

UNIVERSIDAD DE CONCEPCIÓN

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN

PEDAGOGÍA EN INGLÉS



**ANALYSIS OF SUSAN E. HINTON'S NOVEL
THE OUTSIDERS WITH AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH**

SEMINARIO PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE LICENCIADO EN EDUCACIÓN

Research supervisor: Dr. Susan Adele Foote

Student: Ma. Angélica Luengo Muñoz

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“I could see boys going down under street lights because they were mean and tough and hated the world, and it was too late to tell them that there was still good in it, and they wouldn't believe you if you did. It was too vast a problem to be just a personal thing. There should be some help, someone should tell them before it was too late.”



— Ponyboy (Character)

The Outsiders, Susan E. Hinton

DEDICATORY

I dedicate this work to anyone who believes a book is a door to knowledge and a path to healing.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

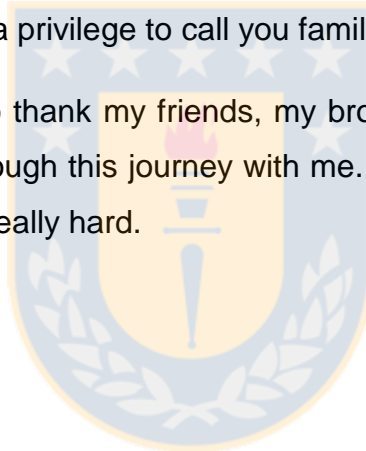
First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Susan Foote for her help, support, patience and her always valuable and kind advice. Her passion and enthusiasm for literature inspired me to work vigorously on this project.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my parents for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for all your sacrifices, I appreciate them and I am sure you appreciate mine too.

I would also like to thank a special friend of mine who brought nothing but happiness to my life and who saw me work on this project from the very beginning, but sadly was not able to see me finish it. I am sure that in our next lives we will meet again and it will be a privilege to call you family once more my dear Noru.

And finally I would like to thank my friends, my brother and everyone who, in one way or another, went through this journey with me. Without your support I am sure things would have been really hard.

Thank you.



ABSTRACT

Literature is a valuable and powerful tool for human beings. It is because of this that the present investigation aims to help in the understanding that literature plays an important role in the curriculum, and what is more, in the lives of every student, not solely as a way of developing skills as important as reading, writing, listening or speaking, but also as a way to encourage critical thinking, channel emotions, help in the development of the personality, serve as a support for teenagers in the construction of their identity and in the always complicated path of self-discovery and/or healing.

I have decided to analyze and to give an educational approach to a book that is still unknown to many teenagers in our country despite the fact that it was published in the 60s, and that it enjoys a well-deserved reputation until today: *The Outsiders*. Even though *The Outsiders* was written a long time ago, in 1967, and that it is set in the United States, it contains examples of modern topics many teenagers can easily relate to, such as discrimination, violence, poverty, friendship, belonging, abandonment and so on. The importance of this book lays, in my opinion, in the universality of the themes that it explores, the different situations which the main character and his friends find themselves in, the problems that they have to face, and how the decisions they make at certain points have an impact in their lives and their futures.

This work can be used as an instrument to help students find a way to liberate themselves from the chains that tie them down. By handing them tools which can be used to talk about their own struggles and by helping them to express themselves through literature, they may be able to face the problems that they are having without them realizing that a learning process is taking place. It can also help to improve the classroom atmosphere and at the same time improve the quality of learning; consequently students can find a certain sense of belonging among their classmates and it can also help them to develop empathy for others.

The flexibility of the topics explored in this novel makes it possible for this work to be implemented in ESL as well as EFL class, and it can be modified to suit literature classes in Spanish also.



RESUMEN

La literatura es una herramienta valiosa y poderosa para los seres humanos. Es debido a ello que la presente investigación tiene como objetivo ayudar en la comprensión de que la literatura juega un rol importante en el currículum, y lo que es más, en las vidas de cada estudiante, no solamente como una forma de desarrollar habilidades tan importantes como la lectura, la escritura, escuchar o hablar, sino que también como una forma de incentivar el pensamiento crítico, canalizar emociones, ayudar en el desarrollo de la personalidad, servir como apoyo para los adolescentes en la construcción de su identidad y en el siempre complejo camino del autoconocimiento y/o sanación.

He decidido analizar y dar un enfoque educacional a un libro que aún es desconocido para muchos adolescentes en nuestro país a pesar del hecho que fue publicado en los 60s y que goza de una más que merecida reputación hasta el día de hoy: *The Outsiders*. Aunque fue escrito hace mucho tiempo atrás, en 1967, y está situado en Estados Unidos, contiene ejemplos de temas modernos con los cuales los adolescentes se pueden identificar fácilmente tales como la discriminación, violencia, pobreza, amistad, pertenencia, abandono, entre otros. La importancia de este libro yace, en mi opinión, en la universalidad de los temas que explora, las diferentes situaciones en las que el personaje principal y sus amigos se ven envueltos, los diferentes problemas que tienen que enfrentar, y cómo las decisiones que toman en ciertos momentos tienen un impacto en sus vidas y en sus futuros.

Este trabajo puede ser usado como un instrumento para ayudar a los estudiantes a encontrar una manera de liberarse de las cadenas que los atan. Al entregarles herramientas que pueden ser utilizadas para hablar sobre sus propias luchas y al ayudarlos a expresarse a través de la literatura, ellos pueden ser capaces de enfrentar los problemas por los que están pasando sin que se den cuenta del proceso de aprendizaje que se está llevando a cabo al mismo tiempo. También

puede ayudar a mejorar el clima en la sala de clases y al mismo tiempo mejorar la calidad del aprendizaje, como consecuencia los alumnos pueden encontrar un cierto sentido de pertenencia entre sus compañeros y también puede ayudarlos a generar empatía por los demás.

La flexibilidad de los temas explorados en esta novela hace posible que este trabajo pueda ser implementado en clases ESL así como en EFL, y puede ser modificado para ajustarse a clases de literatura en español también.



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INTRODUCTION

When I was asked about the topic I would choose for my thesis I was definitely not certain of it. Which topic seemed more appropriate to do research on? What theme related to education in this country, Chile, would be worth talking about? In what way can I make a contribution, even if small, to help students and at the same time motivate teachers to use alternative tools to assist their students in need? I asked myself these questions for a long time; I spent days trying to come up with a proper idea. One day, while searching for inspiration, I came across a set of documents related to my *Práctica Profesional*¹ and suddenly the school I worked in and the experiences I lived there came back to my mind.

The name of the school I was assigned to will not be mentioned in this work, but I will point out that it is a public school located in Concepción, Chile, and that, according to the social worker I interviewed in the year 2014, it had approximately an 80% index of *Vulnerabilidad Escolar*². I was assigned to First, Second and Third Year classes at this High School and during the time I spent there, I was the head teacher of the First Year class.

To better understand what *Índice de Vulnerabilidad Escolar* is, I went on the internet to do research. I looked for the definition of *Vulnerabilidad* in the Mineduc³ website, but I could not find a satisfactory definition. However, Junaeb⁴ states that:

La condición de Vulnerabilidad Estudiantil, reconoce la interacción de una multiplicidad de factores de riesgo y protectores (como un hecho presente o potencial), a nivel individual (estudiante) y de contexto (familiar-escuela-barrio-comuna), que se presentan durante el desarrollo del ciclo educacional. (...) La condición de Vulnerabilidad Estudiantil determina una escala de mayor o menor riesgo asociado a la presencia de variables

¹Internship or Student Teaching

²IVE; At-Risk Students Index

³Ministerio de Educación/Ministry of Education

⁴Junta Nacional de Auxilio Escolar y Becas/ National Council of Educational Aid and Scholarships

culturales, económicas, psicológicas, ambientales y/o biológicas, que intervienen o determinan la finalización del ciclo educacional del o la estudiante. [The condition of Vulnerabilidad Estudiantil, recognizes the interaction of many factors of risk and protection, (like a present fact or a potential one), at an individual level (student) and of context (family-school-neighborhood-town) that are present during the development of the educational cycle. (...) The condition of Vulnerabilidad Estudiantil determines a scale of higher or lower risk associated to the presence of cultural, economic, psychological, environmental and/or biological variables that interfere or determine the ending of the educational cycle of a student.]⁵

Thus, *vulnerabilidad* makes reference to a set of variables that deeply influence the lives of students during their educational cycle, such as the ones mentioned above: cultural, economic, psychological, environmental and/or biological. These variables can impact the lives of students in such a way that the course of their education may be affected, and it can go as far as putting an end to their education. Junaeb classifies students into a degree of *vulnerabilidad*, because this classification makes it easier for the Government of Chile to identify, take action and support the students who are at risk.

