

Chapter One

1. What makes Ponyboy different from the rest of his Greaser crew? Why are these good traits for a narrator of this story to have? Ponyboy is younger and not really a full member of the gang. He's Darry's little brother, so he's more of a mascot than a full member. He's also book smart, gets good grades, and is a deep thinker. He's the sort of guy who prefers to go to the movies alone so that he can fully escape into the film and think about it. For a narrator, you want someone, like Ponyboy, who is innocent and open-minded. Ponyboy isn't jaded yet, so he can still see/believe in a time when the fighting between the social classes will end. It's also good to have a smart narrator, a thinker, so we can hear all of his deep thoughts about this world.
2. How do Ponyboy's relationships with Darry and Sodapop differ? Explain. Ponyboy is closer to Sodapop because Soda is kind, funny, and easy-going. Ponyboy is also closer in age to Sodapop and they share a bedroom. Ponyboy feels like Darry is always disappointed/irritated by him. Darry, the oldest, is under a lot of stress and snaps at Ponyboy often, making Ponyboy feel like Darry doesn't love or even like him. This isn't true, of course.
3. What has Johnny learned from the gang that he couldn't learn from his parents? What's the irony in this? What can you learn from your friends that you can't learn from your own family? His parents are abusive, so the gang has been the force to teach him about love and affection. The boys take care of each other, which is more than Johnny's parents do for him. The irony is that the gang is seen by the public as a menace, but the group is actually nurturing and caring towards each other. Johnny receives from the gang exactly the opposite of what we accuse gangs of promoting. Instead of hate, the gang is a source of love and acceptance for these boys. Answers will vary on the second part of this question. Most students say they learn more about themselves when they are with their friends, who might introduce them to new hobbies or interests. Students also tend to behave the expected way in front of their parents, but they behave in a way that's closer to their true selves when they're with their friends.
4. As they are falling asleep, how does Ponyboy react to what Sodapop tells him about Darry? He pretends to agree with Sodapop and understand that Darry is tough on him out of love, but he doesn't really agree or understand. He still doubts Darry's love, but he keeps it to himself.
5. Do you think Darry loves Ponyboy? Why does he treat Ponyboy the way he does? Yes, Darry definitely loves his youngest brother, but he's exhausted from working so hard and he's stressed. Sometimes, parents, or parental figures, use tough love to try to protect and help the ones they love. And, sometimes, those parents get tired and frustrated. Darry isn't soft and warm, but he does love his brothers. If he didn't love them, he wouldn't work so hard and wouldn't hassle them like he does.
6. At the end of the chapter, Ponyboy says, "I lie to myself all the time. But I never believe me." Explain what he means. In what way is this idea true for you, as well? In this scene, Ponyboy is telling himself that he won't love his oldest brother, Darry, anymore, but he also knows that this is a lie to himself. Of course, he'll always love Darry. Students' answers will vary on the second question, but we all certainly lie to ourselves while being aware of what we're really doing. For example, if a student makes a promise to himself to get better grades but he deep-down knows that he's not going to change his actual behaviors, that's an example of what Ponyboy's talking about. We also lie to ourselves when we choose to believe something that isn't true just because it makes our lives easier in the short-term. An example of this is when a parent defends a child who lied or cheated in school, refusing to believe the teacher's true account of the student's poor choices. This is called denial, a classic defense mechanism.

Chapter Two

1. Ponyboy and Sodapop are the boys' actual names. What does this show you about their parents? Certainly, the parents were non-traditional or "original," as Ponyboy says. They raised three nice boys, so they must have been good parents, even if they did things differently than other parents.
2. Why doesn't Ponyboy like referring to Sodapop as a dropout? In what way does this label fit? In what way does it not fit? He feels that the word unfairly labels Sodapop. In a way, it fits because Sodapop has actually dropped out of school and now works at a gas station, a low-paying job without much of a future. It doesn't fit, though, because Ponyboy says that Sodapop is smart in his own way and that he has a lot of value in their world. He's one of the kindest, most warm-hearted people that Ponyboy knows.
3. Four months ago, Johnny was attacked by a group of Socs, leaving a scar on his face "that he would carry all

of this life." Johnny was actually scarred in more than one way by the attack. Explain. While he physically carries a reminder of that attack on his cheek, he's also been scarred emotionally and seems afraid of everything. He's quiet and timid, due in large part to the Soc attack. A lot was taken from him that night.

