



Novel Guide for Gifted and Advanced Readers



This guide is appropriate for use with gifted and advanced readers. It addresses their affective and cognitive needs through questions that can be used for discussion. Depending on the length of the book, students should read the entire book before conducting the bibliotherapy lesson, the **Group Discussion** using the higher order questions and the **After Discussion** activities. Students should be given the **Before Discussion** activities to complete during their time while reading the book. If the book is exceptionally long, you may need to modify this lesson plan. See **Novel Guide: Notes for Implementing** for additional procedures and recommendations.

Book Title: *The Outsiders*

Author: S.E. Hinton

Interest Level: Grade 6-8

Lexile: 750L

Length: 180 pages

Guide developed by: Rachel Glass

Summary

Ponyboy Curtis is a fourteen-year-old boy who enjoys poetry and sunsets, but you would never guess that from the looks of him and his friends. He lives in a town divided into two rival societies, the "greasers" and the "Socs." Being a greaser means that you catch all the rough breaks and hate the more fortunate Socs; and that's the life Ponyboy knows. One night, when someone takes an argument too far, everything changes. Ponyboy is forced to take a deeper look at himself and the Socs and reevaluate what is really important in life.

Conceptual Connections

Conceptual Lens: misconceptions

Other Key Concepts: empathy, conflict; choices; consequences

Essential Understandings:

- Appearances often lead to misconceptions about others.
- Conflict can be addressed through the lens of empathy.
- Everyone has to make important choices and face the consequences of those choices.

Essential Questions:

- How can misconceptions affect the way we view and think about others?
- How is empathy helpful when dealing with conflict?
- What types of consequences result from a person's choices?

Affective Focus (Bibliotherapy)

Introductory Activity/Hook

Often, we develop misconceptions about others because of their appearance or what we have heard from others. Try and think of a time you judged someone too quickly or too harshly and found out you were wrong. Write a short paragraph describing what misconceptions you had about this person, and how you discovered that you were wrong.

Menu of Bibliotherapy Questions

Identification:

- How do the greasers view the Socs and visa versa?
- What characteristics does Ponyboy display throughout the book that proves he does not fit the typical "greaser" definition?
- What are some misconceptions that could be easily made about Dally, Johnny, or Darry? What about Cherry Valance, Rob, or Randy?
- What is empathy? Which events in the book lead Ponyboy to take a more empathetic look at others and wipe away his own misconceptions?
- What are some of the difficult choices that some of the characters were faced with and how did the choice they made affect them?

Catharsis:

- How does Ponyboy feel about his life as a greaser at the beginning of the book? Do you think this changes at all by the end of the book? How?
- Ponyboy and Cherry have a conversation about sunsets at one point in the book. How does this show two characters developing empathy for one another?
- Do you think that Johnny had any other choice of action on the night he and Ponyboy got into a fight with the Socs? How did Johnny feel about his choices?
- How did Dally feel when Johnny died? How can you tell he felt this way? What misconceptions did most people have about Dally?

Insight:

- What misconceptions do you think some people may have about you and how does this make you feel?
- Do you feel that you have the power to wipe away those misconceptions? How could you start doing that?
- How do you feel the choices that you make affect your life, the life of others, and the opinions that others formulate about you? List some choices you are proud of or regret.
- How can you begin feeling more empathy for others? How do you think this could lead to a more enjoyable life with less conflict?

Universalization/Follow up Activity

Brainstorm for a few minutes about the misconceptions you think people may have about you that you would like to clear up. On the back of a piece of paper create a short story about yourself by completing this sentence starter as many times as you would like:

You may think _____, but _____.

(For example: You may think I am rude or snobby, but I am actually a little shy and nervous to talk to new people.)

On the other side of the paper draw a self portrait of yourself surrounded by a collage of images or words that express the real you. You can draw and write the items in your collage or find clippings to use from magazines. Share your creation with the class.

Reading Comprehension: Independent Work and Group Discussion

To foster strong reading comprehension, literacy skills, and love of literature, students need to read critically, respond to what they read with text-based evidence, develop a robust vocabulary, and engage, in high level discussion with peers. The following activities address these components.

Before Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete independently

A. Knowledge and Comprehension Questions related to the novel. Students use sticky notes to locate answers in the text as they read. Teacher may use student's answers for a grade.

Knowledge Questions

- Who are the main characters?
- Who are the rival groups in the story and what are some traits of each?
- Who does Ponyboy call the greaser's pet?
- What are some of Ponyboy's interests?
- What big event causes Ponyboy and Johnny to run away?
- What does Cherry Valance say to Ponyboy when he tells her he can see the sunset from the East Side too?
- What is the last thing that Johnny tells Ponyboy?

Comprehension Questions

- How is Ponyboy different from the other boys in his gang? How is Dally different?
- Why is Johnny so scared every time he sees a blue mustang?
- Why do the greasers and Socs hate each other so much?
- Why does everyone in the gang feel protective of Johnny?
- Why does Darry treat Ponyboy so harshly at times?
- How does Dally show that he cares for Johnny and Ponyboy in the story?
- Why does Dally get so angry at the end of the book?

B. Vocabulary Study: Students will complete the following activities with vocabulary from the novel. The activities may be used for a grade, but should also be included in the discussion.

