and Ponyboy deciding to run away from home).
2. Distribute **Handout 6**, and use part A to discuss the nature of cause-effect relationships.

Suggested Responses

1. The next day schools and many businesses were closed.
2. The team was disqualified and did not finish the race.
3. People panicked, and several were injured in a stampede for the doors.
4. Melissa did not do well on the test.

3. Emphasize the difference between cause-effect relationships and coincidences, and ask for examples based on items on the handout.

Suggested Responses

1. If the next day is also someone's birthday, that is a coincidence.
2. That same evening there was a full moon.
3. At the same time, a gas station just down the street was robbed.
4. Melissa wore a pink shirt and blue jeans to school.

4. Have small groups complete part B of the handout.

Suggested Responses

1. Cherry and Marcia are alone at the drive-in and so are free to talk to the greasers.
2. Dally walks away.
3. Ponyboy is very late getting home.
4. Ponyboy runs away from home.
5. Ponyboy tells Darry not to yell at Soda.
6. Johnny was severely beaten by Socs who came in a blue Mustang.

5. Explain that Johnny is one of the more important characters in the novel. Distribute **Handout 7**, and have students use the text to complete the graphic organizer.

Suggested Responses

Actions—Tends to be quiet and somewhat withdrawn; hangs around with Ponyboy, stays out all night if he wants to, carries a switchblade, dares to tell Dally to leave the Soc girls alone

Dialogue—Tells Ponyboy that sometimes he feels like killing himself; told his gang about the brutal beating he received; describes his abusive household; lets Ponyboy do most of the talking with the Soc girls

Feelings—Some security with the gang; insecurity after the attack; depression about uncaring parents; brave in scolding Dally

Appearance—Sixteen-year-old with big serious black eyes; small for his age; dark skin and hair

6. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the last paragraph of chapter 3. Ask the following questions.
    - As the chapter ends, what is Ponyboy planning to do? (He has cooled down and plans to go back home.)
    - What does the last sentence tell us? (Something really bad is about to happen.)
    - Why did the author put that sentence there? (It is a cliffhanger, intended to keep the reader curious and interested, eager to go on to the next chapter.)
7. Ask students to brainstorm a list of bad things that could happen to Ponyboy and his gang. Be careful not to give away events that actually occur in the rest of the book.
8. Assign students to read chapter 4.

Cause and Effect Relationships

Part A.

Directions: Cause-and-effect relationships are the opposite of coincidences. For example, the fact that someone does not hear the alarm in the morning might cause that person to be late to work. In the chart below, indicate a likely effect of each of the causes.

Cause	Effect
1. Twenty-four inches of snow fell overnight.	
2. The first runner in the relay race dropped the baton.	
3. Someone in a dark and crowded theater screamed, "Fire!"	
4. On the day of the unit exam, Melissa was still only half way through the book.	

Part B.

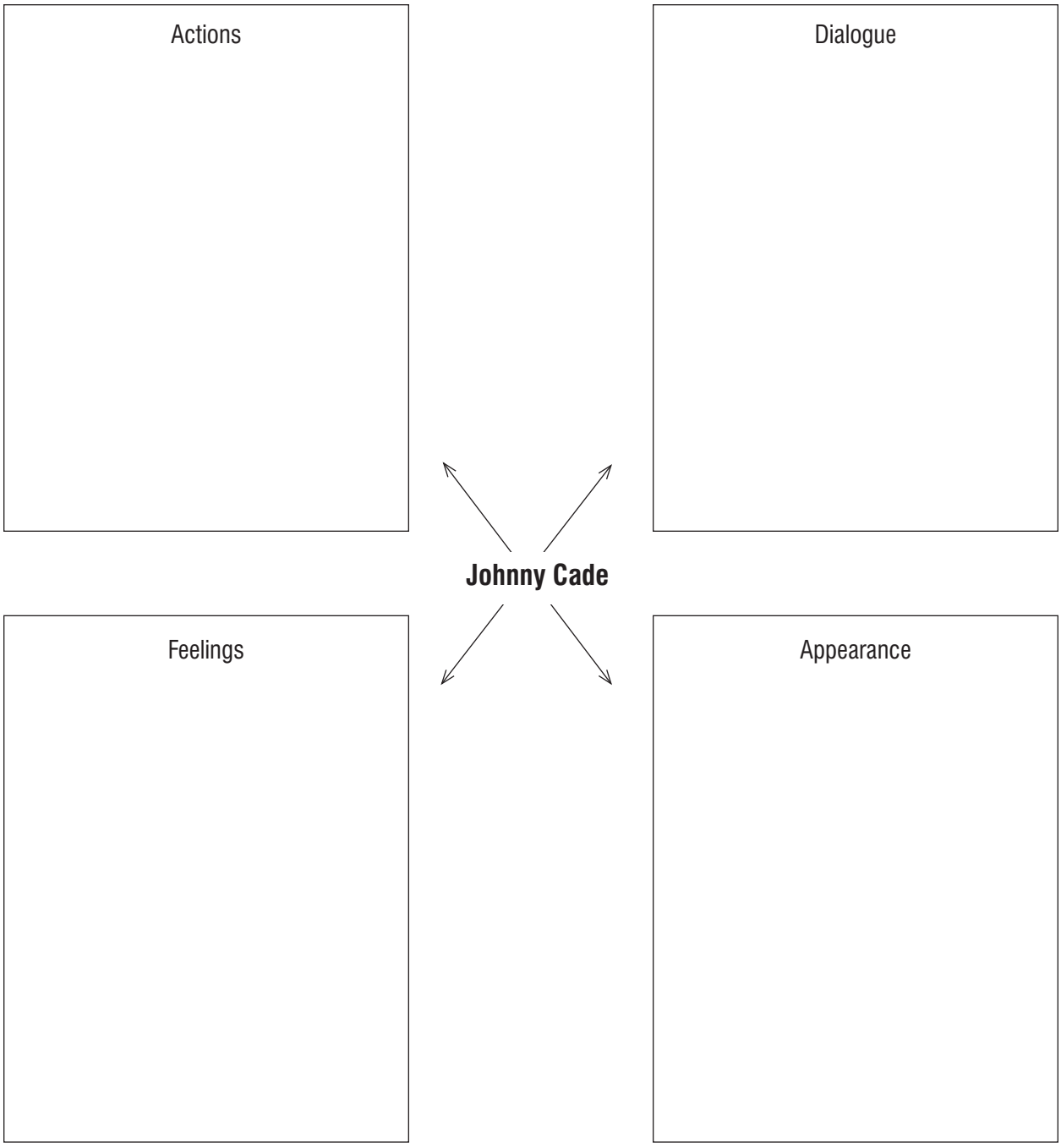
Directions: Fill in the chart with causes and effects in *The Outsiders.*

Cause	Effect
1. Cherry's boyfriend got drunk, and so did Marcia's.	
2. Johnny tells Dally to stop teasing the girls.	
3. Ponyboy falls asleep in the lot when he is looking at the stars.	
4. Darry slaps Ponyboy.	
5.	Darry slaps Ponyboy.
6.	Johnny carries a switchblade.

Name:

Johnny: A Character Map

Directions: Use the graphic organizer to record information about Johnny Cade in chapters 1, 2, and 3 of *The Outsiders*.