Even though the Chilean Government might actually have active participation in trying to help students from less well-off backgrounds to continue their studies, after doing my Teaching Practice I realized that there is a lack of interest in the lives of the students themselves at school; I felt that the educational community; teachers, school principal, and UTP⁶, did not give as much support to the students as the one we are taught they should receive. It was not only the educational community which did not care much about students, many parents did not either, which was reflected in the low attendance of parents at parent-teacher meetings and in their lack of participation in parent organizations. In conclusion, while students may now have more economic resources to continue their studies, they

⁵ http://www.edinetwork.net/w8/z/017/index.asp?seccion1=contenido&id_web=256&sec=3&id_articulo

⁶Unidad Técnico Pedagógica/ Technical-Pedagogical Unit

lack the emotional support and motivation which are necessary in order to achieve a meaningful learning experience.

What experiences learned at school could be helpful for this thesis? My students were mostly high-risk teenagers who came from low social-economic backgrounds, some of them were very poor, many of them had emotional problems at home; some of them did not even have a home, and quite a few of them showed little or no interest in learning or in life at all. The whole time spent at school I had this feeling that students did not feel a sense of belonging, they did not feel that the school they were spending 8 hours a day in was a second home for them, or that it was a safe place even, they felt they did not belong with their classmates, in the classroom. I saw this reflected in different situations, but right now one particular situation comes to my mind. It was some days before September the 18th, National holiday, our Independence day, students had to work together and decorate the classroom but they did not do it, their classroom was the only one in the whole school which was not decorated, that same day they had to present a stand with typical food from Chile, the class was the only one which did not present anything. I realized at that time that students did not like to work together, they were not committed to being part of the class and their head teacher did not seem to provide the students with a proper environment for them to trust each other. Therefore, every time I wanted them to work together on a project they refused to do it; only when there was a grade involved would students consider working together, but that was not the idea I had in mind.

There was another situation that called my attention. There was a student who was expelled from school because he was being constantly disruptive. He had attention deficit disorder and he was very popular among the class for being funny and never paying attention to the class, but students did not seem to feel affected in any way by the fact that one of their own classmates was leaving the school. He was expelled but no one was concerned about that and when I asked them what they thought about it they openly told me that they did not care and that it was

better that he was gone. It is easy to notice that students were not very close or empathetic with their classmate.

In the classroom, students had little or no opportunity at all to talk about themselves and their problems, their daily life experiences. I believe that it is important to consider that these particular high-risk students may have no one to turn to for help and advice when they need it, no friends they completely trust, no family they can rely on, they may be in complete emotional abandonment. During the months I was in charge of the class, I looked for a way to become closer to them and I was very interested in knowing what situations they were going through. I remember some of them opened up to me and told me some of their own struggles, I remember students making comments about their lives once in a while, and I also remember the ones who did not say anything at all about themselves.

From my own experience in schools I have learned that when students misbehave in class, when they do not concentrate or learn in the same way or at the same speed that their other classmates are learning, it is probably because they are going through emotional trauma. There are many things that are not okay with their lives, and on many occasions, we teachers overlook some situations or do not take time to think about the reasons behind the behavior of the students. Many of them struggle with situations we cannot even imagine and it is our duty as teachers not just to educate students in subjects as important as Mathematics or Science, but also to provide a comfortable environment for them and to create instances for them to feel free to express themselves, to develop their potential and to grow as a person, be it through a good conversation, art, literature or in whatever way we can contribute to make students feel comfortable.

The investigation about the relationship teacher-student in schools with high risk students *Estudio sobre la percepción de la relación profesor-alumno entre estudiantes de colegios vulnerables de la region metropolitana*⁷, carried out by

⁷Study about the perception of the relationship teacher-student among students from high-risk schools of Santiago (Chile).

Sandra Cecilia Zepeda Aguirre, Chilean social worker and magister in education, reveals that the more vulnerable a school, the more complex and difficult the teacher-student relationship is. She concludes her investigation with these words:

Sin duda alguna, avanzar hacia la mejora del ambiente emocional del aula, abre un espacio importante para mejorar las condiciones en que son educados los estudiantes que viven en contextos de pobreza. [Without doubt, heading for the improvement of the emotional environment in the classroom, opens up an important space to improve the conditions in which students who live in a context of poverty are educated.]⁸

If the emotional environment is improved, if students notice that their teachers care, not just about grades, but care sincerely about them, if teachers involve themselves more in the lives of their students and if students begin to trust each other, I believe that they will not just feel more comfortable in class but their overall performance will improve.

After finishing my Teaching Practice, I came to the conclusion that at University of Concepción we are required to develop different competencies in order to excel and fulfill the role of an English teacher, nevertheless we are rarely taught how to approach, get to know and earn the trust of our students, the same happens with how to deal with difficult situations which we may encounter in the classroom.

After realizing the impact the students and the different problems and situations they were going through had on me, I knew that I wanted to focus on high-risk students. There has to be a way to help high-risk students to feel more comfortable at school and to help them to see a dim of light in a world that for them seems so dark.

Focusing on high-risk students was a start, but how can I help these students? How can they feel more at ease and enjoy spending time at school without having to worry about what they will do once the school hours are over? Then an idea

⁸ 2007, 13

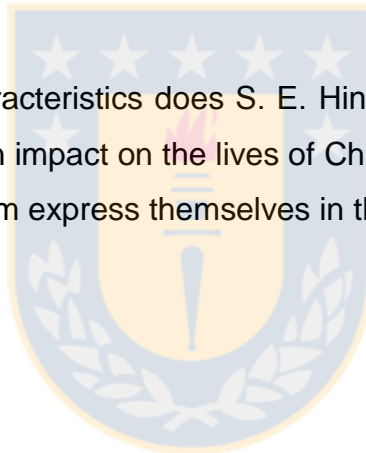
came to my mind, I have always loved reading, I have always loved books and I remember that students did not like reading at all during my school years, even students at the school I worked at did not like reading. To me, books have that special power to take you to a different place that you can make completely yours and feel comfortable in. Books, just like music, have that power to heal and make you feel like you are not alone in the world. I have also found that books are an important source for language teaching since they provide authentic material, be it English, Spanish or any other language. And so, I decided to find a way for students, especially the ones from vulnerable backgrounds, to use books as a tool to open up and talk about their own struggles and difficulties. Hopefully to help them find in books a way to channel their emotions, to learn without even realizing that they are learning, to help them find those talents they did not know they might have, to put it in other words, to find in books the magic that maybe life has taken away from each one of them.



Research Questions

Because students often feel unmotivated to read in the Chilean classroom, the research questions selected for the current work are the following:

1. Why is literature a good opportunity for students to develop skills in language learning as well as social skills and getting to know themselves?
2. How can high risk students be motivated to read and enjoy literature?
3. How can students be encouraged to analyze and interpret a young adult literary text?
4. What specific characteristics does S. E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders* have that could make an impact on the lives of Chilean students, motivate them to read, and help them express themselves in the target language?



Hypothesis

Through literature, we are able to express ourselves and understand different points of view and situations that people encounter in life.

Susan E. Hinton shows through *The Outsiders* that reading and writing can serve as a means to express inner thoughts and feelings, to express a point of view, to save people. Ponyboy, the Greaser who reads and enjoys sunsets, uses his school assignment to write his own story as a way to give a message to kids like him. He wanted to help them not to give up by letting them know that there is still good in this world. Ponyboy hoped for a change, for a better life; he wanted people to stop judging others by their appearance:

“I could picture hundreds and hundreds of boys living on the wrong sides of cities, boys with black eyes who jumped at their own shadows. Hundreds of boys who maybe watched sunsets and looked at stars and ached for something better. I could see boys going down under street lights because they were mean and tough and hated the world, and it was too late to tell them that there was still good in it, and they wouldn't believe you if you did. It was too vast a problem to be just a personal thing. There should be some help, someone should tell them before it was too late. Someone should tell their side of the story, and maybe people would understand then and wouldn't be so quick to judge a boy by the amount of hair oil he wore”⁹

Therefore, **the hypothesis** for this work will be “Literature can help students to improve their language learning process as well as helping them to express their emotions, inner thoughts and serve as a path to their own healing.”

