

Good book review on society, environmental and political impacts on individuals a...

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



The Outsiders is a story that took place in Oklahoma. The novel describes complicated relationships between teenagers that belong to different social layers. In the beginning of the book one of the main characters, Ponyboy Curtis became a victim of a group of upper-class adolescents from the West Side. Both belligerent parties had their nicknames: the boys from the East End were called greasers because of their long greasy hair and the boys from the West End were called “ Socs” that was short from “ Socials”. The conflicts between greasers and Socs arose further several times based on their social background. Sometimes their fights ended with lethal outcomes of the participants (Hinton 5).

The parents of three brothers, Darry, Sodapop, and Ponyboy, were killed in the car accident. Darry, the oldest brother, had assumed the responsibility for the other two children in the family. The boys found themselves on the bottom of society being involved in the half-criminal group of greasers. The rest of the group include Johnny, a sensitive boy, Dally, a young criminal, Steve, the best friend of Sodapop, and Two-Bit, the oldest group member (Hinton 12).

There were also second-rate characters including Socs girls Cherry and Marcia, their boyfriends Bob and Randy. Dally, Ponyboy, and Johnny had met Socs girls cherry and Marcia in the cinema. Dally started to flirt with the girls in an obscene way, but Johnny stopped him. After the movie was finished, Dally left his friends and Ponyboy with Johnny spent good time with the girls until they met their drunken boyfriends, Bob and Randy accompanied by other Socs boys. After fight, Ponyboy fainted because Socs were trying to drown him in the fountain and Johnny killed Bob trying to rescue his friend

(Hinton 56).

Dally Winston helped the boys to hide in the abandoned church in Windrixville aiming to avoid punishment, he gave them money and a gun. The boys were not totally damaged by the environment and spent time reading books and discussing poetry. Dally came to visit them and told them that after Bob's death the tension between greasers and Socs escalated. Dally told that Cherry acted as a spy in the greasers' group because she felt partially guilty for Bob's death (Hinton 75).

When Ponyboy and Johnny decided to return home, they noticed that the abandoned church was burning. They got to know that several schoolchildren came into this church. Ponyboy and Johnny started to rescue them and were hurt by the roof that was damaged by the fire. As a result, they dropped into the hospital and Johnny died from wounds. The boys were proclaimed heroes in the local newspaper. Shortly after, Dally was killed by police during the rumble with Socs and Ponyboy was shocked by his death. Being stressed, he was not able to eat, and felt hostile to Darry. Ponyboy was cleared of all allegations related the death of Bob. He fought with older brother because he felt the lack of harmony inside. Finally, Sodapop said Ponyboy that he was suffering from fighting of his brothers and Ponyboy started to value his family more. After some time, Ponyboy learnt to accept the deaths of his friends without pain and wrote a novel about his life.

Discussion of the Challenges Faced by the Main Characters

One of the main characters, Ponyboy Curtis, being merely a fourteen-years-old boy, was able to understand the differences in social layers and the roles of these groups in the society. He faced several challenges including the

<https://assignbuster.com/good-book-review-on-society-environmental-and-political-impacts-on-individuals-and-their-choices/>

death of his friends and family fights. Through the challenges Ponyboy had faced, I can judge about his personal development. The deaths of Johnny and Dally he saw with his own eyes taught him to value human life and realize that human life can be interrupted each moment. Besides, several times he found himself on the point of death. Realization of transience of life helped him better understand its value. When he felt disoriented and dazed after the deaths of his friends, he started to fight with his older brother because he did not know how to cope with inner discomfort. Finally, his sufferings made them value his family. Also, the loss of his parents also contributed to increasing the value of family.

Johnny Cade, one of the greasers, came from an abusive family that made him value his friends more. Johnny considers greasers as his second family. They need each other like family members. When Johnny protects his friends, he feels needed as his friends gave him the sense of purpose. Johnny is ready to sacrifice his life for his friends. His friends occupy the first place in his system of values because he does not feel warmth in his family.

However, Johnny justifies hatred of his friends and rivalry between the gangs. Being abused at home, he stopped harassing Socs girls by Dally because he knew this feeling. Nobody protected him, but he tried to give the feeling of protection to his friends because he knew the feeling of vulnerability. Unfortunately, Johnny acted as catalyst for the major fights with Socs. His courage led to death, murder, and heroic rescue when he finally died.