Lesson 4

Fleeing to Windrixville

Objectives

- To understand the crisis in chapter 4 of *The Outsiders*
- To make personal connections with Ponyboy and Johnny
- To learn about the characteristics of gangs

Notes to the Teacher

Chapter 4 provides a major turning point in the story, and we find out exactly how things can get worse. Socs find Ponyboy and Johnny in the park and attack, nearly drowning Ponyboy. Johnny uses his switchblade to kill one of them. Frightened about legal consequences, Johnny and Ponyboy turn to Dally for help. He sends them off to stay in an abandoned church near a town called Windrixville. They jump on a train and arrive, exhausted, at the church.

In this lesson, students begin by responding to questions about the chapter. The handout can be used as a basis for group discussion or as a reading check. Students then return to **Handout 1**, apply the statements to Ponyboy and Johnny, and write paragraphs relating themselves to the characters. The class concludes by taking a look at the nature of gangs. Depending on the location of your school, students may know almost nothing or a great deal about gangs.

In connection with this lesson or later in the unit, you may want to ask a police officer who works with juvenile offenders to speak to your class about the special challenges and heartbreaks, as well as the successes, involved in this line of work.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 8**, and have students answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Before they can leave the park, Ponyboy and Johnny are attacked by five drunk Socs.
2. Ponyboy tries to act brave, and one of the Socs, Bob, pushes his face into a fountain, nearly drowning him.
3. Johnny uses his switchblade and kills Bob.
4. Ponyboy and Johnny turn to Dally, who has already had substantial encounters with the law.

5. Dally gives them a gun and money, and he gives Ponyboy a dry shirt. He also tells them to go hide in a church in Windrixville. Presumably the gun is for self-defense and the money for food and other necessities; Ponyboy needs a dry shirt.
6. They hop on a train and go to the church, which to Ponyboy seems to have a creepy atmosphere.

2. Point out that by the end of chapter 4 we have gotten to know Ponyboy and Johnny quite well. Refer students back to **Handout 1** or give them new copies, and ask them to work individually to complete it from the perspective of either one of the boys.
3. Have students meet in small groups with others who chose the same character. Ask them to compare and contrast responses to the statements on the handout. Explain that there is more than one possible way to respond to some of the statements. (While a wide variety of comments are likely to be made, it is certainly true that Ponyboy and Johnny live in a dangerous situation where walking alone is foolishly risky; movies and books are ways to escape to a different world. The Socs are society's "haves," so the police may tend to see the greasers as the culprits rather than as the victims. Johnny's parents clearly do not care much about him, a fact that he finds extremely painful. Ponyboy had loving parents, but they died.)
4. Distribute **Handout 9**, and have students complete both the Venn diagram and the writing exercise.
5. Point out that there is nothing new about a story dealing with rival gangs. A long time ago William Shakespeare wrote a play called *Romeo and Juliet*. The entire action of the play hinges on a long-standing conflict between two rival families, the Montagues and the Capulets, and city authorities are very upset about constant eruptions of violence on the street.
6. Have students read the information on **Handout 10**. Then point out that in the past gangs have been big problems, especially in urban areas, where they have been associated with graffiti, drugs, robberies, fights, and murders. Have students discuss the extent to which gangs are or are not a problem today.
7. Ask students what problems Ponyboy and Johnny face at the end of chapter 4. (They are kids out on their own with limited resources; they need food and water, and they are bound to get bored and lonely. Back home, investigators are going to want to know why Bob was found dead in a park with a nasty stab wound.)
8. Assign students to read chapter 5.

The Outsiders: Chapter 4

Directions: Use complete sentences to answer the following questions.

1. At the end of chapter 3, Ponyboy decides to return home instead of running away. Why does this plan change in chapter 4?

2. What does one of the Socs try to do to Ponyboy?

3. What does Johnny do?

4. To whom do the two boys turn for help? Why?

5. What does Dally give them? Why?

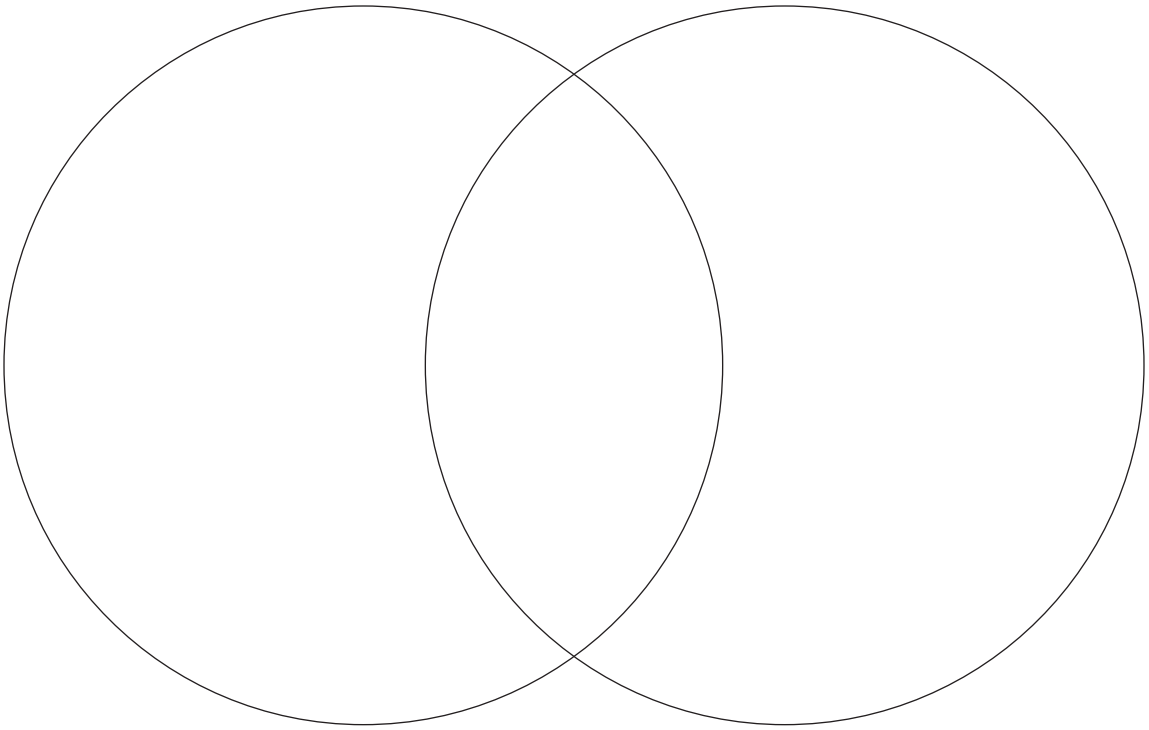
6. Where do the boys go, and how do they get there?

 Name:

Connections with *The Outsiders*

Part A.

Directions: Write your name over one of the circles in the Venn diagram, and write Ponyboy's or Johnny's name above the other one. Then use the diagram to record similarities and differences.



Part B.

Directions: Write a paragraph explaining why you are able to make personal connections with this character.

Characteristics of Gangs

Directions: Read and think about the following information.

1. What is a gang?

   A gang is a close-knit group of people who share characteristics they see as important. Gangs exclude people who do not share those characteristics.

2. What causes people to choose to belong to gangs?

   The first big benefit of gang membership is a feeling of belonging, of not being a lonely, isolated, and vulnerable individual. Being in a gang makes a person part of a community. Gangs give people feelings of security and power.

3. Why are gangs often associated with violence?

   Gangs have power just because they consist of many people, and they also establish rivalries which can easily lead to power struggles and erupt into violence on the streets and elsewhere. When gangs consist of people who live in poverty or are victims of prejudice, gang members may feel a desire to get back at a culture that is oppressing them.