⁹ The Outsiders, p.179

Objectives:

General Objectives

1. To make teachers and the educational community aware of the importance of the use of literature in the Chilean classroom, be it English or Spanish.
2. To use literature as a tool to help students in the journey of self-discovery and to serve as a channel to reflect on their own lives and actions.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To demonstrate that reading and writing, as well as speaking, can be used as tools to express oneself.
2. To show how literature can be used to promote oral and written communication in the classroom.
3. To create exercises, based on the book *The Outsiders*, to stimulate students, especially high-risk students, to get to know themselves better and to find in literature a method to channel their emotions and to understand that they are not alone with their problems.
4. To show how literature can promote student creativity.
5. To help in the promotion of a healthy atmosphere in the classroom by getting students to know and trust each other.

PART I: THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodology used in this work consisted in the compilation of information through bibliographical research in order to obtain essential background information about literature and its use and benefits in the curriculum. As soon as the background information was collected and analyzed, I proceeded to interview two poets from Concepción, Mr. Oscar Vidal and Miss Maria Teresa Torres, who have conducted literature workshops aimed at high risk children and adolescents; their experiences were analyzed, interpreted, contrasted and briefly used in this work. Finally microteaching activities were created in order to show how *The Outsiders* helps students to develop not only their language learning skills, but perhaps even more importantly, develop cognitive abilities while providing significant input for critical thinking which can help them to talk about and resolve both personal and social problems. Another benefit is that it enhances their creative process in helping them to face their own problems. Thus, the overall aim of this work is to demonstrate the impact that literature and especially a book like *The Outsiders* can have on students, and identify how it can help them in different areas of their lives.

1. Reading

1.1 The importance of reading for kids

There is no discussion when we say that reading is extremely important in our lives. The younger children start to read the better, but even before they are able to read on their own, it is of vital importance that parents and teachers read aloud to them from story and picture books in order for them to acquire a liking for books and motivate them. Children whose parents read to them develop a stronger and closer relationship with their mothers and fathers. Children exposed to reading before attending school are more likely to do well in all facets of formal education since they acquire basic speech skills, improving interpersonal communication and mastery of the language. They also develop more logical thinking skills, acclimate to new experiences, their concentration and discipline are enhanced and helping them to view books as a pleasure, not a dull activity.¹⁰

As we can see, reading has multiple benefits for the learning process. Now I will summarize in my own words the most important benefits of reading outlined in the website “Best-Books-for-Kids”¹¹:

- Reading helps kids develop empathy: If you identify or engage with a character in a book, you feel the emotions that particular character is feeling at a certain point and therefore you develop a sense of empathy. Nowadays children, teenagers and even adults are less and less empathetic with the rest and it is important that they get to understand the situations other people are involved in, traumas or the hardships instead of simply judging by what they see. They will be able to “put themselves in someone else’s shoes”.
- Reading teaches children about the world around them: Whether you are reading a book in an expensive hotel room with an amazing view of the

¹⁰ <http://www.earlymoments.com/promoting-literacy-and-a-love-of-reading/why-reading-to-children-is-important/>

¹¹ <http://www.best-books-for-kids.com/benefits-of-reading.html>

place or you are reading a book sitting on a couch in your own house, reading has the power to take you anywhere. Not only can you learn about people you have never met or people who lived in another time, you also have the opportunity to explore events that you have never experienced yourself. At the same time your imagination develops and you learn because you are reading about people, places, and things that are unknown to you.

- Reading relaxes the body and calms the mind: In the fast-paced world we are living nowadays it is hard to relax, especially for children and teenagers who are constantly bombarded with technology, TV programs and videogames. Reading can help you to ease your mind and find a comfortable silence and peace for a while.
- Reading exercises our brains: Studies have shown that by reading, the brain connections strengthen and build new connections. In the next section, we will explore this point further.

1.2 The importance reading has for the mind

Reading not only makes us feel more physically relaxed but it also exercises our brains. What happens to our minds when we read? Below I will list some of the things that happen to our mind and I will shortly explain them: ¹²

1. We make photos in our minds, even without being prompted: As mentioned above, reading develops our imagination. We are able to create worlds in our minds and create pictures of objects we are reading about without even knowing about them.
2. Spoken words can put your brain to work: As mentioned above, listening to a story has multiple benefits. When we listen to a story, our language

¹²<http://oedb.org/ilibrarian/your-brain-on-books-10-things-that-happen-to-our-minds-when-we-read/>

processing parts activate and certain experiential parts of our brains come alive, for example when we read about food or places we have visited.

3. Reading about an experience is almost the same as living it: When you connect to a story or piece of literature, you may have the sensation that you have lived it. Many studies have shown that the brain cannot easily distinguish between when we read about an experience and when we have experienced it in real life, because in both cases the same neurological regions are stimulated.
4. New languages can help your brain to “grow”: Researchers have found that when you read a book in a different language your brain grows in both the hippocampus and the cerebral cortex. The amount of growth depends on the amount of effort and learning experienced.
5. Reading changes your brain structure (in a good way): Poor readers may not truly understand the joy of literature, but they can be trained to become better readers. And in this training, their brains actually change. The volume of white matter in the language area of the brain increases.
6. Deep reading makes us more empathetic: As mentioned above, when we enjoy deep reading it allows us to feel what the characters in a story feel. And this in turn makes us more empathetic to people in real life, becoming more aware and alert to the lives of others.

1.2.1 A little about Neuroscience

Neuroscience¹³ has taken steps to investigate this. Through brain scans, it has been shown that stories stimulate the brain and can even change the way we act in life. It is widely known that the area of Broca and the area of Wernicke are involved in how our brains interpret written words, but recently scientists have realized that

¹³Neuroscience, also known as Neural Science, is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure and what it does. Neuroscientists focus on the brain and its impact on the behavior and cognitive functions. (<http://neuro.georgetown.edu/about-neuroscience>)

(...) narratives activate many other parts of our brains as well, suggesting why the experience of reading can feel so alive. Words like “lavender,” “cinnamon” and “soap,” for example, elicit a response not only from the language-processing areas of our brains, but also those devoted to dealing with smells.¹⁴

As a conclusion, it can be said that reading and being read to when you are a child are highly beneficial for the human being, not just because our vocabulary expands, but because our brain develops much further and in much more complex ways.

2. Literature

2.1 Why use literature in the L2 and EFL classrooms?

There are teachers who might feel reluctant to use literature in class, believing that literature is not a strong enough and efficient tool to use, or they may feel uneasy with literary analysis, perhaps because they find the topics which could come up in the discussion, like sex, child abuse, rape, abortion, drugs and violence, uncomfortable to talk about since they are quite sensitive and somehow controversial topics. But are not these the topics students are being bombarded with in the media every day? It is important to talk about them, no matter if you are an English teacher or a Spanish teacher, a Mathematics teacher or a Science teacher. There is an infinite variety of ways of using literature in EFL or ESL class and all of them can be beneficial for students, if they are used in an appropriate way.

¹⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-neuroscience-of-your-brain-on-fiction.html?_r=2

In their book *Literature in the Language Classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities*, Collie and Slater make reference to four main reasons why a language teacher decides to use literature in the classroom.¹⁵

Literature is valuable authentic material: Its main purpose it is not to teach a language; books are primarily written for readers, most likely native speakers, to enjoy a story. Literature is full of language used in real life contexts; therefore students are exposed to it and it is easier for them to learn from it.

Cultural enrichment: Literary texts increase the understanding of the way communication (verbal or non verbal) takes place in the country in which the language is spoken; they also lead us to a wider look on different cultures.

Language enrichment: Literature presents many features of written language, like syntax for example. As Collie and Slater say literature “*provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable*”. (p. 5) Therefore, by reading, learners are able to improve their competences and see how vast and rich the language they are trying to learn is. Being able to learn new words in context is always a great opportunity to enrich the language, especially learning words that were used many years ago and are still used today.

