

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Stay Gold

Before Johnny Cade dies in *The Outsiders*, he leaves Ponyboy a powerful message: "Stay gold." At first, Ponyboy doesn't understand what Johnny means, but later, he realizes it is one of the most important lessons of his life.

Johnny's words connect to a poem Ponyboy once read by Robert Frost. The poem talks about how gold, which represents innocence and beauty, does not last forever. Johnny wants Ponyboy to hold onto the goodness inside him—to stay kind, hopeful, and open to the world. He sees that Ponyboy is different from the other Greasers because he loves books, movies, and sunsets. Johnny does not want Ponyboy to become hardened by the violence and struggles of their world.

Throughout *The Outsiders*, many characters lose their innocence. The Greasers have to fight to survive, and they grow up too fast. Johnny, for example, is forced to defend himself against the Socs, leading to tragic consequences. Dally, another Greaser, has been hurt by life so much that he no longer believes in anything good. Johnny's last words remind Ponyboy not to lose himself in the pain and anger around him.

After Johnny's death, Ponyboy struggles with grief. He starts to fail in school, loses interest in things he once loved, and even begins to act more like a tough Greaser. But when he finds Johnny's note inside *Gone with the Wind*, he realizes what his friend was trying to tell him. Instead of giving in to the harshness of life, Ponyboy decides to share his story. He writes about his experiences so that others can understand that there is more to people than just being a Greaser or a Soc. In the end, Johnny's message helps Ponyboy find his way. "Stay gold" means holding on to what makes you special, even when the world tries to change you.