4. How do gang members express their unity?

   They may wear certain colors or styles of dress; they often use rituals of initiation; they may have characteristic gestures or passwords. Usually gang members share secrets that they will not reveal to others.

5. Is the term "good gang" an oxymoron?

   Ideally, there could be a good gang; practically speaking, it would be likely to be destroyed by less virtuous counterparts.

Lesson 5

Ponyboy and the Written Word

Objectives

- To understand Ponyboy's thoughts and interactions with Johnny while they stay in the church
- To analyze the allusions to *Gone with the Wind* and "Nothing Gold Can Stay," and to reflect on them
- To reflect on the significance of the letter from Sodapop

Notes to the Teacher

In chapter 5, the long days of hiding in the church evoke a lot of emotions from both Ponyboy and Johnny. There is not much to do, and both fear the legal ramifications of the stabbing in the park. They cut their hair, they read *Gone with the Wind*, and they talk. Finally Dally shows up with news.

Gone with the Wind seems a strange choice for teenage greasers in Oklahoma in the 1960s, but something about the novel grips Johnny's imagination. He is drawn to the image of the gallant Southern gentleman, a lifestyle far removed from his loveless, lower-class family environment. Ponyboy recites Robert Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" and admits he does not entirely understand it; oddly, it seems that Johnny does. Sodapop's letter is at the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of verbal dexterity, but the genuine love behind it is clear.

In this lesson, students first answer a few questions to show they read and understood the chapter. They then learn a little about *Gone with the Wind*, and they analyze "Nothing Gold Can Stay."

Procedure

1. Use the following questions to review the chapter.
    - How well does Ponyboy enjoy his time away in a church outside Windrixville? (He is bored and physically uncomfortable; as well as emotionally torn. The time seems very long, and he does not enjoy himself at all.)
    - What does Johnny insist that they have to do to hide their identities? (They cut their hair, and Ponyboy lightens his.)
    - What do they read to help pass the time? (*Gone with the Wind*)
    - Which one from the greaser gang finally shows up? (Dally)
    - Surprisingly, who is acting as a spy for the greasers? (Cherry, the Soc girl)

2. Distribute **Handout 11**, and ask students to complete it individually.

Suggested Responses

1. Ponyboy and Johnny are at the church for four or five days.
2. They try to disguise themselves by cutting their hair and lightening Ponyboy's hair.
3. Johnny brings back candy, bologna, and bread. Some variety would have been nice—Ponyboy finds bologna disgusting after eating it every day. Cooking is not feasible, so the choices are very limited.
4. They play poker. Students may suggest playing computer games on cell phones; point out that the area where they are hiding is likely to be a dead zone.
5. Some may choose more current popular novels.
6. They see themselves more as adult fugitives from the law than as kids. They are too afraid and helpless to use the time constructively.

3. Distribute **Handout 12**. Ask students to read the information and answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Ponyboy loves to read, and Johnny brings a copy of *Gone with the Wind* back with him along with basic supplies. The boys previously saw the movie; Ponyboy can hardly wait to start the book.
2. Ponyboy reports that Johnny is enthralled with *Gone with the Wind*, especially with the image of gallant southern manhood—way different from Johnny's love-deprived home.
3. The book offers entertainment and escape. Ponyboy reads it aloud, as it is too difficult for Johnny to read.

4. Point out that another piece of literature is also mentioned in the chapter—a famous poem by Robert Frost. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Then distribute **Handout 13**, and ask small groups to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Ponyboy and Johnny were awake very early in the morning and saw the sunrise. Johnny remarks on the beauty of the gleaming silver and gold mist in the dawn sunshine.
2. Johnny feels that the poem articulates just what he felt when he saw the shining golden mist.
3. The poem is subtle and has more to do with experience than with intellect.

4. Beautiful things do not last forever; one minute a person can be enjoying them, and the next minute they are gone, like the gleaming mist in the morning. Innocence is like that, too, lovely and fresh, but ephemeral.

5. Ask students what else Ponyboy reads in this chapter (a letter from Sodapop, who does not know where Ponyboy is and who wants him to come home, if he can).
6. Ask students what Dally says is now going on in their town. (There is all-out warfare between the Socs and the greasers because of the killing in the park. Dally wants to have a real showdown to keep the Socs out of greaser territory.)
7. Ask students what they think will happen next in the novel. Will Dally take Ponyboy and Johnny somewhere else? Will the boys stay in the church indefinitely? Will they go home and turn themselves in to the police? If the killing was self-defense, do they have anything to fear from the law?
8. Assign students to read chapters 6 and 7.

Passing the Time

Directions: To Ponyboy, the days spent hiding in the church seem very long. The boys have to stay out of sight, and there is not much to keep them busy. Use the following questions to consider their experience.

1. How long do Ponyboy and Johnny hide out in the back of the church?

2. What practical activities do they complete?

3. What food supplies does Johnny purchase? What would you have purchased if you were in his situation?

4. What game do they play? What game(s) would you have played if you were in their situation?

5. What reading materials would you want? Why?

6. Do Johnny and Ponyboy make good use of their time away in the country? Explain.

What Is *Gone with the Wind*?

Directions: Read the following information about the book Ponyboy and Johnny are reading. Then look up additional information about the novel, and answer the questions to relate it to *The Outsiders*.

Gone with the Wind, a novel written by Margaret Mitchell, was published in 1936 and received the distinguished Pulitzer Prize. The blockbuster Oscar-winning movie version came out in 1939. The setting is the South before, during, and after the U.S. Civil War. At the center of attention is Scarlett O'Hara, the beautiful and spoiled daughter of plantation aristocrats, her infatuation with a man who marries someone else, and her tempestuous romance with Rhett Butler.

When the book was published and when the movie came out, the nation was in the grip of the Great Depression. Times were hard for just about everyone. Both readers and movie audiences welcomed escape into Mitchell's romanticized portrait of the South, destined for defeat, but characterized by a gallant and flamboyant lifestyle.

Gone with the Wind is certainly not young adult literature. In its first edition, it was over a thousand pages long!

1. Why do Ponyboy and Johnny want to read *Gone with the Wind*?

2. How does Johnny respond to the book?

3. What does the book offer them?

A Look at Robert Frost

Directions: Read Robert Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay," which Ponyboy recites to Johnny in chapter 5. Ponyboy knows the poem by heart, but he admits that he does not quite understand it. Johnny, however, might. Answer the following questions.

1. What experience brings the poem to Ponyboy's mind?

2. How does Johnny first react when Ponyboy recites the poem?

3. Why does Ponyboy have trouble feeling that he understands the poem?

4. What meanings do you see in the poem?

Lesson 6

Ponyboy and Johnny: Teenage Heroes

Objectives

- To understand events in chapters 6 and 7 of *The Outsiders*
- To begin to consider the novel's themes
- To find real-life examples of teenage heroism

Notes to the Teacher

Chapter 6 brings yet another turning point in the plot. Johnny decides to go back home and turn himself in. When Dally, Johnny, and Ponyboy return to the church, they find that it is on fire with children trapped inside. Ponyboy and Johnny plunge right in to rescue them, with Dally right behind. The old building is crumbling and crashing around them. Ponyboy escapes with minor injuries; Dally and Johnny are not so fortunate. At the hospital, Ponyboy is in the waiting room when his brothers arrive, and the Curtis boys are reconciled.

