

The Outsiders Summary

By S. E. Hinton, 1967

Chapter 5

The next morning, Ponyboy wakes up in the church to find a note from Johnny saying that he has gone into town to get supplies. When Johnny returns, he brings a week's supply of baloney and cigarettes, and a paperback copy of *Gone with the Wind* because he wants Ponyboy to read to him.

- Here we see that Johnny has a basic knowledge of the English language for he is able to write a simple note, but isn't able to read a novel.
 - This informs us a bit more on Johnny's life; he went to school at some point, but then stopped. What could have happened?
- *Gone with the Wind* is a novel by Margaret Mitchell, published in 1936, but is set in Georgia in 1861 and is about a woman, Scarlett O'Hara, who lives on a plantation in poverty and finds herself in the civil war and surviving not only the condemnments of war, but also the fateful end of many suitors. A tragic love story full of political avarice and death.
 - Johnny identifies with the southern gentlemen because he as a greaser, takes pride in their spirit and heritage.

Ponyboy makes a wisecrack and Johnny tells him he is becoming more like Two-Bit every day, then he insists they cut their hair to disguise themselves, while also bleaching Ponyboy's hair.

- This is significant because a greaser's hair is their emblem; their signature, and for them to abandon it represents a different kind of death; death of their dignity and persona.
 - They shave off their social identities, which allows them to also experience partial freedom from their social category, enabling them to communicate more effectively and question the purpose behind their lifestyle.
- Ponyboy feels an increasing sense of membership in the greaser family, adopting traits from Two-Bit and looking more like Sodapop every day.
 - Dally's leather jacket saves his life later on in the fire, signifying that Ponyboy thrives because his elders protect him.

For the next week, the boys hide out at the church, reading the book, smoking, and eating sandwiches. The boys admire the southern gentlemen in *Gone with the Wind*, and Johnny points out that they remind him of Dally. Ponyboy disagrees because he prefers the other greasers to him.

- Johnny has a bigger heart than Ponyboy and doesn't see any bad in any of his comrades, while Ponyboy is still lacking common sense and the ability to see how grateful he should be toward Dally after what they have been through.

Most of the greasers remind Ponyboy of the heroes in novels, but Dally is so real he is frightening. "Dally was so real he scared me".

- Johnny is able to witness and survive violence, while Ponyboy is still scared and also naïve about how certain rules don't apply to him. He believes his brother doesn't want him because he is hard on him, and is scared of Dally because he also sees him as an authority figure.

- Father-figures and authority figures intimidate Ponyboy to the point where he believes he is better than them.

Later on, Ponyboy recites a poem from Robert Frost, *Nothing Gold can Stay*, which touches Johnny.

- Robert Frost was an American poet from the late 19th century to early 20th.

Nature's first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day,

Nothing gold can stay.

- Frost explains that nothing, especially that which is perfect and beautiful, can last forever
 - All good things come to an end.
- The main symbol for his theme is the cycle of life and the importance of death, which is shown throughout the 4 seasons, which is something that everyone can identify with.
 - Once you realize how precious things are and how fleeting, you appreciate them even more.
- Spring flowers will die, children grow up and lose their innocence, and all people will eventually die too. This seems melancholic, but there is a silver (or gold in this case) lining that is found.
- The poem also suggests the impermanence of gold, pointing to the end of the idyllic male bonding that Johnny and Ponyboy have from experiencing their week-long hideout, as well as their innocence through metaphors from nature.
 - Foreshadows the eventual end of their companionship.
 - Nothing is permanent.

This shows how much of a romantic Ponyboy is, because he has an extreme love for nature and uses nature's patterns to explain how tragic and unfortunate life can get, although, happiness comes again; the cycle of life and death also occurs within one's own problems.

After about 5 days, Dally shows up at the church with a letter to Ponyboy from Sodapop. He keeps the two boys up to date with the happenings in town, saying that the police approached him about Bob's murder and he told them that the perpetrators fled to Texas. He takes Johnny and Ponyboy to Dairy Queen and tells them that a state of open warfare exists between the greasers and the socs, who are furious about Bob's death. He also lets slip out that Cherry Valance feels responsible for the murderous encounter and has been acting as a spy for the greasers. He adds that in a day's time the two groups will meet for a rumble.