Personal Involvement: Just like writers develop affection for their books and characters, readers can develop a connection with a literary text, and feel close or touched by particular characters. It can be much more beneficial for the language learning process if learners start enjoying a story rather than focusing on understanding isolated words and lexical items.

¹⁵ 1987, 3-6

2.2 The role of the teacher as an incentive to reading

The world we live in nowadays is dominated by technology, therefore to incorporate books for students to read in the classroom has become a constant challenge.

Isabel Gallardo Álvarez, a Costa Rican teacher, affirms in her article *La lectura de textos literarios en el colegio ¿porqué no leen los estudiantes?*¹⁶ that teachers need to be mediators who motivate students to read, but motivating students to read at the present time is not as easy a task as it was a few years ago:

Esta es una generación a la que le ha tocado una época nueva, una época que hasta hace poco solo se soñaba en los libros de ciencia-ficción. Una de sus características es que no se rige por la palabra impresa, y por ende ni por los libros, ni por la escritura. (...) Los textos a los que se acercan son diferentes a los impresos, son textos virtuales, televisivos, musicales, son textos que requieren nuevas habilidades para interpretarlos y disfrutarlos. Habilidades que los jóvenes han estado desarrollando desde su nacimiento, cuando la televisión fue la primera en relatarles una historia. [This is a generation living in a new era, an era that until very recently was only dreamed of in science fiction books. One of its characteristics is that it is not ruled by the printed word, and therefore, neither books nor writing. (...) The texts that they approach are different than the printed ones, they are virtual, televised, musical texts, they are texts that require new skills to be interpreted and enjoyed. Skills that the youth has been developing from birth, when television was the first one to tell them a story.]¹⁷

The teacher is extremely important for students, especially for the ones who are in high-risk situations, because she or he has a big impact on them. Juan Emilio Adrián Serrano and Esperanza Rangel Gascó explain in their article *La transición*

¹⁶ Reading literary texts at school, why students are not reading?

¹⁷ 2006, 159

*adolescente y la educación*¹⁸ that adolescents develop authority models based on their teachers in a bigger way than they do with their own parents and that schools are the most important place where a part of the transition of students from adolescence to adulthood takes place:

Ello confiere a la institución educativa una responsabilidad objetiva sobre este proceso (no es una responsabilidad exclusiva, evidentemente, puesto que la familia y otras instancias sociales- medios de comunicación, el mundo laboral, etc., - comparten esta responsabilidad), en el entendimiento de que su influencia, buena o mala, será en cualquier caso, siempre significativa. [That gives to the educative institution an objective responsibility about this process (it is not an exclusive responsibility, evidently, because the family and other social instances- mass media, working world, etc.- share this responsibility), in the understanding that its influence, good or bad, will be in any instance, always significant.]¹⁹

Cozolino, psychologist and professor of psychology, writes in his book *The Social Neuroscience of Education* that:

Teachers don't burn out from working hard, but because they are frustrated, unappreciated, and hopeless about making a positive impact on their students. We often see that high-risk children and adolescents who eventually have successful lives describe with great affection the one or two people who took an interest in them – a mentor, a teacher, a ballet or karate instructor– someone who gave them time, believed in them, and encouraged their success. These reports should not be taken lightly; they reflect the biological reality that we learn better when we are face-to-face and heart-to-heart with someone who cares about us.²⁰

¹⁸The adolescent transition and education.

¹⁹ n/d, 11

²⁰ Cozolino, 50

The influence of any educative institution and educational environment as a whole will always be relevant and it will make an impact in the student's life. As quoted above "*we learn better when we are face-to-face and heart-to-heart with someone who cares about us*", because of this, it is important that teachers genuinely care about their students, in this way students will realize that they are not alone and that they have the power to overcome whatever is happening in their lives at the moment and, hopefully, whatever might come in the future.

2.2.1 Workshops

It would be a good idea to give workshops for teachers before they teach literature, especially using books that are going to be read with children at school. Teachers have to be able to analyze and understand a short story or novel in order to carry out the task of presenting it before a class and creating successful lesson plans. A lesson plan needs to include pre-reading exercises, in-class group reading discussions and analysis and post reading activities. If we think of *The Outsiders*, it demands a kind of sensibility and empathy on the part of the teacher in order to get the students involved. It is up to the teacher to stimulate students to be able to better engage and express themselves while reading and analyzing the book and how to do that can be the topic of workshops.

Poet, teacher and literature specialist María Teresa Torres, who works at SENAME²¹ with high-risk children and who as a writer has conducted workshops for children, believes that her understanding of literature as well as having a profound connection with writing has given her the possibility to help children and teenagers in a more profound way. When interviewed, she told me that it would be ideal to have Ley SEP²² pay for more writers and poets like her to do workshops at schools and she adds and remarks that there is no need for having only Spanish teachers (Lenguaje y Comunicación) teaching literature. She believes that all

²¹Servicio Nacional de Menores –National Service of Minors.

²²La Subvención Escolar Preferencial (SEP) es una ley que entrega recursos del Estado para mejorar la equidad y calidad educativa de los establecimientos educacionales subvencionados de nuestro país. (<https://www.ayudameduc.cl/ficha/antecedentes-generales-sep-10>)

teachers should have a basic training in literature and use literary texts in the classroom. She goes farther and proposes the idea that Universities could offer Mentions in Literature therefore future teachers will be better prepared to teach books at school.

2.3 What type of literature is more suitable to use in the classroom?

According to Collie and Slater, there are different factors that need to be taken into account when choosing a suitable piece of literature to teach students, but “*the criteria of suitability clearly depend ultimately on each particular group of students, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level.*”²³

The description above fits perfectly what *The Outsiders* is, a true-to-life novel. The characters are real, there are no heroes, no villains, just teenagers who are exposed to difficult situations and who make good choices and bad ones. In *The Outsiders* there is no magic formula to undo or easily repair the mistakes that have been made; characters either learn from them or end up consumed by them.

It will always be difficult to find that one perfect book that everyone will like, especially in the Chilean classroom. Teachers should be concerned about choosing literary works that will help students in their process of personal growth. I personally believe that the curriculum needs to be more flexible, including more books that would appeal to the majority of the students instead of imposing a title that probably nobody but the teacher will like.

Isabel Gallardo Álvarez²⁴ believes that by imposing literary texts on students what we actually do is to drive them away from books instead of encouraging them to read:

²³ 1987, 6

²⁴ La lectura de textos literarios en el colegio ¿porqué no leen los estudiantes?

La imposición de un libro de literatura para leer, en un cierto tiempo, los aleja aún más del acto de la lectura y de descubrir el placer que esta puede darles. Además, no solo se les obliga a leer determinados textos, sino que encima se les amenaza con pruebas de comprobación de lectura, a veces llenas de “retorcidas preguntas”, que les hacen afirmarse aún más en su disgusto por el texto. [The imposition of a book to read, in a certain time, keeps them (students) even more apart from the act of reading and from discovering the pleasure that it can bring to them. Besides, not only are they forced to read certain texts, but what is more important, they are threatened with reading comprehension tests, sometimes full of “twisted questions”, which make them reaffirm their dislike for the text.]²⁵

Having students choose the books they want to read at school would be an amazing opportunity for them to enjoy literature. Questionnaires and interviews can be carried out in order for students to choose or suggest their preferences.

Collie and Slater consider that a very important factor to take into account when it comes to choosing books is personal involvement. If students feel motivated, if they feel a connection between the book and their own experiences, if the characters seem real enough to them and if they enjoy reading it, then it is *“more likely to have a lasting and beneficial effect upon the learners’ linguistic and cultural knowledge.”*²⁶

Isabel Gallardo Álvarez in the same article²⁷ makes reference to this and describes how students feel about it:

Por otra parte, como argumentan los estudiantes en muchos momentos, los acontecimientos ahí descritos se alejan de su realidad, intereses y aspiraciones; no les importa lo que ahí se dice, el argumento y los

²⁵ 2006, 161

²⁶ 1987, 6

²⁷ La lectura de textos literarios en el colegio ¿porqué no leen los estudiantes?

personajes no llegan a atraparlos pues se encuentran lejos de su circunstancias y además, carecen de los conocimientos previos que los ayuden a comprenderlos, disfrutarlos y comentarlos. [On the other hand, as students argue on many occasions, the events described there (in books) are very far from their reality, interests and aspirations; they do not care about what is written there, the plot and characters do not engage them because they are far from their own circumstances and besides, they lack the previous knowledge that can help them understand them, enjoy them and comment about them.]²⁸

We can conclude that it is very important that the students create a bond with the book, that they feel comfortable with it and that they feel attracted by the story they are going to read, because even though teachers are the ones who are going to present it to the class and teach it, the students are the ones who are going to have to read it, analyze it and work with it. But it is also important to consider other factors for a book to be suitable, such as the language level of students, their backgrounds and their motivations.