Chapter 7 is less active, as Ponyboy finds himself proclaimed a hero, and we find that Dally will recover, but Johnny's injuries are severe. Ponyboy has another conversation with a Soc, Marcia's boyfriend, and once again concludes that Socs and greasers have more commonalities than differences.

In this lesson, students summarize the main events in the chapters. They then dramatize the dialogue between Randy and Ponyboy near the end of chapter 7, which leads to a discussion of one of the novel's main themes, the idea that the Socs and greasers actually have a lot in common. Finally, students research examples of teenage heroism and share findings in an open discussion.

Procedure

1. Use the following questions to review the chapters.
    - What big decision does Johnny make near the beginning of chapter 6? (He will go back to turn himself in to the police, rather than continue on the run.)
    - When Johnny, Ponyboy, and Dally return to the church, what do they find? (The old building is on fire, and several children are trapped inside.)
    - What actions do the boys take? (Ponyboy and Johnny rescue the trapped children; Ponyboy gets out, but Johnny is caught by falling beams. His back is broken.)

- What happens when Ponyboy sees his brothers at the hospital? (Ponyboy finally understands that Darry does love him; the brothers are reconciled.)
- Earlier, Sodapop said that he wanted to marry Sandy. What has happened? (Her parents sent her to Florida to keep her away from him.)

2. Point out that Ponyboy's first reaction when the Socs arrive at Tasty Freeze is hatred, but then he has a conversation with Randy. Have three students role-play the conversation, playing the parts of Ponyboy, Randy, and a narrator, beginning with Randy indicating a desire to talk to Ponyboy and ending with Ponyboy walking away and Randy signaling his Soc friends.
3. Have students complete **Handout 14**.

Suggested Responses

1. Ponyboy reflects that all of the terrible things that have happened and might happen in the future are the fault of the Socs. Ponyboy hates them, and his face must show it, because Two-Bit warns him not to start anything at this point.
2. Randy did not expect heroism from a greaser, and he feels that he himself would not have been brave enough to help the trapped children.
3. Bob, Randy's best friend, is dead, and Bob's mother had a nervous breakdown. He knows that Bob's parents were ineffective parents partly responsible for Bob's actions. He also knows that there was a good side to his friend.
4. Randy believes that the fights between the Socs and the greasers are pointless, and he does not plan to be in the rumble that night; instead he is thinking about running away.
5. Ponyboy says a few things that reflect wisdom beyond his years. One is that there is no use in running away. Another is about the source of the hatred between the world's haves and have-nots.
6. Although the Socs and the greasers seem very different, the differences are superficial. They actually have a great deal in common and are all just people with similar concerns and problems.

4. Point out that, for most people, not every day brings a chance to be a hero. Distribute **Handout 15**, and ask students to complete the graphic organizer in part A. Follow with discussion, and point out that every chance to be a hero is also a chance to be a coward. Aim for as many examples as possible. (Possibilities: a house or trailer on fire with people trapped inside; a car accident with victims unconscious

while smoke pours from the car's engine; a water-skier being attacked by a shark; an attempted bank robbery; a hostage situation; an attempted car-jacking or kidnapping; seeing someone sell drugs not far from an elementary school; finding a hiker trapped on a narrow mountain ledge; confronting neighborhood bullies.)

5. Ask students to work with partners and use the Internet to find real-life stories about teenage heroes in action and to record information in part B of **Handout 15**. When students have finished the handout, have them share information with the class as a whole.
6. Assign students to finish reading the novel. (Note: At this point students are usually eager to find out what will happen to the characters. You may want to allow several days for this reading to be completed.)

"He's Just a Guy"

Directions: Give close attention to Ponyboy's dialogue with Randy Adderson near the end of chapter 7. Then answer the following questions.

1. How does Ponyboy respond when he first sees the Socs arrive outside the Tasty Freeze?

2. How has Randy reacted to hearing about Ponyboy's heroism?

3. Why is Randy depressed?

4. What has Randy decided to do?

5. How does Ponyboy respond?

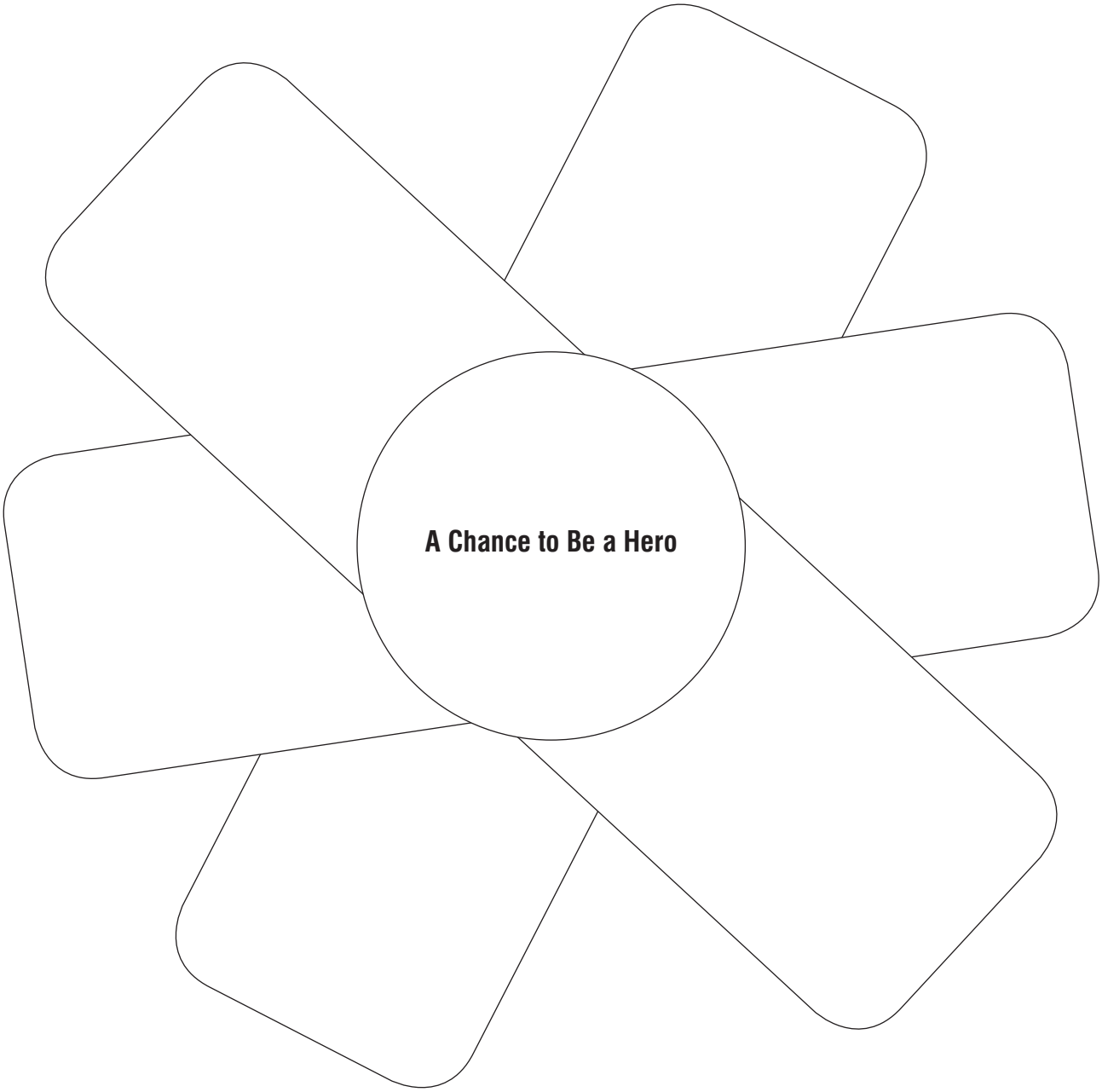
6. Like Ponyboy's earlier conversation with Cherry, this dialogue gets at one of the novel's major themes. What is Ponyboy learning about the social chasm between the greasers and the Socs?