- The fact that the police believe the murderers are now in Texas, signifies how useless and lazy they are, even for the Socs, which causes people to take the law into their own hands.
- Cherry is smart, but now we know that she is also wise, for she can read between the lines and again set aside the vindictiveness of segregation between the social classes, and help whom she believes is right, despite it being her boyfriend who has died.

- More insight on Hinton's way of thinking.
- A rumble is a fight that involves no weapons; it is simply a means to determine strength in numbers and muscle, to deem which team is better.

Chapter 6

Johnny alarmed Dally when he tells him that he wants to go back home and confess to his crime, so he tries to change his mind by telling him that he doesn't want prison to harden him the way it did to him. Johnny however is adamant and points out that his parents would not care what happens to him, but Ponyboy's brothers would care about him and want to see him.

- Johnny's good character is exemplified by his desire to own up to his crimes and atone for them despite knowing the consequences.
 - He knows his family doesn't care about him, but he also is aware that Ponyboy would be severely missed if he didn't turn himself in.

Swearing under his breath, Dally begins to drive them all home. As they drive past the church, they see it is on fire. Ponyboy thinks they may have started the fire with a cigarette butt so the boys jump out to look at the flames.

- Despite Dally acting as the authority figure for these two boys, he is also their friend and decides to let them decide for themselves, even though he doesn't agree with their reasoning.

At the church, they find a group of schoolchildren on a picnic, and suddenly one of the adult chaperones cries out saying that some of the children are missing. Acting on instinct, he and Johnny climb into the burning building through a window. At the back of the church, they find the children huddled together, terrified. Dally appears and screams that the roof is about to cave in. Johnny pushes Ponyboy out of the window and then they both hear Johnny scream. Ponyboy starts to go back in for Johnny, but Dally clubs him across the back and knocks him out.

- Their immediate impulse to help also defines who they are as people, letting us know that anything that happens to them is bad luck for they are decent kids.
 - Greasers are very intune to relationships and consequence from their lack of material things.

When Ponyboy wakes up he is in an ambulance, accompanied by one of the schoolteachers, Jerry Wood. The teacher tells him that his back caught on fire and that the jacket he was wearing is scorched, but saved his life. Jerry tells him that Dally was badly burned, but he will be fine. Johnny, however, is in really bad shape because he was struck by a piece of burning timber as it fell on his back, probably breaking it. The man jokingly asks Ponyboy if they are professional heroes, but Ponyboy tells him that they are actually juvenile delinquents.

- This schoolteacher immediately assumed they were superheroes and not delinquent gang members because who they socialize with does not define who they are, but their actions do.
- Chapter 6 mirrors Chapter 4; murdering Bob makes them look like criminals, but by saving all the schoolchildren, they are represented as heroes.
 - When they disobey Dally and run into the burning church, they further establish their agency and cement their independence from the older greasers.
- Their courageous rescue of the children from the burning church demonstrates that Hinton's greasers are not stereotypical hoods even though they live in harsh, uncertain, and violent ways.
 - Ponyboy, Johnny, and even Dally adhere to the values of courage and loyalty.
 - Again, the stereotypes that define greasers' social class, does not define them as individuals.

Ponyboy has suffered mild burns, and Jerry stays with him while he is in the hospital, so he confides in this new character about Bob's death. Jerry agrees that Johnny defended them in self-defence. He also tells him that he shouldn't smoke, which is something that has never been said to Ponyboy before. Darry and Sodapop arrive, hugging him and crying, which shocks Ponyboy. Any anger that was felt toward Darry has dissipated. He finally realizes how much Darry does care for him and that his strictures are actually because he wants him to succeed. He realizes the difference between having a strict figure at home and an abusive one who doesn't care, like Johnny has.

- Ponyboy stops acting like a spoiled child, realizing that Darry is firm with him for his own good.
 - He realizes the strength of the group lies in the solidarity of its members, and he begins learning to temper his individual needs for the sake of the group.

Chapter 7

The reporters and police interview Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry in the hospital waiting room. Sodapop jokes with the reporters and hospital staff keeping the mood light with his antics.

- Sodapop acts as the "comedic relief"; which is a term coined by Shakespeare to describe a character who provides relief to a tense situation by acting funny.

The doctors finally arrive and say that Dally will be fine, but Johnny's back was broken when the roof caved in, and even if he survives, he will be permanently crippled.

