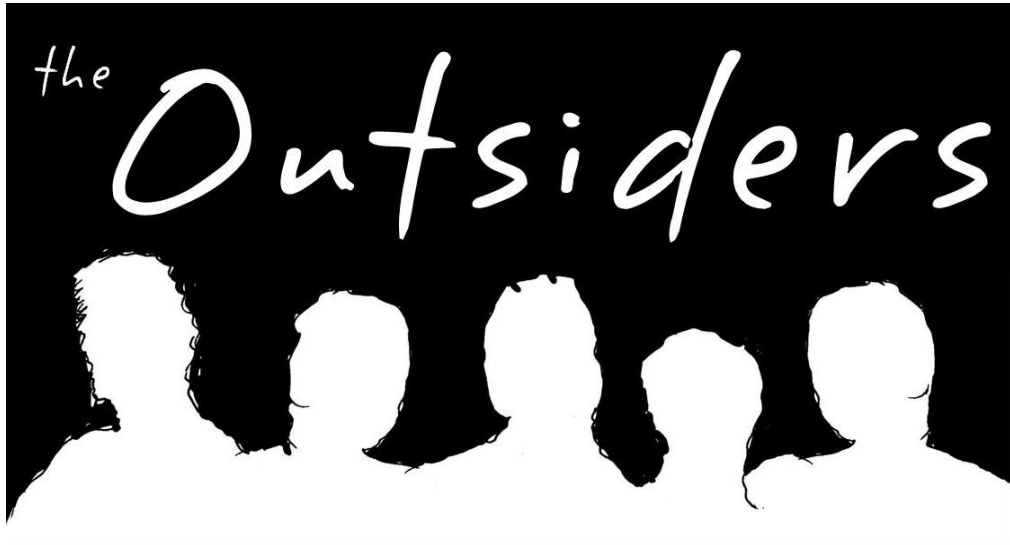


In Class Novel Study



by
S. E. Hinton

Grade 8 English
Mealy Mountain Collegiate
Happy Valley - Goose Bay

About the Book

The Outsiders is told from the **point of view** of **Ponyboy Curtis**, a teenager in Oklahoma who belongs to a group of lower-class youths who call themselves **Greasers** because of their long greasy hair. The Greasers' rivals are called **Socs**, or Socials, a group of upper-class youths from the West side of town. The rivalry between the two gangs increase until someone gets killed. Ponyboy and **Johnny** are forced into hiding until an event occurs which changes their lives and the lives of the other members of their gang.

What makes Ponyboy's situation all the more difficult is the fact that he and his brother, **Sodapop**, are being raised by their older brother **Darry**, after their parents were killed in a car accident. Ponyboy finds himself caught between the two world of wanting to help his friends and wanting to remain a grade A student. This is the source of constant tension between Ponyboy and Darry.

In contrast to the tension of the Curtis home is the friendship between Ponyboy and the rest of the Greasers who are of various ages: Darry, the hardworking responsible breadwinner; Sodapop, a charming 16 year-old high school dropout; Johnny, a sensitive 16 year old; **Dally**, a hardened street hood with a long criminal record; **Steve**, Sodapop's best friend; and **Two-Bit**, the oldest and funniest group member.

The Outsiders covers a wide range of themes that include crime, friendship, heroism, and family relationships. Originally published in 1967, the novel shows S. E. Hinton's frustration with the social divisions that existed in her high school. It continues to bridge the gap between Adult and Young Adult Fiction, exploring violence, class conflict and prejudice.

About the Author

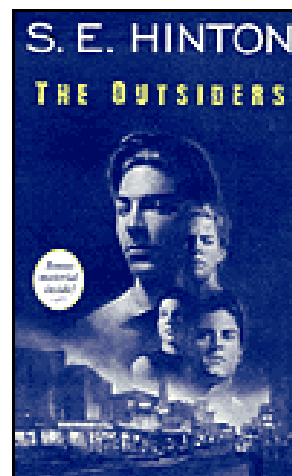
S. E. Hinton



By the time she was 17 years old, Susan Eloise Hinton was a published author. While still in high school in her hometown--Tulsa, Oklahoma--Hinton put in words what she saw and felt growing up and called it *The Outsiders*, a now classic story of two sets of high school rivals, the Greasers and the Socs (for society kids). Because her hero was a Greaser and outsider, and her tale was one of gritty realism, Hinton launched a revolution in young adult literature.

Since her narrator was a boy, Hinton's publishers suggested that she publish under the name of S. E. Hinton; they feared their readers wouldn't respect a "macho" story written by a woman. Hinton says today, "I don't mind having two identities; in fact, I like keeping the writer part separate in some ways. And since my alter ego is clearly a 15-year-old boy, having an authorial self that doesn't suggest a gender is just fine with me."