3. Bibliotherapy

3.1 What is bibliotherapy?

“Not until adolescence does the individual develop the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity”.²⁹

Though reading may be a pleasure for many people, a pastime for others and compulsory for those attending school, there is no doubt that in all cases reading can be extremely productive; it not only keeps people entertained, but it is also a

²⁸ 2006, 163

²⁹ Erikson, 91 (Developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst)

source of knowledge and understanding, thus there will always be benefits associated to reading. Readers experiment different kinds of sensations when they read, like remembering past experiences for example, it can also help people channel their inner emotions and reach understanding of their own problems, allowing them to grow. People are able to reflect, question and judge situations and characters as they get to know their story. I believe a book can become a bridge leading a person to their own healing.

Bibliotherapy, as the name suggests, is the use of books for healing, or the healing through books. The term comes from the Greek words *biblion*, which means books and *therapeia* which means therapy, healing. The objective of practicing bibliotherapy is to produce a change in the attitude or behavior of the reader, and to improve their problem-solving skills by showing them that they are not alone with their problems. Ultimately readers will end up gaining new insights and ideas for their own lives.

About bibliotherapy Valeria Tapia writes in her article *(Don't!) Think Pig": Jacqueline Wilson's Novel Girls Under Pressure as Bibliotherapy for Eating Disorders* that:

The idea is that bibliotherapy not only assumes that the reader is an active agent who brings his/her own experiences into the reading to recreate stories, but the book also performs a therapeutic action that can affect or modify the perspective or attitude of the reader towards a circumstance of life.³⁰

Reading can move people, not just physically speaking, but mentally too. A book can lead people to ask questions, to agree or disagree with certain statements; it can help change the way students see a class, they can become active learners and be more participative in class, it can also become a key point in making a

³⁰ 2015, 4

change in their attitudes and in the way they view life itself. A good book will ultimately help a teacher to understand why a student is behaving in certain way for example.

3.2. The three stages in the biblio-therapeutic process

Readers are believed to go through three crucial stages³¹ in the bibliotherapeutic process: *Identification*, which is when the reader identifies with a real or fictional character and the events narrated in the story; sometimes it is beneficial to have characters of similar age that are facing similar stories to the reader. *Catharsis* is when the reader becomes emotionally involved with the characters and the story, and is able to let his/her emotions flow in a safe place, and finally *Insight*. In this last stage the reader becomes aware that his/her problems might also be addressed or solved and he/she is able to identify possible solutions to their own problems as well as the problems of the characters.

3.2.1 How does the reader go through these 3 stages with the novel *The Outsiders*?

The first stage, *identification* is when the readers identify themselves with a character of the novel, who in this case can be any character from *The Outsiders*, but because they are all seen through the eyes of Ponyboy, readers will naturally tend to identify themselves with him and his conflicts. There are many events the reader may identified with: the way in which Ponyboy and most of the gang lives, parentless or with very irresponsible parents who do not truly care about them; crucial decisions the main character and his friends have to make; when Ponyboy and Johnny have to escape to the countryside being blamed for something that was not really their fault, and so on. In addition, the characters from *The Outsiders*

³¹ <http://www.behavioradvisor.com/Biblio.html>

are between the ages of 14 and 20 years old, which makes it easier for teenager students to identify with. Then we have the second stage, *catharsis*. The reader gets emotionally involved with the struggles of Ponyboy and his friends and catharsis may be reached when Johnny risks his life to save the kids from the fire, when Johnny ultimately dies, or when Ponyboy is finally acquitted by the judge. *Insight* is reached when Ponyboy decides to write about his experiences to help others who are having a difficult time just like him.

In the book *Treating Child and Adolescent Aggression Through Bibliotherapy*, Shechtman mentions and explains these three stages:

When people read or listen to a story or poem or watch a movie in which human beings display their vulnerability, weaknesses, and strengths, they tend to identify with the characters' experiences, suffering, and pain, as well as their happiness. Through this identification process, the individual shares feelings and conflicts with the characters and experiences catharsis. These stories enhance understanding of the human situation and increase empathy for the suffering of others, which eventually may help individuals understand themselves better.³²

3.3 Benefits of bibliotherapy

Using bibliotherapy can help point out behaviors, misunderstood feelings or ways to solve issues or problems of growing up in or out a family setting, this is what happens to the characters in *The Outsiders*, thus it makes it easier for students to relate and talk more freely about it.

Bibliotherapy can also contribute in the process of emotional healing. Oscar Vidal, psychologist and poet of Concepción, Chile, believes that books, poetry, and art in general, give people a different perspective that does not exist in scientific theory or in academic processes. He does not believe that literature can heal people on

³² Shechtman, 27

its own though “*porque es una herramienta, no es un proceso más complejo*” [Because (literature) is a tool, not a more complex process]. In the same way he does not believe workshops or art have that much power on their own either, he does believe instead that it is the relationship a person can establish with literature or art in general that can be healing. This relationship based on empathy and feeling identified with a character, setting or story makes the reader see himself or herself from a different perspective and by realizing that characters in the book can recover themselves from different situations can contribute to the emotional healing of readers. Kids feel free to express their emotions under safe situations and books are a perfect example of a safe place for them.

Bibliotherapy helps create a unique kind of relationship between the reader and the book, because of this; it is a valuable tool not only for students, but for teachers too. It is through reading about stories similar to their lives that students, especially high-risk students can be able to find a way to talk about themselves and feel that they are not alone; through guided discussions they may be able to verbalize what is on their minds. If a book shows real life situations the students themselves are going through, if it brings them model figures they can identify with, it can have such a big impact on them that it can help them make a permanent change in their lives.

A book like *The Outsiders*, which is based on real people, shows students new and better ways to solve different problems, by being able to tell their classmates what their visions in life are, a book that can lead students to face themselves and overcome their fears. The classroom can become an entirely different place, aggressive conducts inside the classroom may reduce significantly and the relationship among the students and teacher can improve. Why? Because by reading certain books students can be able to reflect upon themselves and find that in the same way a character, such as Ponyboy for example, succeeds despite how difficult his life is and despite all the problems he has gone through, they too can break the cycle and rise above all the problems they are going through.

Even doctors nowadays are starting to use bibliotherapy with their patients, thus why can we not take more advantage of books and use bibliotherapy in the classroom to benefit students going through the transition to adolescence or the hardships of life?

3.3.1 Why it will help high-risk students?

The study *Socioeconomic school segregation in a market-oriented educational system. The case of Chile* by Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Cristian Bellei and Danae de los Ríos mentions that:

Disadvantaged students attending more segregated schools tend to have higher dropout rates and lower levels of academic achievement; additionally, researchers have also identified negative consequences of school segregation on students' risk behaviors and psychosocial aspects linked to school success (e.g. motivation) among disadvantaged students.³³

That is why it is important to center our work on high-risk students, because they are the ones who most often have to drop out of school and the ones who most easily lose motivation. Literature may not help with the segregation that is unfortunately common in Chilean schools, but it may help students to find their motivation again, reading can turn into a therapy for them. They may find the support that they cannot find anywhere else except in books. I truly believe that literature can make a significant change in the lives of the students.

Aninda Pradita Haryawan quotes Nilsen & Donelson in her article *Shrinking Violet: Media Role in Identity Construction in Stephen Chbosky's The Perks Of Being A Wallflower*.