4. During the attack, Johnny's "T-shirt was splattered with blood." What color was his T-shirt originally? Symbolically, why do you suppose Hinton made the T-shirt that color instead of, say, green or black? Johnny's T-shirt was white, which is the color of innocence and purity. With the attack, Johnny's innocence was lost and replaced by violence. Also, blood soaking into white cotton is visually alarming, just as the boys were scared and sickened when they found Johnny.

5. When recalling the night of Johnny's attack, Ponyboy says that he noticed Dally was especially disturbed by the viciousness of the beating and looked ill. He says, "Dally has seen people killed on the streets of New York's West Side. Why did he look sick now?" There's two possible reasons why Dally would look so sick in that moment. Explain them both. First, it may be that Dally is really close to Johnny and cares a lot about him. When someone we love is hurt, it hurts us even more. The second reason might be that Dally has lied or exaggerated about his time in New York to make himself seem tougher than he really is. Later, students will learn that it's more of the first reason.

6. In ch. 1, Ponyboy tells us that Steve and Sodapop like to fight and drag-race cars to release some of their pent-up energy. In this chapter, Two-Bit says that a fair fight without blades "blows off steam better than anything." Even today, some young men enjoy these things. Explain how this type of reckless behavior might actually be innocent, as Ponyboy suggests. The boys like to get in fights and drag race cars. The way Ponyboy describes this, these seem like normal things for some young men to want to do because they have so much pent-up energy and male aggression. Students' answers to the second part of the question will vary, but Ponyboy seems to think that certain types of fighting are, indeed, innocent and natural for guys like Steve, Soda, and Two-Bit. As long as weapons/blades aren't involved, it's just harmless fun to these boys. (Interestingly, Ponyboy isn't one of those kinds of guys.) Your students may or may not agree. You might want to discuss how/why this might be true for some young men and not others.

7. To Ponyboy, what's the difference between a gang and a pack? A gang is a group, like the Greasers, who stick together and help each other, no matter what. A pack is a wild, uncontrollable group of thugs, which he equates to the Socs. He says they are like animals, a pack of beasts.

8. Ponyboy is confused about the different treatment his friends give toward girls they know and girls they don't know. Explain what he means. Give an example of how this holds true in our world today. If the guys know a girl either from class or as a friend/relative, they will be more respectful. If the girl is a stranger, though, they'll be crude and disrespectful as they check her out. This is true today, as well. Once you know someone's name and build a friendly relationship, you'll be more mindful of your manners. Students might give examples of guys who objectify women from pictures they see on the internet, but those same guys would never be so crude with classmates or their buddy's sister. A more innocent example is when we walk past students we don't know when crossing campus, but we stop and say hello or wave to the kids that we know from class. We're friendly and more open to people we already know; we're closed off to strangers.

9. When Dally brings each of the girls a soda, what does Cherry do? What does Marcia do? Which girl do you think Ponyboy respects more? If you were one of the girls, which move would you make? Cherry throws the soda in Dally's face, while Marcia drinks the soda. Ponyboy seems to respect Cherry more because she's brave, even if it's foolish bravery, and she stands by her beliefs. Dally was a pig to the girls and Cherry follows through on exactly what she said she'd do. Students' answers will vary on the last question. For me, I'd want to do what Cherry did, but I'd probably just do what Marcia did. Sigh.

