

## JOHNNY

Johnny Cade was last and least. If you can picture a little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers, you'll have Johnny. He was the youngest, next to me, smaller than the rest, with a slight build. He had big black eyes in a dark tanned face; his hair was jet-black and heavily greased and combed to the side, but it was so long that it fell in shaggy bangs across his forehead. He had a nervous, suspicious look in his eyes, and that beating he got from the Socs didn't help matters. He was the gang's pet, everyone's kid brother. His father was always beating him up, and his mother ignored him, except when she was hacked off at something, and then you could hear her yelling at him clear down at our house. I think he hated that worse than getting whipped. He would have run away a million times if we hadn't been there. If it hadn't been for the gang, Johnny would never have known what love and affection are.

Hinton, S. E. (2006). *The Outsiders*. Penguin Classics.

## SODAPOP

Soda tries to understand, at least, which is more than Darry does. But then, Soda is different from anybody; he understands everything, almost. Like he's never hollering at me all the time the way Darry is, or treating me as if I was six instead of fourteen. I love Soda more than I've ever loved anyone, even Mom and Dad. He's always happy-go-lucky and grinning, while Darry's hard and firm and rarely grins at all. But then, Darry's gone through a lot in his twenty years, grown up too fast. Sodapop'll never grow up at all. I don't' know which way's the best. I'll find out one of these days.

I could have waited to go to the movies until Darry or Sodapop got off work. They would have gone with me, or driven me there, or walked along, although Soda just can't sit still long enough to enjoy a movie and they bore Darry to death.

Soda is handsomer than anyone else I know. Not like Darry—Soda's movie-star kind of handsome, the kind that people stop on the street to watch go by. He's not as tall as Darry, and he's a little slimmer, but he has a finely drawn, sensitive face that somehow manages to be reckless and thoughtful at the same time. He's got dark-gold hair that he combs back—long and silky and straight—and in the summer the sun bleaches it to a shining wheat-gold. His eyes are dark, brown—lively, dancing, recklessly laughing eyes that can be gentle and sympathetic one moment and blazing with anger the next. He has Dad's eyes, but Soda is one of a kind. He can get drunk in a drag race or dancing without ever getting near alcohol. In our neighborhood it's rare to find a kid who doesn't drink once in a while. But Soda never touches a drop—he doesn't need to. He gets drunk on just plain living. And he understands everybody.

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## TWO-BIT

Two-Bit Mathews was the oldest of the gang and the wisecracker of the bunch. He was about six feet tall, stocky in build, and very proud of his long rust-colored sideburns. He had gray eyes and a wide grin, and he couldn't stop making funny remarks to save his life. You couldn't shut up that guy; he always had to get his two-bits worth in. Hence his name. Even his teachers forgot his real name was Keith, and we hardly remembered he had one. Life was one big joke to Two-Bit. He was famous for shoplifting and his black-handled switchblade (which he couldn't have acquired without his first talent), and he was always smarting off to the cops. He really couldn't help it. Everything he said was so irresistibly funny that he just had to let the police in on it to brighten up their dull lives. (That's the way he explained it to me.) He liked fights, blondes, and for some unfathomable reason, school. He was still a junior at eighteen and a half and he never learned anything. He just went for kicks. I liked him real well because he kept us laughing at ourselves as well as at other things. He reminded me of Will Rogers—maybe it was the grin.

Hinton, S. E. (2006). *The Outsiders*. Penguin Classics.

## DALLY

If I had to pick the real character of the gang, it would be Dallas Winston—Dally. I used to like to draw his picture when he was in a dangerous mood, for then I could get his personality down in a few lines. He had an elfish face, with high cheekbones and a pointed chin, small, sharp animal teeth, and ears like a lynx. His hair was almost white it was so blond, and he didn't like haircuts, or hair oil either, so it fell over his forehead in wisps and kicked out in the back in tufts and curled behind his ears and along the nape of his neck. His eyes were blue, blazing ice, cold with a hatred of the whole world. Dally had spent three years on the wild side of New York and had been arrested at the age of ten. He was tougher than the rest of us—tougher, colder, meaner. The shade of difference that separates a greaser from a hood wasn't present in Dally. He was as wild as the boys in the downtown outfits, like Tim Shepard's gang.

In New York, Dally blew off steam in gang fights, but here, organized gangs are rarities—there are just small bunches of friends who stick together, and the warfare is between the social classes. A rumble, when it's called, is usually born of a grudge fight, and the opponents just happen to bring their friends along. Oh, there are a few named gangs around, like the River Kings and the Tiber Street Tigers, but here in the Southwest there's not gang rivalry. So Dally, even though he could get into a good fight sometimes, had so specific thing to hate. No rival gang. Only Socs. And you can't win against them no matter how hard you try, because they've got all the breaks and even whipping them isn't going to change that fact. Maybe that was why Dallas was so bitter.

He had quite a reputation. They have a file on him down at the police station. He had been arrested, he got drunk, he rode in rodeos, lied, cheated, stole, rolled drunks, jumped small kids—he did everything. I didn't like him, but he was smart and you had to respect him.

*Hinton, S. E. (2006). The Outsiders. Penguin Classics.*

## PONYBOY

When I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home. I was wishing I looked like Paul Newman—he looks tough and I don’t—but I guess my own looks aren’t so bad. I have light-brown, almost-red hair and greenish-gray eyes. I wish they were more gray, because I hate most guys that have green eyes, but I have to be content with what I have. My hair is longer than a lot of boys wear theirs, squared off in back and long at the front and sides, but I am a greaser and most of my neighborhood rarely bothers to get a haircut. Besides, I look better with long hair.

I had a long walk home and no company, but I usually lone it anyway, for no reason except that I like to watch movies undisturbed so I can get into them and live them with the actors. When I see a movie with someone it’s kind of uncomfortable, like having someone read your book over your shoulder. I’m different that way. I mean, my second-oldest brother, Soda, who is sixteen-going-on-seventeen, never cracks a book at all, and my oldest brother Darrel, who we call Darry, works too long and hard to be interested in a story or drawing a picture, so I’m not like them. And nobody in our gang digs movies and books the ways I do. For a while there, I thought I was the only person in the world that did. So I loned it.

I was still thinking about it while I was doing my homework that night. I had to read *Great Expectations* for English, and that kid Pip, he reminded me of us—the way he felt marked lousy because he wasn’t a gentleman or anything, and the way that girl kept looking down on him. That happened to me once. One time in biology I had to dissect a worm, and the razor wouldn’t cut, so I used my switchblade. The minute I flicked it out—I forgot what I was doing or I would never have done it—this girl right beside me gasped, and said, “They are right. You are a hood.” That didn’t make me feel so hot. There were a lot of Socs in that class—I get put into A classes because I’m supposed to be smart—and most of them thought it was pretty funny. I didn’t, though. She was a cute girl. She looked real good in yellow.

Hinton, S. E. (2006). *The Outsiders*. Penguin Classics.