³³ 2013, 2

“Books are believed as one type of media that can impact children and adolescents in their searching of their selves and [books are] often considered as an escape to young adults from their complicated life to find their own freedom and opportunity”.³⁴

It is because of the impact that books provoke on their readers that they become such precious material to work with. Adolescents and students in general find a way to get away from the problems and difficulties that they are facing. Some of them turn to drugs and alcohol; would it not be better if adolescents could turn to something much healthier and helpful such as literature? Thus, what can be done for high-risk students who are going through difficulties in their lives and do not feel motivated to learn? But most importantly, how can we get them to read literature? We need students to get engaged with the story; we need them to feel identified with the characters, the context, the situations that are happening, we need something that can connect with them in such a way that they feel encouraged to talk about their problems without feeling ashamed or that they are being forced to talk; this is exactly what *The Outsiders* has to offer.

Since high-risk students usually have no space to talk about their problems and share experiences with each other even though they may have be going through the same difficulties, literature can provide teachers and students with a context to talk about problems high-risk students might be dealing with or situations they might be exposed to. What is being narrated in *The Outsiders* is the story of somebody else and because of that it makes it easier for students to openly comment on it, compare it to their own struggles and share their experiences with the class. It helps students to realize that they, just like the writers they have been reading, have stories to tell and people who want to listen. And even though some students cannot open up and talk about themselves easily, they can still talk about Ponyboy, Johnny or any other character, and reveal some of their personal

³⁴ Nilsen & Donelson, 2011, cited by Aninda Pradita Haryawan (p.128)

struggles while attributing these attitudes and emotions to the characters in the novel.

Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that socio-economic school segregation is present in Chile. In the study mentioned before³⁵ Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Cristian Bellei and Danae de los Ríos quote García-Huidobro and Bellei to exemplify segregation:

While low-SES³⁶ students tend to attend public schools, middle-SES students tend to attend voucher private schools, and high-SES students tend to attend non-subsidized private schools.³⁷

Thus, we teachers are likely to find students from low socio-economical backgrounds attending public schools and from high socio-economical backgrounds attending private schools; *The Outsiders* is not only an incredible book to be taught in schools with high-risk students, it is also a great opportunity for students from private Chilean schools to explore in more depth other realities they have little or no contact with. Maybe the students can see themselves mirrored in a character, be it a Socs or a Greaser. The book can help kids from high socio-economical backgrounds to develop empathy with other kids and for a reality that they see very distant, and therefore, may not understand. Hopefully books like *The Outsiders* can assist students to free their minds and realize that class discrimination is wrong, that prejudices have to stop, that conflicts and acts of violence or hatred toward people who are different from us needs to end, Maybe a book like *The Outsiders* can help to end the stereotype in Chile that people from a lower social class (socioeconomic level) are uneducated or criminals.

Fortunately through literature people, and especially adolescents, can be exposed to the different and real aspects of life. Is it relevant for students to read about rich and poor teenager gangs who cause trouble everywhere they go and who fight

³⁵ Socioeconomic school segregation in a market-oriented educational system

³⁶ Social Economic Status

³⁷ García-Huidobro and Bellei 2003; González, Mizala, and Romaguera 2004; Elacqua 2007 cited by Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Cristian Bellei and Danae de los Ríos

each other constantly? I believe that it is not a matter of whether it is relevant or not, but whether the situations shown in the book are real and happen in our society or not. If they do happen then our students should have the right to know about them, to comment on them and to form their own opinions about them.



PART II: SUSAN HINTON AND THE OUTSIDERS

1. About the author: The life and work of Susan E. Hinton



(Susan E. Hinton. Picture taken from her website³⁸)

³⁸ <http://www.sehinton.com>

1.1 Susan Hinton: Life

Susan Eloise Hinton, most known as S. E. Hinton, was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her passion for writing started when she was very young, leading her to write her most famous novel, *The Outsiders*, when she was still at Will Rogers High School. *The Outsiders* was her third novel, nevertheless it was the first to be published in 1967, and is the one that made her known worldwide.³⁹

Her publisher, Viking Press, suggested using her initials in print, instead of her full name, afraid that both readers and male critics would dismiss the novel because its author was female. She continued writing and publishing under the name S. E. Hinton, not only because it was the name that had made her famous, but also because it allowed her to keep her private life apart from her public one.

Susan E. Hinton entered University of Tulsa, where she earned a B.S. in Education. In 1988 she was awarded with the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the American YA librarians for her importance in the development of young adult fiction. In 1998 she was inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame at the Oklahoma Center for Poets and Writers of Oklahoma State University, Tulsa. Susan Hinton is currently living with her husband and son in Tulsa, Oklahoma, enjoying her low profile life.⁴⁰

³⁹<http://www.penguin.com/author/s-e-hinton/232789>

⁴⁰<http://www.sehinton.com/bio.html#>

1.2 Susan E. Hinton and *The Outsiders*

The Outsiders is considered by many people to be one of the first Young Adult fiction books (YA).⁴¹ Hinton said she started writing the novel because she wanted to read something that could reflect the life of teenagers in a more realistic way, but there were no books addressing these issues at that time. She decided to start writing *The Outsiders* in order to read it herself:

I wanted to read something that dealt with teen life as I saw it. There wasn't anything realistic for teenagers to read back then; I was through with the horse books, not ready for a lot of adult books, couldn't stand the "Mary Sue Goes to the Prom" books, so one of the main reasons why I wrote it was to read it."⁴²

The Outsiders was inspired by what Susan E. Hinton witnessed herself during her school years and the experiences of the people around her and by the beating up of one of her friends when he was walking home by a group of boys who did not like the way he dressed. The topic of social class conflict was chosen because it was a sensitive theme that made her angry when she was studying at Will Rogers High; she was upset by the social situation in her high school where everyone had set groups that excluded others, the students did not like to make friends outside of their group. She herself stated "*I was angry about the social divisions in my very large high school*",⁴³ thus she decided to address the issue and make it the central topic of the novel.

The two gangs in *The Outsiders*, Greasers and Socs, were inspired by rival gangs at her high school. In an interview⁴⁴ given to the *New York Times* it is mentioned that in Will Rogers High School students were divided into two groups. One of these groups was the Greasers, who came from hardworking families, and the

⁴¹ <http://sideofwonder.wordpress.com/2013/10/16/how-the-outsiders-changed-young-adult-fiction/>

⁴² <http://blog.nathanbransford.com/2009/05/interview-with-se-hinton.html>

⁴³ <http://sehinton.com/misc/faq.html>

⁴⁴ An Outsider, Out of the Shadows. NY Times

other the Socs, who were rich kids that were always driving expensive Mustang cars and whose families benefited from the oil money of Tulsa.

She herself addresses this topic in the interview *Speaking with S. E. Hinton*⁴⁵ stating that:

Ponyboy's gang was inspired by a true-life gang, the members of which were very dear to me. (...) A lot of Ponyboy's thoughts are my thoughts. He's probably the closest I've come to putting myself into a character. He has a lot of freedom, true-blue friends, people he loves and who love him; the things that are important to him are the things that are important to me. I think Ponyboy and Soda and Darry come out better than the rest of them because they have their love for one another.

2. *The Outsiders* in the classroom

2.1 Why *The Outsiders* is suitable to use in the classroom?

The Outsiders, just as any other literary work, is *valuable authentic material* because the main purpose of the book is not to teach something to somebody, at least not in an educational level. If we think about it, it is easy to notice that the novel is full of real life language used by the youth at the time it was written, beginning with the word “greasers” and other words like “to jump somebody” or “to get mugged” just to mention a few. Some people may argue that the street slang used in the book might not be the most fitting language to be taught in class, or the most appropriate for teaching purposes, but I believe that the language used by Susan E. Hinton in the novel was very typical of any teenager during the time it was written, just like today Chilean teenagers use certain slang words and this

⁴⁵ Interview included in the book *The Outsiders* (Edition 2008)

makes the book very authentic. The language used in the novel adds realism to the story and characters and allows teenage readers to identify with the characters, and surprisingly enough, the “slang” in *The Outsiders* is a sort of “standard” slang that has survived over the years and that is still used in English today! It doesn’t seem at all outdated.