10. At the end of the chapter, Ponyboy says that the Socs have it so easy in life - "good grades, good cars, good girls, madras and Mustangs and Corvairs - Man, I thought, if I had worries like that I'd consider myself lucky. I know better now." First, examine how Ponyboy's opinion in the first part of this quote is hypocritical, given his earlier stance about Sodapop being labeled a "dropout." Second, look at the last four words, which foreshadow an eventual change in Ponyboy's thinking. Give at least two guesses of the kinds of problems these wealthier kids might have. It's okay if you're wrong, but I want you to take a guess. In the first part of the quote, Ponyboy is being hypocritical because he hates people who label and make snap judgments based on outward appearances, yet he's doing the exact same thing to the Soc kids. In the last four words, Ponyboy seems to have changed his mind and realized that Socs have troubles, too. Your students will likely guess that Ponyboy will get to know some of these

kids, like Cherry, and realize that their lives also have problems, such as the unrealistically high expectations of their parents and feeling trapped in a social role they didn't choose. Students' answers will vary on this last part, so I give credit for any reasonable guess.

Chapter Three At the top of the worksheet, The Beatles are (from the left): Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr, and George Harrison.

1. Explain the differences between the two social groups in regards to The Beatles and Elvis Presley. Why would each group have the preference that it holds? The Socs like The Beatles and think Elvis is not cool, while the Greasers prefer Elvis and think The Beatles are lame. This makes sense because The Beatles at the time were seen as clean-cut and wholesome, while Elvis is pretty much a Greaser.
2. Cherry explains that part of what keeps the two groups apart is that the Greasers are overly emotional and the Socs are too emotionally cool/numb. Of the two extremes, which one do you think is better? Explain your answer. Students' answers will vary, but most will probably agree that it's better to wear your heart on your sleeve and face the consequences. For the Socs, they must bottle up their feelings and that tends to cause an even-bigger explosion down the road. For me, it's better to feel too much than to not feel anything at all.
3. Ponyboy says that he and Johnny "understood each other without saying anything." Explain how this is possible. Have you ever had this kind of relationship with a friend or sibling? Explain. Sometimes, you come across a person who "gets" you so completely that you don't have to explain every little thing to that person. This develops naturally in long-term relationships and friendships, but it also can happen pretty quickly for two people, like Ponyboy and Johnny, who share the same world view. Both of these boys are young, small, quiet, and frustrated by their life's circumstances. They have so much in common that they don't need to talk about things overtly. Students' answers to the second part of the question will vary, depending on their life experience.
4. Sodapop's connection to the horse named Mickey Mouse can actually be seen as a metaphor for his relationship with Darry. How so? Sodapop is the only one able to get through to the onery horse, just as he's the only one who can make Darry smile/relax. Sodapop has a gentle, harmless nature that appeases both the mean horse and the mean older brother. Ponyboy doesn't see the connection, but we should.
5. Why would Cherry be attracted to Dally? Do your best to explain the complicated, conflicting emotions that Cherry is feeling. It's been said that the opposite of love isn't hate, but indifference. Cherry is heated when she thinks about Dally. Cherry lives in a cool, unemotional world, yet she's felt a lot of emotion tonight, both in fighting with her boyfriend and throwing the soda in Dally's face. Dally is not particularly physically attractive (at least, according to Ponyboy), but he's made her feel things tonight. This is magnetic for Cherry, who earlier in the evening told Ponyboy that she's tired of feigning indifference and talking about things that don't matter. Also, Dally is dangerous and girls, for whatever crazy reason, tend of love a bad boy.
6. How long ago did the Curtis parents die? Explain how this amplifies all of the emotions the boys are sorting through. The parents died eight months ago, which really isn't very long ago. The emotions are still pretty raw about the accident, so it makes sense that the emotions in the household have all of them on edge. It will take time for the boys to find their groove and develop the new relationships they're forming. Ponyboy says that he and Darry got along fine before their parents' death. Clearly, Darry is going through an emotional upheaval, which is affecting everyone.
7. What happens when Ponyboy comes home at 2 a.m., long after his curfew? Darry is furious and frustrated, scared that such a situation might cause the boys to be ripped apart by the foster care system. He slaps Ponyboy across the face, knocking him to the floor. Darry immediately regrets his actions, but Ponyboy runs out of the house and finds Johnny in the lot. Johnny helps Ponyboy calm down.
8. Why does Johnny like it better when his father is hitting him than when he ignores him? As mentioned above in #5, hate is just another shade of love. For Johnny, the negative attention of the beatings is better than no attention at all. This is a classic psychological truth of adolescence. Some kids will do reckless, dangerous things because they want to grab their parents' attention. In Johnny's world, the indifference his parents show to him is more painful than the beatings. Sad stuff.