Cherry Valance, while being a Socs girl, feels sympathy for greasers. She differentiates people by their behavior rather than their address. Cherry is a

well-brought-up girl and tries to treat all people nice. However, she is subject to group prejudice. For example, she told Ponyboy that she would not say hello to him at school thus revealing her social preferences. Also, her perception of a good girl made her spy on the greasers when Bob was killed. On the one hand, her attitude to all people was loyal, but she did not know what to do when she found herself in an ambiguous situation.

Discussion of the Impact of the Society and Environment on the Characters

All of the characters of the novel understand social differences. Moreover, these differences provoke continuous fights between greasers and Socs. The impact of society and environment can be tracked on the example of Ponyboy. Ponyboy lost his parents and dropped into the criminal environment together with his brothers. The criminal surroundings force them to participate in the fights and rumbles. The environment where the brothers stayed contributed to their criminalization. Ponyboy learnt how to use a gun, he saw death of his friends and enemies in the fights, and he was forced to disappear with his friend Johnny to avoid punishment for the death of Bob. Ponyboy saw death of his friends closely for the first time in the bottom of the society. However, he remains well-educated boy who is interested in literature. Johnny is also an educated young fellow. They discussed *Gone with the Wind* when they were forced to hide in the old church outside the city. He could possibly find himself on the opposite side if his parents were alive.

Cherry Valance was brought up in a quite different environment that made her a different person in comparison to Ponyboy Curtis. However, they have

something in common. In the cinema, when Johnny and Ponyboy met the girls for the first time, they found topics they could discuss. On the contrary to Dally, Johnny and Ponyboy are not rude and cruel. The communication between Cherry and Ponyboy was possible despite the differences in the society showing that people could be interesting to each other even if they belong to different social stratum.

The impact of environment can be traced when considering the personality and behavior of Johnny Cade. The absence of normal relations in the family made him a greaser. The members of the group showed him that he was needed while he did not feel he was needed in his own family. Paradoxically, the members of the greasers' group were more reliable for Johnny than the members of his family. During the fights, Johnny was ready to lay down his life for his friends. Actually, he saved Ponyboy's life when he fainted during the fight with Socs. In the environment where crimes and murders were common, the actions of the greasers were justified. The fights and rival between the gangs from both groups was perceived natural. However, Johnny experienced constant inner fight. For example, he unintentionally provoked the fight when he protested against Dally's abusive attitude to the Socs girls in the cinema. They interacted with the Socs girls making Socs boys angry. As a result, Johnny and Ponyboy were attacked by Socs boys trying to protect Socs girls. Also, he sacrificed his life to save schoolchildren stayed in the burning church.

Discussion of the Choices Made by the Main Characters

The choices of the main characters of the novel were often limited by fear of violence and the lack of money. For example, Ponyboy felt the desire to spend time alone contemplating the world and musing about the order of things. However, he had to stay with the members of his group to be protected in case if he meets Socs. Once he was beaten by Socs when he was alone and he wanted to avoid violence committed against him. He went home alone because he wanted to assert his right to go for a walk alone. Possibly, he secretly wanted to participate in fight to defend his right to walk alone despite he knew it was not safe. At the end of the book Ponyboy started to realize that he could at least chose between violence and nonviolence. The thought made him happier and calmer. He hated to fight, but he had to do it because of continuous misunderstandings between two groups of adolescents. On the contrary to Ponyboy, Johnny made a decision to stab Bob. However, it was possible the right decision in that situation because Johnny could have died if Johnny did not protect him. Possibly, Johnny had other options except for committing a murder, but probably he had to react quickly to save the life of his friend.

In another situation Johnny chose to rescue children when the church was burning. It was not the right choice for him because he died from wounds received when he carried out the children. However, he had chosen to do it because in his value system human life had the highest value. To the contrary, Randy told Ponyboy that he would never go to the burning church to save the lives of the children because few people can risk their lives to save the lives of other people.

Darry was successful in school, he was also good at sports, but he did not have an opportunity to enter the college because of high payment for entering. If his parents were alive, he could have had different life. They could pay for his entering a college and he could start normal life of a student. However, his choice was limited by the absence of money. Darry could pursue his dream and enter the college, but he knew that he had two younger brothers to be take care of. He chose to take care of his brothers because family values were more important for him than personal ambitions.

Cherry also had several choices. On the one hand, she could take the side of greasers and hide the facts related Bob's death. On the other hand, she could chose spy on them to attain punishment for those who were guilty. It was the most difficult choice in the book. Cherry chose to spy on the greasers, but it was her personal choice. Nobody can judge her for making this choice.

Works Cited

Hinton, Susan Eloise. *The Outsiders*. London: Speak, 2006. Print.