

The influence of bad parenting or the lack of parents in the outsiders, a novel b...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Without parents-or good ones at least- where would you be today? In a gang, in jail, or even dead? That is the lifestyle that too many children and young adults face and it is no different in *The Outsiders*, by S. E. Hinton, where good parents and a whole family are far and few between. Almost everyone in the gang, from Johnny to Bob is experiencing or has experienced at some point parent issues and this seldom has nothing to do with them being in a gang and going through mental and/or physical trauma. Hinton skillfully lets the readers infer the underlying theme of such common problems between the gang members. By the end of the book, it's quite evident that parenting, and family as a whole, is an important part of how people develop and how they live their lives.

One of the first and most prominent examples of this in the novel is Johnny's case horribly of abusive parents. His parents beat him and make him feel unwelcome to the point where he pretty much lives on the streets. Because of his family's destructive behavior, Johnny joins a gang to get even a miniscule idea of what it's like to have a family. Even when he is in the hospital, weak and vulnerable, his parents' cruelty was never forgotten. " A nurse appeared in the doorway. ' Johnny,' she said quietly, " your mother's here to see you.' Johnny opened his eyes. At first they were wide with surprise, then they darkened. ' I don't want to see her". His parents' abuse towards Johnny even leads him to find himself on the streets when he gets jumped by Socs and kills one of them which subsequently leads to his death. Due to his terrible circumstances, Ponyboy even describes him at the beginning of the novel as, " a little dark puppy who's been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd a strangers". Although this judgment may have

seemed harsh at the beginning of the book, that is exactly what Johnny was, and the quote proves the point that the reason he found himself in a gang was because of him being “kicked around too much” by his parents. Johnny could of been a tremendously different and stronger person had it not been for the iron fist of evil his parents had clenched him with.

Although it's not as evident in the novel, there are some rather large hints towards the fact that the Curtis boys would've been a much different and much more successful in life had it not been for the death of their parents and an auto crash. It's mostly hinted that Darry would've finished school and done something with his life before the need for a parent figure appeared in the Curtis family. Due to this instantaneous succession and him needing to play the part of two parents for three children, Ponyboy makes a remark at the beginning of the book that sums it up nicely. “But then, Darry's gone through a lot in his twenty years, grown up too fast. What Ponyboy is stating here is that Darry had matured very quickly and he later remarks that he dropped school to take care of Sodapop and Ponyboy. “One time, Steve made the mistake of referring to him as ‘all brawn, no brains,’ and Darry almost shattered Steve's jaw...Darry has never really gotten over not going to college.” Darry quite obviously would've become a different person than he was in the book if his parents were still alive due to his feeling of necessity to dropout of school and him becoming the father figure and maturing very quickly. Parenting or lack thereof clearly took its toll on the Curtis family.

One last example of bad parenting or lack of family leading to unfortunate or unwanted results is Bob Sheldon. All the information about Bob that the <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-of-bad-parenting-or-the-lack-of-parents-in-the-outsiders-a-novel-by-s-e-hinton/>

reader receives is either from Randy, Cherry or from inferencing and reading between the lines. Randy tells Ponyboy that Bob wasn't really a bad person but his parents let him do anything that he wanted with no sense of boundary, limit, or consequence which led to him joining a gang and terrorizing the Greasers. Cherry also reinforces a similar image of Bob being a good guy after Ponyboy inviting her to visit Johnny in the hospital and her declining saying, " " You only knew his bad side. He could be sweet sometimes, and friendly. But when he got drunk." . Bob had a good side but his bad side was a monster feeding off his parents' negligence of it. His parents never even showed a watching or even caring eye about Bob's activities and this leads to his death in the end. The inference the reader needs to make about Bob is near the end of the novel where Ponyboy is looking through an old yearbook and finally sees the Bob that Cherry knew. " What was he like? I knew he liked to pick fights, had the usual Soc belief that living on the West Side made you Mr. Supper-Tuff, looked good in dark wine-colored sweaters and was proud of his rings. But what about the Bob Sheldon that Cherry Valance knew?". This is a moment of realization to Ponyboy, where he sees the real Bob, not the one his parents let take hold of him through turning a blind eye to his behavior. Maybe if he had better parents he wouldn't have died such a young death.

In the novel, *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, parenting plays a big role in developing characters and influencing their decisions from Johnny to Bob- two polar opposites. It affects who they are, what they do and most importantly, who they become in the novel. Parenting can have a positive or negative affect and bad parenting can cause people to be lost in life, and

even die in the cases of Johnny and Bob. Through clear examples in the book, such a theme is almost hard to miss, and it plays such an important role in the evolution of each and every character.