 Name:

Real-Life Heroes

Part A.

Directions: Use the graphic organizer to brainstorm a list of situations in which a person might have an opportunity to become a hero, but could also choose to be a coward. Briefly indicate what a heroic action might be.



Part B.

Directions: News reporters use six basic questions to organize information: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* Find a news story about a real-life teenage hero in action, and record the information below.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Source:

Lesson 7

From Heartbreak to Healing

Objectives

- To understand events and characters in the novel's closing chapters
- To understand the structure of a frame story

Notes to the Teacher

The last chapters bring the novel full circle. Johnny is in critical condition and unlikely to recover. After years of longing for his mother's love, he refuses to see her when she comes to the hospital. Dally is on the mend and eager to fight the Socs. Ponyboy talks to Cherry, who is grieving the loss of Bob; she knew his good side, much as Randy did.

Chapter 9 begins with the rumble and ends at the hospital. Ponyboy and Dally are present when Johnny dies, breathing his last words imploring Ponyboy to "stay gold." Dally's pain makes it clear that, with Johnny, he took the big risk of loving someone.

Chapter 10 shows Ponyboy, who has been through so much in the past few weeks, mired in pain and confusion. Dally, equally confused, brings about his own death. Ponyboy, who was nearly sick before the rumble, becomes very sick and has a concussion; there is a lot of unfinished business, and he feels that he will never be able to make up all of the schoolwork he has missed.

Chapter 11 is brief, presenting Randy's effort to visit Ponyboy and Ponyboy's confusion over just about everything. In chapter 12, Ponyboy has recovered physically, and legal issues are resolved. Still, things are far from fine. The end of the book takes us right back to the beginning, and we find that we have been reading Ponyboy's very extensive essay for his English class.

In this lesson, students begin by summarizing events and focusing on their effects on Ponyboy. Students then voice personal responses to situations in the story. Finally, they define the term "frame story" and apply it to *The Outsiders.*

Procedure

1. Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group one of the five closing chapters. Ask the groups to summarize events and to describe their effects on Ponyboy; they should then present findings to the class as a whole. (See Notes to the Teacher.)
2. Distribute **Handout 16**, and have students complete it individually. Follow with general discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Johnny's mother offers too little too late. Maybe he should have allowed her to visit him, but his refusal is understandable.
2. Cherry knew and loved another side of Bob; her affection shows her idealism and romanticism.
3. Dally was probably acting out of emotional despair rather than from logical planning.
4. Being placed in foster care might have kept Ponyboy out of rumbles, but it would also have separated him from his brothers, the only family he has left.
5. This response is subjective. Students may see Ponyboy, Johnny, Sodapop, Darry, Cherry, or one of the others as a favorite.
6. Ponyboy is only fourteen years old; as he gets older, he will probably use his head more effectively. In the novel we see him thinking quite perceptively on many occasions.
7. Bullying and conflicts come in many forms; they are not always physical.
8. Darry is awfully young for the amount of responsibility he is carrying. He has had to give up his own dreams for the future.

3. Use **Handout 17** to explain the nature of a frame story, and ask students to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. A frame story begins and ends with the same situation or with very similar situations. In between the two frames, another story or series of stories emerges.
2. The framing device in *The Outsiders* is the reference to the movie starring Paul Newman and to the trip home.

4. Ask students to imagine a framing device for a story they might write; have them record details about the frame, but just a sketchy notion about the story in between. Some samples might include the following:
   - The frame story tells of a star high school basketball player in the locker room before one of the season's most important games. The story in between locker room segments might tell of breaking up a relationship, getting a letter with a great scholarship offer, or finding out about an impending parental divorce.
   - The frame story involves a courtroom with jury, judge, defendant, attorneys, and witnesses. Inside the frame might be the series of events that brought these people together in a trial.

5. Remind students about their earlier discussion of the relationships between causes and effects. Clarify with examples of the differences between coincidences and causes/effects. For example, if it rains on someone's birthday, that is a coincidence. Receiving gifts on the day demonstrates cause/effect.
6. Distribute **Handout 18**, and have students complete the graphic organizer.

Suggested Responses

1. Johnny could stay outside all night and frequently stayed at the homes of other greasers; he refused to see his mother when she finally came to the hospital.
2. The officers, not knowing that the gun was not loaded, shot to kill Dally.
3. "Ponyboy" wrote *The Outsiders* and, presumably, passed English.
4. Ponyboy and Johnny went into the burning church and rescued the children; Ponyboy was slightly injured and Johnny critically injured by falling debris; Ponyboy found himself hailed as a hero; Johnny died.
5. Johnny began carrying a knife and used it to kill Bob, leading to the flight to the old church.
6. Ponyboy remembered and recited Robert Frost's poem; Johnny's last words encouraged Ponyboy to "stay gold."

7. Emphasize that causes and effects often come in chains; a cause leads to an effect, which then becomes a cause for another effect, etc.

The Way I See It

Directions: Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with each of the following statements. Make your judgment based on the perspective of a person who has read the entire novel. Write brief explanations for your responses.

_____1. I understand why Johnny refused to see his mother when she came to the hospital.

_____2. I understand why Cherry loved Bob even though she could not stand being with him when he was drunk.

_____3. I believe that Dally robbed the grocery store because he wanted to die.

_____4. It seems to me it would have been better for Ponyboy to have been separated from his brothers when their parents died.

_____5. My favorite character in the novel is Dally.

_____6. If Ponyboy had used his head, none of the bad things in the novel would have happened.

_____7. I don't think real schools have rival groups like the Socs and the greasers.

_____8. I understand Darry's attitudes toward Ponyboy and Sodapop.

What Is a Frame Story?

Directions: Read the following information about the literary form called a *frame story*. Then answer the questions.

In the Middle Ages, a poet named Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a story about a group of people traveling together from one city in England to another. To pass the time, they tell stories. The pilgrimage is the frame for the stories.

Emily Brontë wrote a story that begins with a man renting a house far from the city to take a vacation. In the end, a year later on another vacation, he journeys to the same area. In between he hears the story of a series of events that started decades ago. The frame is the visits to the country.

Joseph Conrad wrote a story that begins with five friends sitting on a ship. Then one of them tells a story of some bizarre experiences he had when he was working for Belgian ivory exporters. At the end the narrator is still sitting in the ship with his friends—that is the frame of the story.

1. What is a frame story?

2. What is the framing device in *The Outsiders*?

 Name:

This Was No Coincidence

Directions: Fill in the graphic organizer with the effects of the causes listed to the left.

