

Wahlert High School  
Dubuque, Iowa

Dear S. E. Hinton,

I live on a farm in rural Wisconsin. Here, everyone knows everyone else. There aren't any gangs or hoods. Almost everyone here gets good grades and goes to college. Reading *The Outsiders* made me realize that there are many different lifestyles than the one that I live.

Before I read *The Outsiders*, I didn't really think about how other teens, my age may live. I didn't think that discrimination between the rich and the poor was a problem anymore. I thought that when you were part of a gang, you were always a delinquent and frequently got into trouble.

For some reason reading this book made me feel many strong emotions. I felt hatred toward the Socs, pity for the Greasers, and proud that Darry, even though involved in a gang, helped his brothers stay together after their parents died.

I had always thought that gangs were horrible and that people involved in them were merciless and uncaring. This book states just the opposite. Ponyboy was extremely caring and merciful. He cared for Johnny and for his brothers. He didn't choose to become part of a gang; he had to be in order to survive. You showed me that hoods are not always delinquents. Ponyboy for example was a straight A student and with Johnny's help saved those little children from the burning church.

Many times throughout this book I felt sorry for the Greasers. When Johnny died I was extremely saddened, not that Johnny died, but for Dally, his friend who always protected him. In the beginning of the book, I never would have imagined feeling sorry for Dally, the true juvenile delinquent, but I was. I felt sorry for Sodapop when Sandy told him that she was moving and that they wouldn't see each other ever again. Throughout the whole book my feelings turned from hating all gang members and hoods, to feeling sorry for them because it really wasn't their fault if they were rich or poor.

In the end I thought the book was both inspiring and depressing. I thought it was inspiring because throughout their experiences the Curtis brothers stayed together. They helped out each other and their friends. The book was also depressing because after all of the things that the Greasers have been through, Johnny dies. Johnny was the only reason that Dally was living his life and in the end he got himself into a police chase and the police killed him. It is depressing because after all of the rumbles and hardships, both the strongest and weakest people die.

After all that, the greasers do have a sense that the Socs are just like them, but they know that the Socs and the Greasers will never be allies. This is the thing that made me the most depressed. That even though the Socs are not any better or worse than the Greasers, they still will never be friends because of their class divisions.

Even though I am the same age as Ponyboy, I can't even begin to imagine going through all of the things that he had to. I don't think that I would have the courage or be strong enough to handle murder, death, and constant fighting. The book made me go back and look at how I viewed my own life as well as other's lives. I realized that I am really lucky to have parents, good friends, and to live in a safe neighborhood. I also realized that sometimes I judge people before I get to know them. At the beginning of the book, I thought that the Greasers were greedy and delinquents, but by the end you convinced me that looks can be very deceiving.

Sincerely,

Alicia Fleege