Chapter Four

1. Reeling pickled. Boozed up. Crooked. The Greasers use a lot of different words/phrases for “drunk.” Why, do you suppose, they have so many euphemisms for getting drunk? What does this show us about their world? They have so many words/phrases for it because getting drunk is something they often do. In this world, it’s common to drink to excess. This makes sense when you think about how much they hate their lives and want some kind of escape. Sometimes, people drink alcohol to make them numb to the pain in their worlds. This seems to be the case for most of the boys, even if they think they’re drinking only to have fun. There’s really something deeper, and darker, happening here. It’s interesting that the Socs also drink a lot, even though Bob and Randy say that they don’t. Every time we’ve seen them so far, they’ve been drunk. Perhaps this is a common denominator amongst the two groups. They are all unhappy with their lives.
2. If you were on a jury and saw a video-recording of what happened when Johnny stabbed Bob, what would your sentence for Johnny be? Students’ answers will vary. Some will say that Johnny was acting in self-defense and doesn’t deserve any punishment at all. Others will say that Johnny did kill Bob, but doesn’t deserve the electric chair, as the boys fear he’d be given. This question always makes for a lively class discussion. A crime has been committed, but which crime?
3. In this chapter, Ponyboy says that “the fight for self-preservation had hardened [Dally] beyond caring.” Is this true for Johnny, too? For Ponyboy? Johnny does seem to be hardened by the aftermath of the Soc beating four months ago. His eyes are described as darkening and he’s scared all of the time, even carrying the switchblade with him. For Ponyboy, there is evidence of hardening feelings against the Socs when he talks about the economic differences between the two classes and the injustice of it all. Although Ponyboy isn’t as hard as the older boys, the reader can see the changes happening.
4. What’s the irony of Ponyboy’s dream of living in the country finally coming true in this chapter? A dream is supposed to bring joy, yet the circumstances surrounding his move to the country are anything but joyful. This version of life in the country is not what Ponyboy had envisioned. It seems like dreams, even a simple dream like living in the country, are denied to members of the Greaser class.
5. If Johnny and Ponyboy had come to your house in the middle of the night seeking help, what would your advice have been to them? Students’ answers will vary, but most would say they’d tell them to turn themselves into the police because the killing was done in self-defense. You can raise a compelling class discussion if you ask your class whether Johnny would’ve been given fair treatment by the police and district attorney. If the roles were reversed, would a young Soc be treated differently by the system than a young Greaser? Do your students see unequal treatment in their own worlds/your community?
6. What color are Ponyboy’s eyes? Symbolically, what’s interesting about this? His eyes are gray. This is a compelling choice by Hinton because gray could mean that Ponyboy is depressed and weary about the world. It also could mean that Ponyboy understands that there are lots of sides to every story; that is, the world is not black-and-white or set at the extremes. Instead, it is much messier, like shades of gray. There are good Socs and bad Socs, just as there are good Greasers and bad ones. Even within one person, there is good and bad. Ponyboy, our narrator, seems to understand this more thoroughly than any of the other characters. Finally, Hinton might just want to make Ponyboy stand out even more than he already does. You don’t, after all, meet many people with gray eyes.
7. What does “premonition” mean? If you need to, look it up in a dictionary and write down the definition. How is this word’s usage in the last paragraph of the chapter an example of foreshadowing? A premonition is a strong feeling that something bad is going to happen. This word’s usage here obviously means that the boys’ troubles are not over. We should have a bad feeling at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Five

1. When Ponyboy awakens, he notices that Johnny’s jean jacket “had somehow got thrown across me.” What does this show us about Johnny? He’s a good guy. It’s almost like he’s serving the role of an older brother/caretaker for Ponyboy. The reader already liked Johnny, but by sacrificing his own comfort to keep Ponyboy warm makes us like him even more. Interestingly, the label of “murderer” just doesn’t fit this kid. It’s another example of labels providing an incomplete – and inaccurate – picture of someone.