Cause	Effect
1. Mrs. Cade paid very little attention to where Johnny was or what he did. →	
2. Dally pointed an unloaded gun at police officers. →	
3. Mr. Syme gave Ponyboy a last-minute chance to pass English. →	
4. Some young children were trapped in a burning church. →	
5. Johnny was brutally beaten by Socs. →	
6. Johnny remarked about the beauty of the morning mist shimmering in the light of sunrise. →	

Lesson 8

Focus on Characterization

Objectives

- To distinguish direct and indirect characterization
- To identify characters as major/minor, static/dynamic, and round/flat

Notes to the Teacher

Ponyboy narrates all of *The Outsiders* and provides a good deal of direct characterization when he tells us about himself and about the other characters. He also provides indirect characterization when he lets us hear what the characters say and observe what they do. This lesson begins by asking students to note the difference between the two ways of presenting characters and to recognize that direct and indirect characterization connect in interesting ways. For example, some of the direct characterization of Darry conflicts with what we observe about him, revealing his complexity.

Students then focus on character analysis. Indicate that major/minor, static/dynamic, and round/flat are not diametrical opposites but rather more-or-less qualities. For example, Randy and Mrs. Cade are both minor characters, but Randy is less minor than Mrs. Cade.

Procedure

1. Explain that we have two ways of getting to know people. Sometimes we hear things about them; other times we make our own conclusions based on their actions. Provide examples from real life.

   Direct learning

   - The sixth grade teacher tells the seventh grade teacher that Debra is an excellent writer.
   - Someone states that Tony cannot be trusted.
   - Aaron tells his girlfriend that he loves her.

   Indirect learning

   - The seventh grade teacher observes that all of Debra's writings are interesting and grammatically correct.
   - Tony is seen taking five dollars out of someone else's coat pocket.
   - Aaron gives his girlfriend a dozen roses even though it is not Valentine's Day or her birthday.

2. Distribute **Handout 19**, and have small groups complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. *Direct*—Ponyboy seems to indicate that Sodapop is nearly unflappably happy. *Indirect*—This contrasts with Sodapop's anguished response to the argument between Ponyboy and Darry near the end of the story.
2. *Direct*—Ponyboy describes Dally as a hardened criminal who is unlikely to love anyone. *Indirect*—We see how deeply Dally loved Johnny.
3. *Direct*—At first Ponyboy presents Darry as serious, cold, and bossy. *Indirect*—We soon see that Darry is just a boy trying to do a man's job.
4. *Direct*—Ponyboy describes Johnny as shy and unlikely to talk. *Indirect*—Johnny boldly takes decisive action at several times in the novel.
5. *Direct*—Ponyboy is struck by Cherry's prettiness and emphasizes that she is someone (like himself) who likes to look at the stars. *Indirect*—We hear Cherry's comment that she will probably not speak to Ponyboy at school and her explanation of why she does not go to visit Johnny in the hospital.
6. *Direct*—Both Randy and Cherry refer to a good side of Bob. *Indirect*—All we see in Bob is a rowdy, dangerous drunk.

3. Distribute **Handout 20**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Ponyboy is the protagonist.
2. Sodapop, Dally, Darry, and Johnny are among other important characters.
3. Among many clearly minor characters (but not unimportant) are the doctor, the English teacher, and Johnny's mother.
4. Ponyboy learns a great deal about his family, himself, and life in general; he is dynamic.
5. Johnny is dynamic; once he thought he wanted to die, but he finds that is not so at all.
6. Two-Bit is a possibility; we have no opportunity to see change in the hospital personnel or the English teacher.
7. Ponyboy has a tough greaser façade, but is actually sensitive, a scholar, vulnerable, and hungry for insight into human nature. Johnny seems like a traumatized and neglected victim, but is

also capable of heroism and insight. Dally seems like a callous juvenile delinquent but is loving and protective toward the young greasers, especially Johnny.

8. Mr. Syme is the stereotypical kind high school English teacher; the doctor is the stereotypical wise physician; Mrs. Cade is the stereotypical self-centered, passive parent.

 Name:

Direct and Indirect Characterization

Directions: With *direct characterization,* the narrator or another character tells us what a character is like; with *indirect characterization,* we hear the character talk and see him or her act, and that leads us to reach a conclusion about what the person is like. Find an example of direct and indirect characterization of each of the characters listed below.

Character	Direct Characterization	Indirect Characterization
1. Sodapop		
2. Dally		
3. Darry		
4. Johnny		
5. Cherry		
6. Bob		

Kinds of Characters

Directions: Read the information, and answer the questions.

Major/minor characters—Major characters play bigger roles in a story than minor characters. The most important character is the story's protagonist.

Dynamic/static characters—Dynamic characters change because of their experiences, while static characters remain pretty much the same. The change can be a positive one, such as maturing or gaining insight. It can also be negative.

Round/flat characters—Round characters are complicated, like real human beings; flat characters are more like stereotypes. A flat character can be described in a sentence or two, but pages are necessary to describe a round character.

1. Who is the protagonist of *The Outsiders*?

2. Who are some characters that you see as major, even though they are not the protagonist?

3. Who are some characters who are definitely minor?

4. Is Ponyboy dynamic or static? Explain.

5. Is Johnny dynamic or static? Explain.

6. Identify a character that you see as static, and explain your choice.

7. Who are three round characters in *The Outsiders*? Explain what makes them so complicated.

8. Identify three flat characters in the novel, and explain your choices.

Lesson 9

Focus on Conflicts and Themes

Objectives

- To identify the ways in which the characters conflict with themselves, with other individuals, and with society
- To recognize connections between the novel's conflicts and its themes

Notes to the Teacher

The Outsiders is very much a story of a young person acquiring maturity, part of a long tradition in literature. In the future, students are likely to encounter works such as J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and John Knowles's *A Separate Peace*, all of which have striking similarities to S. E. Hinton's book.

The characters in the novel, especially Ponyboy, experience conflicts that connect closely with the central themes. Person vs. nature plays little role here, except for the fire at the church, but the other three types of conflict are abundantly present. Perhaps most important is person vs. self. Ponyboy struggles to reconcile participation in rumbles with the realization that Socs and greasers are all just people. Johnny realizes that he does not want to die after all. Fights occur in this novel, with bloody results. Perhaps Randy says it best when he comments that fights are useless.

One reason for the novel's enduring appeal is undoubtedly the timeless themes that connect powerfully with teenage hearts and minds. Life is tough and often unfair. Socioeconomic differences forge competing cliques. Young men experience conflicting messages about the need to achieve and the need to rebel. Love hurts, but not loving hurts more. Family matters, but is not always easy.

Procedure

1. Point out that conflict is part of life, and explain that we often classify four types of conflict: person vs. nature (surviving a flood or confronting a grizzly bear), person vs. self (making a choice or learning a lesson), person vs. person (a boxing match or a debate), person vs. society (running for office or participating in a protest).
2. Distribute **Handout 21**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. *Person vs. person*—Bob holds Ponyboy's face in the fountain until Johnny intervenes with his switchblade.

2. *Person vs. society*—Ponyboy is attacked by the group of Socs just because he is a greaser; he is saved when the rest of the greasers arrive and chase the Socs away.
3. *Person vs. self* and *person vs. person*—Johnny struggles with himself for a moment before declining to see his mother, who is angry but helpless.
4. *Person vs. self*—The Curtis brothers know they can stay together only if they do not get into trouble; at the end of the book they are still together.
5. *Person vs. society*—Dally acts out his feelings about Johnny's death; Dally is killed.
6. *Person vs. society*—Ponyboy's conversation with Randy leads him to decline the stereotypical image of Socs.
7. *Person vs. nature*—Johnny and Ponyboy confront the danger of a burning building and manage to save the trapped children; both are injured, Johnny critically.
8. *Person vs. self*—Ponyboy decides to try to pass English; to do this, he will confront his own experiences.
9. *Person vs. self* and *person vs. society*—Sodapop, more vulnerable than he has seemed in the rest of the book, implores his brothers not to argue, and they comply.
10. *Person vs. society*—Cherry fights the status quo of conflict between Socs and greasers; the rumble takes place, and Ponyboy is injured.