The Outsiders also provides the reader with *cultural enrichment*. The story takes place in the 60’s, therefore we are able to see what life was like during those times, how teenagers talked, acted and related to each other. They are not children anymore, but they are not yet adults, they are seeking an identity, looking for their individuality, but, contradictorily, they seem to be more concerned about what others think about them and want to belong to a group who understands them and shares the same experiences they are going through. Erik Erikson⁴⁶ refers to this period when he says adolescents

“are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the ideal prototypes of the day”.⁴⁷

Teenagers are still striving to survive in a world that everyday seems more unknown and cruel to them, which is exactly what Ponyboy and his friends are trying to do in *The Outsiders*. They deal with the abandonment and the lack of concern of their parents; they are criminalized, discriminated against, marginalized, and in spite of everything we find humanity in these characters. Ponyboy and the rest of the gang are seen as bad people in the eyes of the upper class Socs, they are generally feared and hated, but maybe their way of dressing and their sometimes rude and tough ways are their method of asking for help, asking for someone to pay attention and understand them. Maybe it has nothing to do with

⁴⁶ Developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory on psychosocial development of human beings.

⁴⁷ Erikson, 128

that and it is simply their way to tell the world that they do not agree with the expectations society has for them, they do not agree with discrimination and set rules; as readers we get to see that they have a lot of positive qualities to offer. These Greasers are kids capable of love in a place where hate is around the corner; they keep a strong relationship, share a system of values and respect one another. The bond that Greasers have created among themselves make students realize that love, friends and support can be found even in the darkest places and that everlasting friendships are much more precious than money.

In the novel, it is the Socs that always start the fights and violence, starting from the very beginning of the story, when Ponyboy is attacked by Bob and his crew and then later on when Ponyboy and Johnny are at the fountain and the same Socs attack them again. The book shows that the rich kids, the Socs, are even more violent than the Greasers, who are the ones viewed as the real violent gang by everyone. Here we have a clear example of *symbolic* violence that can lead to an escalation in physical violence. This shows us that discrimination and marginalization based on socio-economic levels and racial issues are symbolically violent acts even when they are not necessarily physical. This kind of symbolic violence often leads to physical violence as a reaction.

3. The novel

3.1 *The Outsiders*: Introduction

Despite the decade in which it was written, *The Outsiders* has become a story that people still come to, because it not only portrays the reality of youth in the United States during the sixties, but it can also be associated to the problems many teenagers are facing nowadays in different countries around the world, including Chile. Being a novel inspired by real people gives the story and characters a unique realism which makes the situations and conflicts more true to life and

sincere to the reader, allowing them to identify at different levels and times with them.

It is mentioned in the article, "*The Outsiders is Still 'In'*" that "*It seems students find this book a validation of what they see in their own lives and appreciate reading about the struggle for individual identity while still wanting to belong to a group.*"⁴⁸

The topics explored in the story also encourage students nowadays to identify with the text; themes such as gang rivalry, identity, social class conflicts, family relationships, brotherhood, friendship, and coming of age are all universal and are still relevant in our time and to our lives.

3.2 *The Outsiders*: A literary analysis

*"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..."*⁴⁹ This is how Ponyboy Curtis, the main character from *The Outsiders*, begins and also ends the story. Ponyboy, a fourteen year old teenager, narrates the story; therefore, it is from his perspective and through his eyes that the events are seen.

The novel introduces us to the world of two rival gangs living in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the sixties: the "Greasers" and the "Socs". Ponyboy, his brothers Darrel (Darry) and Sodapop and friends Steve Randle, Two-Bit Mathews, Dallas (Dally) Winston, and Johnny Cade are Greasers, but what does it mean to be a Greaser? "*We're poorer than the Socs and the middle class. I reckon we're wilder, too*"⁵⁰ says Ponyboy. Greasers are "*almost like hoods*",⁵¹ they live on the bad side of town and are underprivileged kids who belong to the lowest social class. They are easy to recognize on the streets because of the way they look and dress: long hair, blue

⁴⁸The Outsiders is still "In": Why This Old Novel Is So Popular with Teens, and Some Activities Students Enjoy

⁴⁹ The Outsiders p.1

⁵⁰ The Outsiders p. 3

⁵¹ The Outsiders p. 3

jeans, ragged t-shirts, tennis shoes or boots, and leather jackets. But the name Greaser comes from the fact that they wore hair oil, which gave them the aspect of having greasy hair.

On the other hand, the Socs (abbreviation for Socials) are kids from wealthy families who live on the West Side of town. They drive expensive Mustangs and Corvairs, they wear madras shirts, dress nicely and attend social clubs and fancy parties. Most of them look at Greasers like they were dirt. According to Ponyboy, one of the favorite past times of Socs is picking on Greasers, they are constantly looking for trouble.

It is mentioned in the book that although there were many gangs around, like the River Kings and the Tiber Street Tigers, Greasers never fought with any of them, even if Dally, a Greaser, could, he never did because he "*had no specific thing to hate.*" He simply hated Socs and Ponyboy implies that the fact that "*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*"⁵² is probably what made Dally so angry and the reason he and the gang hated Socs. What makes Socs different from the other gangs is that they are from a higher social class while all the other gangs are from poor neighborhoods.

Although Ponyboy is a Greaser, Susan E. Hinton develops the character carefully, giving him a sensibility that is unlike the rest of his friends and the gang itself. He is the only one attending school, he dreams, he likes deep conversations, he enjoys watching sunsets and arts, he likes reading, watching movies and even painting. Probably what drives the reader to empathize with him is the fact that he himself was an outsider in his own gang of outsiders.

The book begins with Ponyboy, who after watching a movie starring Paul Newman, starts to walk home. He is the first person narrator. As he walks, he meditates on how he prefers to go to the movies by himself so he can concentrate on the movies. His daydreaming is interrupted as he becomes aware that it is dangerous

⁵² The Outsiders, p. 11

to walk alone in the streets because of the Socs, who are always out looking for trouble. His fears turn to reality when Socs in a Corvair appear from nowhere and attack him, he is lucky this time because the rest of the Greaser gang arrives in time to save him. It is important to point out that throughout the whole book Ponyboy always implies that it is the Socs who start the violence, looking for them in order to hurt them. Greasers do not initiate the violence in the book, which contrasts with the view people in general had regarding Greasers, they were supposed to be the violent and uneducated ones. There is some kind of symbolic violence implied in the novel as we can see: it is always the middle and upper classes who initiate violence, if not literal violence as in the novel, then symbolic violence: i.e., class discrimination, bullying and exclusion. At the beginning of the novel Ponyboy mentions that "*Greasers can't walk alone too much or they'll get jumped, or someone will come and scream "Greaser!" at them.*"⁵³ He also mentions that when Johnny was sixteen years old, four Socs beat him without any apparent reason and that after that incident he became "*scared of his own shadow*".⁵⁴

One day Ponyboy, Johnny and Dally go to the movies. There they meet Sherri "Cherry" Valance and her friend Marcia. Meeting Cherry Valance is a very important moment in the life of Ponyboy because it is Cherry, a Soc girl, who makes Ponyboy aware that not everything is perfect in the lives of Socs kids. Cherry is the first Soc he can actually have a conversation with, he can talk about deep topics, like life, sunsets and books with her. The fact that they both watch sunsets and read books serves as symbol, showing how sensitive they both are. Ponyboy is different than his friends, they do not like reading or watching sunsets, but Cherry Valance does and it is at this point where Ponyboy for the first time realizes that Socs and Greasers have much more in common than he thought they would and that "*things are rough all over*".⁵⁵

Ponyboy always thought the only worries Socs would have were regarding buying expensive cars, having girls and good grades but he comes to the conclusion that

⁵³ The Outsiders p.2

⁵⁴ The Outsiders, p.4

⁵⁵ The Outsiders, p.35

things are much more complex than that, stating "*I know better now.*"⁵⁶ We should also note that this is probably the first time that he has actually talked in some depth with a girl and that she is a Socs girl and not a Greaser girl. Later we will discuss the issue of gender and the fact that Greaser girls do not appear in the book.

Things get out of control when Socs arrive to drive their girlfriends, Cherry and Marcia, home and they find them with Greaser boys. After driving their girls home, the same Socs boys come back looking for them and attack them. Bob, one of the Socs, is accidentally killed by Johnny that night while he was trying to save Ponyboy from being drowned in a fountain. It is worthwhile to mention that Ponyboy loses consciousness at the height of the struggle, only waking up when it is all over and Bob is already dead. This is the first of many episodes when he loses consciousness in the middle of a violent scene, exempting him from any violent behavior, which again remarks how different Ponyboy is from his tough friend and the level of sensitivity he possesses, to the point of fainting when he witnesses extreme violence. In the book, Greasers are seen as outsiders, but Ponyboy himself is an outsider in his own gang, which seems pretty fascinating and conflicting at the same time and engages the reader even more.