2. Ponyboy doesn't want to cut and bleach his hair with peroxide, but Johnny knows they need to alter their appearances. According to Ponyboy, how does a military or prison haircut serve as a method to break young men from their social class? For Greasers, long hair is part of their identity. By requiring a haircut, officials are taking away a young man's identity and sense of self. This can be a good thing for the military that needs group identity to function well, but this can be a tool of humiliation in the criminal justice system.
3. After shouting and crying in the church, Ponyboy wakes up feeling stronger and more in control of his emotions. Explain how this episode is similar to Steve and Sodapop's need to fight or drag-race cars. For all of these young men, they need some sort of outlet for the extreme emotions they are feeling. Some boys, like Steve and Soda, use violence to get out their rage. Ponyboy, however, is more of a thinker and he weeps openly here. This is embarrassing for a young man, but necessary. Afterward, the event was cathartic and Ponyboy is now better-able to face the tough situation.
4. Explain the incident that leads Johnny to compare Dally to the old Southern gentlemen in *Gone With the Wind*, the novel Ponyboy's reading. Do you agree with Johnny that Dally's actions were heroic? One time, Johnny watched as Dally was accused of breaking school windows, even though it was Two-Bit who did the damage. Dally never once implicated Two-Bit and took the entire blame upon his shoulders. Johnny was impressed and called the move "gallant." Students' opinions will vary on the second question, but there is something honorable, even if it's an honor amongst thugs, to stick together, no matter what.
5. Of all the boys, Ponyboy likes Dally the least. Why? What does this realization show us about Ponyboy? He says that Dally is "too real," while the other boys all have heroic qualities like the characters in the novels he reads. Dally, however, doesn't have those traits; he is rough and raw and violent. This scares Ponyboy. This realization shows us that Ponyboy likes to imagine himself living in an idealized world. Dally, however, lives in the real world that Ponyboy wishes he didn't have to confront.
6. Ponyboy has trouble understanding the meaning of Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay." In your own words, explain the poet's theme. Then, connect that theme to characters and events from this story. Students' answers will vary slightly, but basically they should be able to state that Frost's message is that the golden moments of life are fleeting and should be enjoyed while they are here. On page 48, Ponyboy describes his mother as "golden and beautiful." This is no coincidence. The things that are beautiful simply cannot last in this world. Even our own youth is like this. We must enjoy the beautiful moments while they are here. Ponyboy's relationship with his parents is one example. Another example is the lightness that Darry had in him before the death of their parents. Finally, Johnny's brief life will be another example of this, but your students haven't read that part yet...
7. Johnny compares the Curtis brothers to their deceased parents. Which boy looks/acts like which parent? Which one of your parents are you most like? What similarities (physical or behavioral) do you share? Johnny says that Sodapop looks like their mom, but acts like their dad. Darry looks like their dad, but acts like their mom. Ponyboy doesn't look or act like either of the parents. Students' answers will vary on the last question, depending on their families and personal insight.
8. What is a heater? Why does Dally have one with him? A "heater" is a gun and Dally's begun carrying one because tensions have heated up between the Greasers and the Socs. The gun isn't loaded, but it does a good job of intimidating people, he says.
9. Who is the unexpected spy for the Greasers? Why would this person be willing to serve in this role? Cherry Valance, the red-haired Soc girl from the drive-in, has been giving information about the Socs to the Greasers. Although the chapter doesn't say why, we can conclude that she has several motivations. First, she knew Bob, her boyfriend, was sometimes a menace, a drunk, and ran with a thuggish group of Socs. She feels responsible for the whole mess because she was the reason Bob and the Socs came back looking for the boys that night. She also knows that Johnny and Ponyboy are sweet-natured and wouldn't go looking for trouble. Looking at the evidence objectively, she must realize what really happened that night. Also, she has an odd attraction to Dally and wants to help him.