

Name _____



Finding Belonging

In *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, the idea of belonging and identity plays a big role in the lives of the characters. Ponyboy Curtis, the novel's narrator, is a Greaser—a group of boys from the poorer side of town. He and his friends, including Johnny, Dally, and Sodapop, stick together like family because they don't have much support at home. Being a

Greaser gives Ponyboy a sense of belonging, but he also struggles with what it means to be part of this group.

The Socs, short for "Socials," are the rich kids from the other side of town. They have nice clothes, expensive cars, and live in big houses. The Greasers and the Socs don't get along because they come from different backgrounds. At first, Ponyboy thinks all Socs are the same—cold, mean, and privileged. But after meeting Cherry Valance, a Soc girl, he realizes that they have problems too. Cherry helps him understand that being a Soc or a Greaser doesn't define who you are as a person.

Johnny also struggles with belonging. He comes from an abusive home, and the Greasers are his real family. When he saves the children from the burning church, he proves that he is more than just a Greaser—he is a hero. Sadly, Johnny does not survive his injuries, but before he dies, he tells Ponyboy to "stay gold." He wants Ponyboy to stay true to himself and not let the world change him.

By the end of the novel, Ponyboy realizes that identity is about more than being a Greaser or a Soc. He chooses to write his story to show that everyone, no matter where they come from, has struggles. *The Outsiders* teaches us that true belonging comes from being yourself and finding people who support you, no matter what group they belong to.