3. Tell students that events in a story are usually arranged so that they gradually build up to a high point called a *climax*, and everything after that is resolution. Ask students to identify the climax of *The Outsiders*. (The main conflicts climax when Johnny dies in the hospital.)
4. Clarify that a theme is a general idea stated or suggested in a story or other work of art. A theme is more than just a topic. For example, a topic could be prejudice, but a theme would be the idea that prejudice leads to oppression. Have small groups complete **Handout 22**.

Suggested Responses

1. Family relationships are precious, but they are not always easy and conflict-free.
2. Sometimes a network of friends can be closer than family.
3. Peer pressure is a powerful force in young people's decisions.
4. Cliques and gangs tend to turn groups into enemies and may generate violence.
5. Good grades are important, but they can sometimes conflict with social expectations.

6. Life can be tough and dangerous; people have to be ready for whatever comes their way.
7. There are many possible responses. Abuse of alcohol can lead to terrible consequences; under a tough façade one can often find a vulnerable individual; it is important to think before acting—to use your head.

 Name:

Conflicts in *The Outsiders*

Directions: Identify the types of conflict involved in the following situations. Then indicate both the cause and the resolution of the conflict.

person vs. person person vs. nature

person vs. self person vs. society

_____ 1. Ponyboy almost drowns in the park.

_____ 2. Ponyboy is attacked when he is walking home from a Paul Newman movie.

_____ 3. Johnny refuses to see his mother when she comes to the hospital.

_____ 4. Ponyboy fears being taken away from his brothers.

_____ 5. Dally robs a grocery store.

_____ 6. Ponyboy identifies Randy as just a guy, not a Soc.

_____ 7. Ponyboy and Johnny try to rescue children from a burning church.

_____ 8. Ponyboy starts to write his English paper.

_____ 9. Sodapop asks Darry and Ponyboy not to fight.

_____ 10. Cherry helps the greasers by being a spy.

 Name:

Thoughts from *The Outsiders*

Directions: Respond to each of the following questions.

1. What does *The Outsiders* say about family relationships?

2. What does it say about friends?

3. What does it say about peer pressure?

4. What does it say about cliques and gangs?

5. What does it say about success in school?

6. What does it say about life in general?

7. What lessons about life did you learn from reading this novel?

Lesson 10
Final Considerations

Objectives

- To recognize and understand motifs in a story
- To point out and explain colloquial expressions

Notes to the Teacher

Motifs are patterns. They have to do with repetition and variation. A small child's bedroom, for example, might have a Disney motif, with images of Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and other famous characters. Movies often have musical motifs—strains of sound that recur at key moments in the stories.

A central motif in *The Outsiders* is the polarized relationship between the Socs and the greasers. Another involves descriptions of eyes and hair; Ponyboy seems to focus on those two characteristics in introducing all of the characters. Still another is gang activities—attacks of helpless individuals, street rumbles, robberies, drunken joyriding. Cars come up quite often in connection with Socs, the wealthy teens in the novel.

In this lesson, students begin by considering motifs in Ponyboy's narration. You will need art paper or computer graphics for the first procedure. Students then look at idioms and colloquial expressions in the novel. Ponyboy's voice is natural and unpretentious, and he uses the phrases that would come naturally to an intelligent fourteen-year-old in the Southwest in the 1960s. To conclude, students consider Ponyboy's values.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into six groups, and assign groups to design picture or mirror frames for people with different interests: a golf enthusiast, a gardener, a Walt Disney fan, the lead performer in a band, someone who loves cats, and an enthusiastic cook. Explain that the challenge is to decorate the frame with images that will appeal to the person's tastes and interests. When groups have finished, have them share results with the class as a whole. (For example, the frame for the cook might include an onion, salt and paper shakers, herbs, a slow cooker, broccoli spears, and a pie.)

2. Explain that the frames the groups created reflect the use of motifs—patterns and variations of patterns. Motifs can be visual. For example, parents might design a toddler's bedroom with a motif of baby animals—kittens, puppies, piglets, foals, ducklings, etc. Motifs can also be audio, such as repeated musical phrases in a movie. Writers also often employ motifs.
3. Distribute **Handout 23**, and assign each small group one of the motifs. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Cars are always associated with the Socs—the red Corvair, the blue Mustang—"cool" cars coveted by wealthy kids in the 1960s. In the novel, the cars are always associated with the arrival of Socs and with danger. The motif suggests the chasm between the haves and have-nots in society.
2. Ponyboy is always conscious of people's eyes—blue, brown, green, black; icy, gentle, blazing. To Ponyboy, eyes seem to capture character.
3. Hair is equally important to Ponyboy, from Soda's dark blond tresses to Dally's wispy curls. Ponyboy is very reluctant to see his own hair cut and bleached during the stay at the church. Hair seems to relate to social status.
4. Literature comes up in the references to *Great Expectations, Gone with the Wind*, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," and *The Outsiders* itself. It seems detached from real life—a kind of escape—but also profoundly connected as a source of insight.
5. Heroes and hoods seem merged throughout the novel—Paul Newman, Darry and Sodapop, Dally, Ponyboy and Johnny—unlikely heroes, tough façades hiding good hearts.
6. The Socs and greasers as opposing gangs are ubiquitous in the novel; the division is based on socioeconomic status, which results in different patterns of dress and behavior. Throughout the novel lurks a suspicion that the gangs in fact have a great deal in common.

4. Tell students that we often use idioms and colloquial phrases without even thinking about them. Ask students to explain the meaning of the following sentences.
   - Dan is a chip off the old block. (Dan is very much like his father.)
   - Tanya is the apple of her grandfather's eye. (Tanya's grandfather thinks she is wonderful.)
   - I think you are barking up the wrong tree. (The other person has made a big mistake, like a dog barking at a tree the squirrel abandoned hours ago.)

5. Distribute **Handout 24**, and ask students to complete part A.

Suggested Responses

1. The phrase suggests that the people are at cross-purposes and seem to be getting nowhere.
2. Each is not available or does not answer when the other calls.
3. Rob was no fun at all and almost ruined the party for everyone else.
4. Slang phrases really irritate the speaker.
5. The company will do everything possible to get a fair settlement for its clients.
6. Someone disclosed secret information.

6. Explain that Ponyboy's narration throughout the novel is natural and conversational, and it includes idioms and colloquial phrases.
7. Ask students to complete part B, and follow with discussion. (Ponyboy's idioms are all easy to decipher. Sodapop "never cracks a book"; "sweating something fierce" when approached by the Socs; Two-Bit going to school "for kicks.") Allow students to share and explain their choices.
8. As a final procedure, have students complete **Handout 25** individually. If necessary, define terms, or allow students to use dictionaries. Follow with open-ended discussion. (All of the values listed on the handout are important to Ponyboy; to some, he is fiercely committed—for example, his loyalty to Johnny and to Sodapop.)
9. Assign students to select one of the values listed on the handout and to write an essay discussing how that value affects Ponyboy's thoughts and actions.

 Name:

Motifs in *The Outsiders*

Directions: Find examples of the following motifs in the novel. Then explain the significance of each.