The next morning, Ponyboy is making breakfast when Steve Randle (Sodapop's best friend) and Two-Bit come in with the morning papers. The papers portray Ponyboy, Johnny, and Dally as heroes for rescuing the schoolchildren. They also mention Ponyboy's excellent performance on the track team and in school. The papers also mention that the state will charge Johnny with manslaughter and send both Ponyboy and Johnny to juvenile court, from which Ponyboy might be sent to a boys' home. The other boys reassure him that his family will stay together. Ponyboy tells them of his recurring nightmare, which first started

occurring after his parents' funeral. He never remembers the dream, but it makes him wake up in a panicked state.

- Despite being portrayed as a star student and team member, he is still a greaser and is still going to be held responsible for being attacked.
 - Johnny killed someone, but Ponyboy did nothing wrong

Ponyboy asks Sodapop about Sandy, he is told that she moved to Florida to live with her grandmother on account of being pregnant. He asked her to marry him, but her parents wouldn't let her.

- The theme of a broken home is continued, despite Sodapop wanting to own up to his role as father and husband, he is not allowed because he is too young.

Sodapop and Darry go to work, and Two-Bit and Ponyboy go to get cokes at the Tasty Freeze. A blue mustang pulls up to the restaurant, and in it they see the group of Socs that jumped them in the park. Ponyboy feels an immediate and intense hatred for them. Marcia's boyfriend, Randy, comes over to Ponyboy, but Two-Bit reminds him that no fighting until the rumble is allowed, but Randy only wants to talk. He asks Ponyboy why he saved those children and admits that he would never have put himself in danger for someone else and he would never have expected a Greaser to do that. Ponyboy answers that it has nothing to do with being a greaser. Sick about what happened to Bob, Randy tells him that he doesn't intend to fight in the rumble for he is sick of the violence. Bob was his best friend and a good guy with a terrible temper, which comes from having overly indulgent parents. Ponyboy feels reassured by this talk and realizes that Socs can in fact be human beings.

- This conversation with Randy finally reassured Ponyboy that Socs can be good people. It is the first time in his life in which he has had a positive encounter with one of them.
- Furthers the theme of individuality and breaks apart the black and white concept of gangs.

Chapter 8

Two-Bit and Ponyboy go to the hospital to check on their friends. Johnny is pale and weak and whispers to Ponyboy that he would like to continue being read to. His mother shows up to visit, but she is a mean-spirited, nagging woman, so Johnny refuses to see her. As Ponyboy and Two-Bit leave, she accosts them and blames them for Johnny's condition, so Two-Bit insults her.

- The differences in family become increasingly important; the biological family and the greaser family.
 - Events begin to threaten the Curtis cohesion, since there is a very good chance that Ponyboy will be separated from them
 - This is especially difficult to deal with now that Ponyboy has realized how much he appreciated Darry and now becomes very important to him to stay with his brothers.
 - If they can stay together, they can prove that greasers have the capability to overcome the odds against them and also be functional.
- For boys such as Johnny, the greaser family is more robust and caring than his biological parents. His preference for the greasers and disdain for his mother becomes very evident in

this scene because he allows Ponyboy and Two-Bit to visit him, but he doesn't even want to see his mother.

- He doesn't consider her an important part of his life.
- The more Johnny is closer to death the more selfish he is in his wants and wastes no time in serving people who have disappointed him. He is now leading his life according to his own principles and not that of his parents.

Dally is recovering nicely, and for the first time, Ponyboy feels warmly toward him. Dally says that Tim Shepard, the leader of another gang of greasers, came in to talk to him about the rumble. Dally asks for Two-Bit's black-handled switchblade, to which he hands over without any questions asked.

On the way home, Ponyboy and Two-Bit see Cherry Valance in her corvette. She says that the Socs have agreed to fight with no weapons. Ponyboy asks her to go to see Johnny, but she says that she can't because he killed Bob. She says that Bob had a sweet side to him and was only violent when drunk, as he was when he beat up Johnny. Ponyboy calls her a traitor, but then quickly forgives her. He asks her if she can see the sunset on the West Side, and when she says she can, he tells her to remember that he can see it on the East Side too.

- Since Bob's death Ponyboy's conversations with the Socs have been about interpersonal connections; all about people as individuals.
 - The cycles of nature as symbolized in the Robert Frost poem are exemplified, since natural cycles, specifically life and death, apply to members of all social groups.
 - Ironically this emphasis on commonality and connection occur right before the rumble, which stands against everything being described here.