

Character List

Ponyboy Curtis - The novel's fourteen-year-old narrator and protagonist, and the youngest of the greasers. Ponyboy's literary interests and academic accomplishments set him apart from the rest of his gang. Because his parents have died in a car accident, Ponyboy lives with his brothers Darry and Sodapop. Darry repeatedly accuses Ponyboy of lacking common sense, but Ponyboy is a reliable and observant narrator. Throughout the novel, Ponyboy struggles with class division, violence, innocence, and familial love. He matures over the course of the novel, eventually realizing the importance of strength in the face of class bias.

Darrell Curtis - Ponyboy's oldest brother. Darrell, known as "Darry," is a twenty-year-old greaser who is raising Ponyboy because their parents have died in a car crash. Strong, athletic, and intelligent, Darry has quit school. He works two jobs to hold the family together. The unofficial leader of the greasers, he becomes an authority figure for Ponyboy. He also makes good chocolate cake, which he and his brothers eat every day for breakfast. The other greasers call him "Superman."

Sodapop Curtis - Ponyboy's happy-go-lucky, handsome brother. Sodapop is the middle Curtis boy. Ponyboy envies Sodapop's good looks and charm. Sodapop plans to marry Sandy, a greaser girl.

Two-Bit Mathews - The joker of Ponyboy's group. Two-Bit, whose real name is Keith, is a wisecracking greaser who regularly shoplifts. He prizes his sleek black-handled switchblade. He instigates the hostilities between the Socs and the greasers by flirting with Marcia, the girlfriend of a Soc.

Steve Randle - Sodapop's best friend since grade school. Steve is a seventeen-year-old greaser who works with Sodapop at the gas station. Steve knows everything about cars and specializes in stealing hubcaps. He is cocky and intelligent, tall and lean. He wears his thick hair in a complicated arrangement of swirls. He is also tough—he once held off four opponents in a fight with a broken soda bottle. He sees Ponyboy as Sodapop's annoying kid brother and wishes Ponyboy would not tag along so often.

Dallas Winston - The toughest hood in Ponyboy's group of greasers. Dallas, known as "Dally," is a hardened teen who used to run with gangs in New York. He has an elfin face and icy blue eyes and, unlike his friends, does not put grease in his white-blond hair. Dally's violent tendencies make him more dangerous than the other greasers, and he takes pride in his criminal record. Dally feels protective of Johnny Cade.

Johnny Cade - A sixteen-year-old greaser with black hair and large, fearful eyes. Though Johnny does not succeed in school, he approaches intellectual matters with steady concentration. The child of alcoholic, abusive parents, he is nervous and sensitive. Since his parents do not care for him, Johnny sees the greasers as his true family. In turn, the older boys, particularly Dally, are protective of him. He is a vulnerable sixteen-year-old greaser in a group defined by toughness and a sense of invincibility. While Johnny needs the greasers, the greasers also need Johnny, for protecting him gives them a sense of purpose and justifies their violent measures. When Johnny, little and vulnerable, suffers at the hands of the Socs, the greasers feel justified in their hatred of the rival gang. Passive and quiet, Johnny is the principal catalyst for the major events of the novel. He stands up to Dally at the drive-in and tells him to stop harassing the two Soc girls, [Cherry](#) and [Marcia](#). Johnny's intervention on the girls' behalf pleases the girls, and they talk and walk with the greasers. This interaction between female Socs and male greasers sparks the anger of the Soc boys and motivates them to attack Johnny and [Ponyboy](#). Ultimately, Johnny's small acts of courage lead to murder, death, and heroic rescue. But Johnny ends by advocating against gang violence, stating that he would gladly sacrifice his life for the lives of little children. Although a gentle boy, he has a profound impact with his startling, persistent demand for peace. His courage in rescuing the children from the burning church and his subsequent death as a result of injuries sustained in the rescue make him a martyr. Ponyboy's decision to write the story that becomes *The Outsiders* ensures that Johnny's bravery will not be forgotten.

