

The Outsiders Summary

By S. E. Hinton, 1967

Chapter 9

Feeling sick before the rumble, Ponyboy swallows 5 aspirins and struggles to eat his dinner. The boys have bathed and made themselves look "tuff", and leave for the rumble excitedly. Ponyboy gets anxious when he sees the other greasers. Tim Shepard's gang and the others seem like genuine hoods.

- Tuff is really tough; Hinton did this on purpose to ridicule how tough they really looked.
 - Tuff is really a light porous rock formed by consolidation of volcanic ash.
- Ponyboy's instincts tell him to skip the rumble for deep down he knows that violence doesn't solve anything, but he feels a greater sense of duty to being a greaser now that he has experienced the feeling of a united front.
 - Fighting in the rumble will also indefinitely seal his place in the gang; he is no longer a tagalong brother, but a fighting member.
 - He has earned his way now as well.
- The rest of the greasers prepare for the rumble like they would for a social event; they bathe, do their hair, and dress carefully.
 - This tells us that the rumble is a social occasion in which both parties celebrate their identities by fighting.

22 Socs arrive in four carloads to fight the 20 greasers. Darry steps forward to start the fight, and Paul Holden, Darry's high school friend and football teammate, steps up to challenge him. As Paul and Darry circle each other, Dally joins the group and as he arrives the fight breaks out in full force. After a long struggle the Greasers won.

- The fact that Paul and Darry are friends, but from different social gangs and still fight each other shows us the negative growth of humanity of the novel. Up until now, individuality has been the prominent theme and has served as a means to eliminate stigmas.
 - A rivalry between them doesn't exist and that money makes enemies of natural friends: moral lesson.
 - They used to be friends but now they dislike each other because one has to work and the other comes from the leisurely West Side. This emphasizes the artificial and unnecessary nature of their animosity.
- The purpose of the rumble is to make peace with everything that has happened between them, which is why they are fighting without weapons and no one dies.
 - It is an attempt to take their frustrations out on each other with mutual consent and blame.

When the rumble ends, Dally and Ponyboy go to the hospital to see Johnny. A policeman stops them, but Ponyboy feigns an injury, and the officer escorts them to the hospital himself. Ponyboy and Dally find Johnny dying and when they tell him about the rumble, he means that fighting is useless. He whispers the quote below to Ponyboy and then dies. Dally is beside himself and frantically runs out of the room.

"Stay gold, Ponyboy, stay gold".

- Refers again to the Robert Frost poem, telling Ponyboy to keep from cycling into a lesser beauty.
- They immediately run to the hospital after the rumble, which proves that they both consider it a minor event that is really interrupting their real concerns; the victory is a false thrill that is shot down even more when Johnny tells them that fighting is pointless.

Chapter 10

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

When Ponyboy wakes, Darry is at his side, and learned that he got a concussion when a Soc kicked him in the head during the rumble, and he has been delirious in bed for 3 days.

- The events of these chapters mark the culmination of Ponyboy's trauma. Constant disaster has kept Ponyboy from feeling pain.
 - Over the course of a few weeks, Ponyboy almost drowns, learns his friend has committed murder, falls in love, runs away and hides, saves children from a burning church, and learns that the state may take him away from his brothers who he now doesn't doubt they love him.
 - The emotions of these events have been oppressed by the constant onslaught of new trauma and by Ponyboy's worries about Johnny and the greasers, and now that his anxieties have had the ultimate tragical ending, he is forced to face his pain, which overwhelms him to the point where he is not able to remain conscious.
 - Ponyboy's hospitalization suggests that the string of disasters has ended and that a period of reflection can finally begin.
 - The storm has ended.

Chapter 11

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

- With the trial around the corner, Ponyboy attempts to try and understand as well as get to know Bob.
 - This shows Ponyboy's empathetic nature, as well his sadness for Bob as well.

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

- Randy behaves insensitively because he doesn't have enough of a mental capacity to deal with his own anxieties and still remain empathetic to Ponyboy's; he is clearly not a bad person, so the reason why he may act so indifferent lies along the fact that he does indeed have problems of his own.
- Ponyboy is delirious enough to suggest exactly what he wishes happened; he feels bad that Johnny had to defend him (he wishes he had killed Bob himself) and he is struck with immense grief that his best friend is dead.

Chapter 12

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

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

- Ponyboy's exemplifies toughness would be a positive development for Steve and Two-Bit because he is losing his vulnerability and intimidation and this becoming more valuable in the greaser gang, but instead it upsets them because they do not want his friend to become something he's not.
- Since Johnny has died, Ponyboy is the last of the greaser gang to retain their innocence.
- The consideration Ponyboy shows in picking up the broken glass from the bottle he used indicates his capacity for angry outbursts is less a part of his character than his thoughtfulness and decency.
 - He is really just going through a phase as a result of all the events that have transpired.

That night as Ponyboy and Darry fight about his grades, Sodapop runs out of the house, upset that Sandy has returned a letter he wrote to her unopened. Darry explains that Sodapop is not the father of Sandy's child and acts puzzled that Sodapop never told Ponyboy. He thinks that he probably acted uninterested when Sodapop tried to talk about his problems. Worried, they both leave to try and find Sodapop.

He tells them their constant fighting is tearing him apart. Sobbing, he asks them to try and understand each other and stop fighting. They promise to try. Ponyboy thinks that Sodapop will hold them together.

- Ponyboy shows himself to be on the road to recovery when he hashes things out with his brothers.
- Though he still feels the pain of loss, he can finally remember Johnny and Dally without feeling overwhelming denial and anguish. He begins to look at the plight of the greasers with objectivity.

The 3 boys return home, and Ponyboy looks at Johnny's copy of *Gone with the Wind*. He finds a note inside from Johnny telling him to stay gold and saying that the children's lives were more important than his own. Ponyboy realizes that he wants to tell the story of his friends so that other hoodlums will not nurse their anger at the world and ignore the beauty in it. He begins to work on his English theme, starting with the same words as the beginning of *The Outsiders*, "When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the moviehouse, I had only two things on my mind, Paul Newman and a ride home".

- He begins to feel that someone should show them the good in the world (his romantic notions are starting to return).
- His decision to tell the greasers' story in his English theme paper marks his maturation into an emotionally capable young man.
 - Hinton suggests that Ponyboy has found a way to make sense of the preventable violence in his life. His willingness to examine his painful past marks the last stage in his recovery and sets him up to achieve the potential that Darry has long seen in him.
- The novel's closing lines are an exact repetition of its opening lines symbolically initiates Ponyboy's exploration of his past through memory. With this exploration, recorded in Ponyboy's writing, we, as well as Ponyboy, finally discover a purpose to the seemingly senseless struggle that he has undergone.
 - Hinton's act of ending the novel by circling back to its beginning provides a balanced symmetry to the story's structure.
 - Ponyboy's ability to tie the story up so neatly shows that he has dealt with these traumatic events in a healthy way.