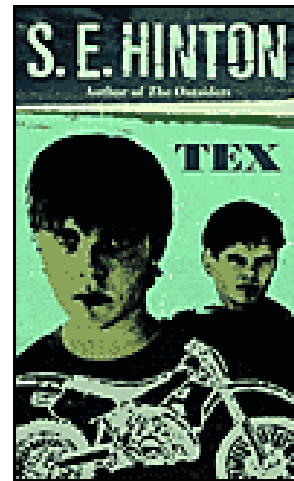
Today, more than twenty-five years after its first publication, *The Outsiders* ranks as a classic, still widely read and one of the most important and taboo-breaking books in the field. Finally, someone was writing about the real concerns and emotions of a teenager. *The Outsiders* marked the beginning of a new kind of realism in books written for the young adult market, and Hinton's next four books followed suit.



She wrote her second book while she was in college at the University of Tulsa, studying to be a teacher. But "I don't have the nerve or physical stamina to teach," she says. "I did my student teaching, but I couldn't leave the kids and their problems behind me; I'd go home and worry about them. I think people who are good teachers do one of the most important jobs there is; I can't praise them highly enough."

David Inhofe, who is now her husband, was her boyfriend then and was instrumental in helping her get her second book written. Hinton was suffering from writer's block. Inhofe refused to go out with her at night unless she wrote two pages during the day, and slowly but steadily over four months, she compiled the manuscript that became *That Was Then, This is Now*, a story of drugs, delinquency, and a tough kid making a tough decision. She and David were married in 1970; the second book was published in 1971.

Her third book, *Rumble Fish*, was published in 1975. Hinton was inspired to write it by a magazine photo she had saved since 1967, of a boy on a motorcycle. *Tex* followed, and drew the attention of Walt Disney Studios. In 1982, Disney's movie version, starring Matt Dillon, was released. Dillon later starred in movies of *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*, and he and Hinton have become friends over the years. In 1985, Paramount Pictures released *That Was Then, This is Now* and Fox Television adapted *The Outsiders* for a television series.



Taming the Star Runner, Hinton's fifth book, was a departure for her. "For the first time, I told the story in the third person. My son, Nick, was then four, and I was so involved with him that I didn't have the emotional space to become a completely other person."

After *Taming the Star Runner*, Hinton took a seven-year break. She was busy with Nick, and she says, "I couldn't think of a single thing to say. I didn't have a writer's block--I was writing plenty: screenplays for my novels, television scripts, advertisements. I simply didn't have a story I wanted to tell."

When she found a story, it was directly from her life. *Big David, Little David* is a hilarious picture book about a joke she and her husband played on Nick when he was entering kindergarten. On his first day at school, little Nick meets a boy who, like Nick's father, has dark hair, glasses, and is named David. "He's not you, is he?" Nick asks his father.

"Oh, yes, that's me," Big David says. A rollicking tale of confused identity follows.

No more outsiders, no more tough boys, but *Big David, Little David* shares with all of Hinton's work a deeply autobiographical thread.

"*The Puppy Sister* is actually the most autobiographical of all of my books," she

says. "Nick is an only child and was not an animal person. He was a little bit afraid of dogs, but I was determined to get him a puppy so he could connect and share attention in the family. We got our puppy when Nick was eight, and there was so much sibling rivalry between the two that he once accused me of loving the dog more than I loved him. `Honey,' I told him, `it's not true. I love you more: you're housebroken.' "

Hinton knew the story of puppy-boy rivalry was a good one, but she needed a hook. Nick provided it. One day the three of them came home from a walk and Nick said to his mother, "I wonder when she will turn into a person." And *The Puppy Sister* was born.

When Hinton's not writing, she rides her horse, takes courses at the university, and is involved in Nick's school. "I'm not any one thing, and that's a reason I don't mind having a separate identity for my writing. I'm an author, but I'm also a mother, a friend, a horseback rider, a decent cook. Being involved domestically keeps me in touch with reality."

S. E. Hinton is the recipient of the American Library Association's and *School Library Journal's* first annual Margaret A. Edwards Award, which honors authors whose "book or books, over a period of time, have been accepted by young people as an authentic voice that continues to illuminate their experiences and emotions, giving insight into their lives."

* Information gathered from Random House Publishers

S. E. Hinton Questions:

1. S. E. Hinton's hometown is _____, _____.

2. Why did her publisher's suggest she use her initials instead of her name?

3. Does she regret doing this? Why or why not?

4. The Outsiders was one of the first books to . . .

5. Why didn't she become a teacher?

6. How did her husband - then boyfriend - help her write *That Was Then, This is Now*?

7. What was the inspiration for *Rumble Fish*?

8. What do the movie versions of *The Outsiders*, *Tex*, and *Rumble Fish* all have in common?

9. How was *Taming the Star Runner* different from her other four books?

10. Why did she stop writing for a long time after that book?

11. What do all her books, including the children's ones, have in common?

12. Name two things she likes to do in her spare time.