Sandy - Sodapop's girlfriend. Sandy is pregnant with another man's child and moves to Florida to live with her grandmother. Like the other greaser girls, Sandy appears in the text only when the boys mention her.

Cherry Valance - Bob's girlfriend, she is a Soc cheerleader whom Ponyboy meets at the movies. Cherry's real name is Sherry, but people call her Cherry because of her red hair. Ponyboy and Cherry have a great deal in common, and Ponyboy feels comfortable talking to her. Cherry is both offended and intrigued by her encounter with Dally Winston at the drive-in. Cherry admires Dally's individuality and tells Ponyboy that she could fall in love with Dally. In the days preceding the rumble, Cherry becomes a spy for the greasers. Before [Cherry Valance](#) enters the narrative, [Ponyboy](#) paints the conflict between the greasers and the Socs as irreconcilable. The introduction of Cherry, however, suggests that individual

friendships can chip away at group hatreds. Cherry gets along perfectly well with some of the greasers. She likes Ponyboy and [Johnny](#) because they treat her politely. Dally's rude antics do not amuse her. Her disenchantment with Dally's behavior suggests that she talks to Ponyboy and Johnny not because she is slumming and their greaser identity fascinates her, but rather because she likes them as individuals. For a short while at least, she cares more about how each boy behaves than about his West Side or East Side address.

Cherry is not just a sweet, simple girl. She finds herself sexually attracted to Dally, who is crass and unrefined but also sexy and charismatic. Despite all her attraction to the greasers, moreover, she is not completely free of group prejudice. She tells Ponyboy she probably will not say hello to him at school, acknowledging that she respects social divisions. Although Cherry plays a relatively small role in the novel, the ambiguity of her sympathies gives us something to which we can relate. She mirrors our own perspective as someone close to the action who is nevertheless an outsider and who does not always fully understand other characters' emotions and motivations.

Marcia - Cherry's friend and Randy's girlfriend. Marcia is a pretty, dark-haired Soc who befriends Two-Bit at the drive-in. Marcia and Two-Bit share a sense of humor and a taste for nonsensical musings.

Randy Adderson - Marcia's boyfriend and Bob's best friend. Randy is a handsome Soc who eventually sees the futility of fighting. Along with Cherry, Randy humanizes the Socs by showing that some of them have redeeming qualities. Randy helps Ponyboy realize that Socs are as susceptible to pain as anyone else. Randy tries to make peace with Ponyboy after Ponyboy saves the children from the fire, and he refuses to fight in the Soc-greaser rumble.

Bob Sheldon - Cherry's boyfriend. Bob is the dark-haired Soc who beats up Johnny before the novel begins. Bob has a set of three heavy rings, which he wears when he fights greasers. Bob's indulgent parents have never disciplined him.

Paul Holden - The husky blond Soc who steps forward to challenge Darry when the rumble begins. Paul and Darry were friends and football teammates in high school.

Jerry Wood - The teacher who accompanies Ponyboy to the hospital after Ponyboy saves the children from the fire. Though an adult and a member of mainstream society, Jerry judges the greasers on their merits instead of automatically branding them juvenile delinquents.

Tim Shepard - The leader of another band of greasers and a friend of Dally. Tim and Dally respect each other, despite occasional conflicts. Ponyboy thinks of Tim as an alley cat, hungry and restless. Tim does not appear in the novel until the night of the rumble, when his gang sides with Ponyboy's. Ponyboy sees Shepard's gang as real street hoods and criminals, and realizes that his own gang is little more than a group of friends fighting to survive.

Curly Shepard - The fifteen-year-old brother of Tim Shepard. Curly is stubborn and rough. He cannot go to the rumble because he was put in a reformatory for six months after robbing a liquor store. Tim is proud of Curly's criminal record.

Mr. Syme - Ponyboy's English teacher. Mr. Syme expresses concern over Ponyboy's falling grades. He offers to raise Ponyboy's grade if he turns in a well-written autobiographical theme. This assignment inspires Ponyboy to write about the greasers and the Socs, and his autobiographical theme turns into the novel *The Outsiders*.

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