1. Cars

2. Eyes

3. Hair

4. Literature

5. Heroes

6. Gangs

A Gallery of Idioms

Part A.

Directions: Explain the meaning of each of the following idioms.

1. Quit playing cat-and-mouse games with me.

2. My sister and I have been playing telephone tag.

3. Rob was a real wet blanket at the party.

4. It drives me up a wall when you use slang.

5. That insurance company will bend over backward to help you.

6. Who let the cat out of the bag?

Part B.

Directions: Find at least five idioms in *The Outsiders,* and explain what they mean.

 Name:

A Last Look at Ponyboy

Directions: Below is a list of some of the values often described as universal, central, and essential to an effective cultural setting. Indicate the level of importance Ponyboy places on each one by placing a check mark in the column. Be ready to support your ideas with evidence from the novel.

Value	Important	Somewhat Important	Unimportant
1. Courage			
2. Endurance			
3. Equality			
4. Family commitment			
5. Integrity			
6. Loyalty			
7. Responsibility			
8. Self-discipline			
9. Teamwork			
10. Truth			

Quiz: *The Outsiders*

Directions: Choose the best answers.

_____ 1. Ponyboy's parents were killed in
   a. a car accident.
   b. a fire.
   c. a plane crash.
   d. Vietnam.

_____ 2. Ponyboy mentions that in school he has to read
   a. *Gone with the Wind.*
   b. *A Tale of Two Cities.*
   c. *A Separate Peace.*
   d. *Great Expectations.*

_____ 3. Both the end and the beginning of the book refer to a movie starring
   a. Frankie Avalon.
   b. Clark Gable.
   c. Paul Newman.
   d. Robert Redford.

_____ 4. Ponyboy's last name is
   a. Curtis.
   b. Wilson.
   c. Murphy.
   d. Smith.

_____ 5. The greaser who once lived in New York and seems very tough is
   a. Darry.
   b. Two-Bit.
   c. Duke.
   d. Dally.

_____ 6. Sodapop thinks he is in love with a girl named
   a. Sandy.
   b. Sally.
   c. Sylvia.
   d. Gloria.

_____7. Ponyboy runs away after Darry
- a. yells at him.
- b. slaps him.
- c. threatens to send him to juvenile detention.
- d. orders him to quit school.

_____8. The visitor whom Johnny refuses to see in the hospital is
- a. his mother.
- b. his father.
- c. Dally.
- d. his English teacher.

_____9. The Soc who serves as a spy for the greasers is
- a. Marcia.
- b. Sandy.
- c. Cherry.
- d. Randy.

_____10. In the park late at night, Bob almost
- a. stabs Johnny.
- b. runs over Randy.
- c. drowns Ponyboy.
- d. apologizes for the earlier attack.

_____11. While Ponyboy and Johnny stay in the church, they read
- a. *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*
- b. *Huckleberry Finn.*
- c. *Great Expectations.*
- d. *Gone with the Wind.*

_____12. After Dally robs a grocery store, he
- a. shoots a policeman.
- b. gets shot by policemen.
- c. returns to New York City.
- d. escapes to Mexico.

_____13. Johnny tells Ponyboy to stay
- a. green.
- b. gold.
- c. safe.
- d. smart.

_____ 14. In the first half of the novel, the character Ponyboy least understands is
a. Soda.
b. Two-Bit.
c. Darry.
d. Johnny.

_____ 15. The place setting is
a. the East Coast.
b. the Southwest.
c. the Deep South.
d. the Pacific coast.

_____ 16. On one occasion, Ponyboy is very late getting home because he
a. is detained at the police station.
b. is at his girlfriend's house.
c. is doing homework at Johnny's house.
d. falls asleep looking at the stars.

_____ 17. A Soc who tries to befriend Ponyboy is
a. Bob.
b. Tony.
c. Dennis.
d. Randy.

_____ 18. Ponyboy first talks to Cherry at
a. a rumble.
b. a drive-in movie.
c. a football game.
d. a hospital.

_____ 19. When describing people, Ponyboy tends to stress
a. height and weight.
b. hair and eyes.
c. sense of humor and intelligence.
d. money and power.

_____ 20. Ponyboy thinks the most handsome man he ever saw is
a. Clint Eastwood.
b. Paul Newman.
c. Sodapop Curtis.
d. Johnny Cade.

Answer Key

1. a
2. d
3. c
4. a
5. d
6. a
7. b
8. a
9. c
10. c
11. d
12. b
13. b
14. c
15. b
16. d
17. d
18. b
19. b
20. c

Culminating Activities

Directions: Complete one or more of the following projects to complete your study of *The Outsiders*.

1. Read one of the following young adult books by S. E. Hinton: *Rumble Fish*; *That Was Then, This Is Now*; *Tex*; *Taming the Star Runner.* Write a review with an intended audience of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders; be careful not to give away the ending!
2. Write a series of journal entries from the point of view of Cherry. The writings should reflect your knowledge about the book and your ability to imagine Cherry's thoughts and feelings.
3. Research the current state of gangs and gang activities in the United States, and present your findings to the class.
4. Read *Romeo and Juliet* or *West Side Story*, and write an essay about the role that gang warfare plays in the action.
5. Create a visual depiction of the whole greaser gang; be sure to reflect the details included in the novel.
6. *The Outsiders* was written by a teenage girl, but all of the major characters are boys. Describe the girls who are included in the novel, and explain what they seem to indicate about the author's view of the roles of girls in the 1960s.
7. Prepare a talk show in which the host interviews Ponyboy, Johnny's parents, a nurse at the hospital, and other characters about the life and death of Johnny Cade. Ask some classmates to help you dramatize the show for the class.
8. Read *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, and write an essay in which you follow up on Ponyboy's feelings that he and Pip have a lot of similarities.
9. Create a visual project related to the title of the novel. Include all of the people you can think of that sometimes rank as outsiders. Then write a paragraph about how it feels to be an outsider.
10. Imagine yourself in Ponyboy's shoes four years later, as a college student. Write a short story in which he talks about his brothers, his current life, and his future plans.
11. Read *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, and write an essay in which you compare and contrast Roy with Ponyboy.
12. Create a sound track of songs that you think would be the favorites of the characters in *The Outsiders*. Write a brief explanation of your choices.
13. Write an original short story that includes a framing device and that is narrated by a teenager.
14. Use both direct and indirect characterization to create several complex, dynamic characters, and write a dialogue between them.
15. Research Paul Newman's acting career, especially his roles during the 1960s, and write an essay or create a presentation in which you explain why Ponyboy admires him.
16. Read the lyrics of Stevie Wonder's song "Stay Gold," and compare/contrast them with Robert Frost's poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay."

Common Core English Language Arts Standards

The Outsiders

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Entire Unit

RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
RL.9-10.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
RL.9-10.6	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
RL.9-10.10	By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
RI.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
RI.9-10.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
W.9-10.1a	Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
W.9-10.1b	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

W.9-10.1c	Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
W.9-10.1d	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.9-10.1e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
W.9-10.2b	Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
W.9-10.2c	Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
W.9-10.2e	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
W.9-10.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
W.9-10.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
SL.9-10.1a	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
SL.9-10.1b	Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
SL.9-10.1c	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
SL.9-10.2	Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
SL.9-10.3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

SL.9-10.4	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
SL.9-10.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
L.9-10.1a	Use parallel structure.*
L.9-10.1b	Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.
L.9-10.2c	Spell correctly.
L.9-10.5b	Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
L.9-10.6	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Source

Common Core State Standards (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)

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