- Students will create a foldable. Each page of the foldable will be devoted to one of the vocabulary words below. For each word students should write the sentence in which the word is used in the book. They should provide a definition which applies to the book's use of the word. This definition may be found in a dictionary or online. They should also provide one antonym and one synonym of the word and include a small drawing which they feel illustrates the word.

Vocabulary Words

- madras (p. 5)
- roguishly (p. 22)
- values (p. 38)
- resignedly (p. 44)
- smoldering (p. 55)
- gallant (p. 76)
- palomino (p.101)
- manslaughter (p. 108)
- conformity (p. 137)

Group Discussion: Teacher-facilitated small group discussion. Teacher may choose to provide students with a set of the questions prior to the discussion. Students should also be encouraged to create their own questions.

Higher-Level Questions (using Bloom's categories)

1. Application:

- Put yourself in Ponyboy's place. What would you feel angry about? What would you be thankful for?
- Do you have cliques in your school that you could relate to the greasers and Socs in the story? How do these social groups view one another and treat one another?
- They say, "Never judge a book by its cover." Do you agree with this statement? What does this saying mean to you?

2. Analysis:

- Think about the lines of the Robert Frost poem that Ponyboy recites at the old church. Johnny later refers to the poem when he tells Ponyboy to, "Stay gold." What do you think Johnny mean by this?
- How could you compare and contrast Johnny's relationship with Dally to Ponyboy's relationship with Darry?
- Why does Ponyboy feel like there are some things he could only talk to with Johnny, Sodapop, or Cherry Valance?
- Johnny refers to Dally as being gallant. How is he gallant?

3. Evaluation:

- What does this story teach you about empathy?
- What are some positive traits (no matter how deeply hidden) of Ponyboy, Dally, Darry, Cherry Valance, Two-Bit, Johnny, Randy?
- What does the story tell us about the effects of misconceptions?

4. Synthesis:

- Where do you think Ponyboy will go from here?
- How might the story have been different if Ponyboy and Johnny had just gone home instead of walking to the park that one night? How might it have been different if they hadn't gone into the burning church?
- Which characters in the book would you categorize as protagonists? As antagonists? Are there any characters that fall into both categories?
- If you had to choose a theme song for this book what would you choose and why?

After Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete with a partner, in a small group, or individually. Activities may be used for a grade.

- **Language Arts-** The poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost plays an important part in this story. Students will spend time analyzing this and several other Robert Frost poems. They will hold discussions concerning Robert Frost's use of metaphor, simile, and descriptive vocabulary to express emotion in his poetry. Students will then choose one character from the story to write their own poem about. The poem should be a minimum of four stanzas and should also include the poetic devices of metaphor and simile.
- **Social Studies-** In this novel misconceptions play a large role in the conflicts that occur between the greasers and the Socs. Students will choose a notable conflict in history (ex. Civil Rights Movement, Women's Suffrage Movement, Holocaust, Apartheid) and research the events leading up to and during the conflict. Students will then create a poster board or virtual

Lino It board display which gives examples of misconceptions that may have contributed to this historical conflict. Students may also wish to make a comparison between the historical conflict of their choice and the conflicts between the greasers and Socs.

- **Science/Health-** The greasers and the Socs are heavy drinkers and smokers, many at a very early age. Students will use iMove to create an anti-smoking or anti-alcohol ad. Students will include statistics concerning the dangers of cigarettes or alcohol in their ad.
- Ponyboy and Johnny stretch out and watch the stars early in the book. Students will research constellations and choose one to reconstruct. Students could also use the Sky Map app on iPad to research and locate their constellation. Students will create a display of their constellation, labeling the stars that comprise it. Students will also provide a summary of the story behind their constellation or its function in history.
- **Art-** Sunsets are a major symbol in this story. Students will discuss the use of color, tone, and shade to portray emotion in artwork. They will use chalk pastels to create their own sunset masterpiece. Students will write a short explanation of why they believe the sunset is so important to this story and what it symbolizes to accompany their artwork.
- **Careers-** Students will use a three column chart to develop possible career options for four of the characters in the story. In the first column students will include the names of the four characters they chose. In the second column, students will include skills and talents of those characters. In the final column students will include three possible career choices for each character. Students will determine these choices by analyzing the character's skills and talents and conducting internet research. Students should then discuss which character they identify most with concerning skills, talents, and possible future career choices.
- **Language Arts/Creative Drama-** The greasers and Socs don't like each other, although they really don't know much about each other. Some of the conflicts between the Socs and the greasers could easily be considered bullying. Students will brainstorm about modern situations they have witnessed in which people judge or make decisions about others before actually getting to know them. Students will create a short skit showing this synopsis playing out and the effects that judgment or bullying can have on people.

B. Creative Reading. Using the following list of creative products, students will complete a project reflecting their personal connection with the novel (students may determine their own creative product with the approval of the teacher.)

1. Create a puppet play based on a favorite scene in the story
2. Create a poem based on the novel, a character, or favorite scene
3. Illustrate a favorite scene(s) from the story
4. Create a story board of the plot of the story
5. Write a screen play based on the story
6. Create a new ending for the story
7. Create a map of the location(s) of the story
8. Create a mural representative of the story and characters
9. Extend the story into a sequel
10. Rewrite a portion of the story from another character's perspective
11. Rewrite the story in another time or culture
12. Create an online product: infographic, video, character blog, etc.
13. Write a song that one or more of the characters might sing
14. Create an interpretative dance for the story
15. Student idea for a creative product related to the story