Thinking no one will believe that they acted in self defense, since they are always looked down on and will never win against Socs, Johnny and Ponyboy, following their friend Dally's advice, decide to leave town for a while and travel to Windrixville to hide in an old abandoned church. Dally, a serious juvenile delinquent who has spent time in jail, gives them a gun and some money and they leave on a train to the countryside.

After arriving to the abandoned church on a hill and far from any houses, Johnny and Ponyboy get to know each other on a different and more personal level. Ponyboy comes to the realization that even though Johnny got bad grades at school and was not considered intelligent, he was only the second person in this life (after Cherry) that he could have deep conversations with. At this point we are

⁵⁶ The Outsiders, p.36

able to understand that Johnny is a sensitive boy too. They read several books to pass the time, one of them *Gone with the Wind*.

After both boys contemplate the dawn, Ponyboy says he wishes he had some paint to make a picture with while the sight is still fresh in his mind. Then Johnny, referring to the dawn, mentions that it is "*Too bad it couldn't stay like that all the time*". This makes Ponyboy remember a poem he once read: *Nothing gold can stay* by Robert Frost. Ponyboy feels a bit bothered that he was trying to find the meaning the poet had in mind, but it eluded him. The poem had stayed in his mind because he "*never quite got what he meant by it*".⁵⁷ As we will discuss later, the poem plays a major part in the whole story, having a big impact in the lives of Ponyboy and Johnny.

Dally later visits Ponyboy and Johnny in the old church, they leave for some hours and come back to find the church on fire. Kids who had apparently been playing with matches inside the church are missing and Johnny does not hesitate to jump into the burning building in order to save them. During the rescue he is seriously wounded and sent to the hospital by ambulance. His wounds are life threatening and eventually lead to his death. A teacher of the kids who Johnny saved, Jerry Wood, pronounces him a hero and he is the first person not to discriminate against Johnny for being a Greaser. This man is able to look beyond the gang associations, the clothes and the poverty and see the human, individual, true side of Johnny. Johnny has finally redeemed himself by having given up his own life to save innocent children.

The next part of the book describes the trial in which the deceased Johnny and Ponyboy are accused of killing the Soc Bob. In the days leading up to the trial Ponyboy falls into a depression and becomes delirious, he blames himself for the death of Bob and is willing to plead guilty in court. He has two meaningful conversations in this section: one with Randy, the best friend of dead Bob, and one with Cherry. Randy realizes that Ponyboy is also a human being, not just a gang member from a rival gang, this is the first time a Soc, besides Cherry,

⁵⁷ The Outsiders, p 78

acknowledges him as more than just a Greaser. The Socs help Ponyboy and charges are dropped.

At this point we have realized the importance of literature as a means to understand oneself. Ponyboy understands and comes to terms with everything that has happened to him through writing. He comes to the realization that things are bigger than him, it is not only about him anymore, it is about something big and he feels the urge to explain it to other kids like him. Ponyboy suffers a massive depression before the trial, his grades in school drop, he loses interest in everything, he feels empty inside, but somehow after the trial Ponyboy realizes that life goes on despite the difficulties and that he owes his life to Johnny and he cannot let him down. The death of Johnny becomes then a symbol, somehow it needed to happen to trigger the awakening in Ponyboy. It is only after Johnny dies that Ponyboy wakes up to the world and realizes that he could make an impact on people, that he could inspire and change the lives of many kids like him.

By the end we realize that the novel we have just read is a school assignment given to Ponyboy by his English teacher due to the drop in his marks. He was told to write about his own experiences and ideas in order not to fail the semester. Ponyboy saw in this assignment an opportunity to express all his feelings, to tell his story and the story of his friends in order that kids who were in similar situations could find a way to cope and find hope.

But why does Ponyboy write about what happened to him? After reading the letter Johnny left for him, Ponyboy is able to see the greater picture; he came to understand that things are bigger than him and his struggles. He thought of all the kids who were just like him, kids born in hostile places; scared kids who maybe enjoyed watching sunsets and stars and who craved for something better. What does he hope to achieve with the book? He believed that someone should help these kids, inspire them before it was too late. Their stories needed to be known and people who discriminated against them or pointed a finger at them could finally understand their situations and would stop judging them as easily for the way they dressed. He wanted to be a voice for all the kids who did not have one, the ones

who were misinterpreted by society and judged. That is how literature becomes a major symbol in the story. Ponyboy has a nervous breakdown and is only really able to recover by writing the story of Johnny and the gang. Writing for him becomes therapy, he writes in order to understand and heal his own wounds, but also to provide a text that other teenagers like him can read, feel identified with and use as a reminder that they are not alone.

Literature plays a major role in the story because the power of storytelling can resolve both personal and social issues. Reading the novel *Gone with the Wind* and the poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay* serves Ponyboy and Johnny to accept themselves and become empowered. The book *Gone with the Wind* helped to create a deeper bond between Ponyboy and his friend Johnny. They were the most sensitive kids and were able to understand and appreciate things that the other members of the gang will never have. *Nothing Gold Can Stay* helped Johnny to realize that looking at sunsets and reading and appreciating the beauty of simple things is a good way to be, maybe he also wanted to start appreciating the simple things life has to offer. When Johnny was dying he remembers the poem by Robert Frost and tells Ponyboy to “Stay gold”⁵⁸ Ponyboy did not understand at first what his friend meant, but later he receives a letter that Johnny wrote him in the hospital before dying, the letter was inside the book *Gone with the Wind* and there he told Ponyboy that he believed Robert Frost meant that you are gold when you are a kid, in a way similar to green, because when you are a kid everything is new, like the dawning of the day but then once you get used to it, everything is day. He tells Ponyboy that gold, like the sun at dawn, is a good way to be and that he would like him to stay that way. This fictional relationship between the characters and literature within the novel is mirrored in the effect the novel *The Outsiders* can have on the readers.

⁵⁸ *The Outsiders*, p 148

3.3. Themes: *The Outsiders*

Because the novel explores many universal topics it facilitates the understanding of the story and relating to the different situations that take place in it. I have listed the themes I believe are the most relevant:

Social class, injustice and discrimination

Susan E. Hinton herself stated that she was upset with social divisions in high school. Greasers and Socs hate each other because of class divisions, Greasers are poor and Socs are rich, this is where the rivalry among the gangs starts. Ponyboy talks about both gangs at the very beginning of the book:

(Socs) who jump greasers and wreck houses and throw beer blasts for kicks, and get editorials in the paper for being a public disgrace one day and an asset to society the next. Greasers are almost like hoods; we steal things and drive old souped-up cars and hold up gas stations and have a gang fight once in a while. I don't mean I do things like that. Darry would kill me if I got into trouble with the police.⁵⁹

In this brief paragraph Ponyboy expresses how he feels there is social division and mostly injustice “(Socs) get editorials in the paper for being a public disgrace one day and an asset to society the next”⁶⁰, though it is not stated, we can assume that Greasers always made it to the headlines for doing bad things; as he himself states, Greasers are seen as almost hoods. Groups are created inside the classroom and discrimination becomes a topic that affects everyone and it is important that students can talk about it and that we as teachers get involved and take some action to minimize and eradicate this discrimination.

Social class is a current topic that is used in many books and the reason why it is so used comes from the fact that social class segregation is a topic that affects us

⁵⁹ The Outsiders, p 3

⁶⁰ The Outsiders, p 3

as a society even nowadays. *The Outsiders* shows Chilean students that there is not a huge difference among what happened decades ago in a far away country and what happens nowadays in our society. There are definitely no Greasers or Socs in Chile, but their essence is definitely present. In an interview Susan E. Hinton stated that:

The concept of the in-group and the out-group remains the same. The kids say, "Okay, this is like the Preppies and the Punks," or whatever they call themselves. The uniforms change, and the names of the groups change, but kids really grasp how similar their situations are to Ponyboy's.⁶¹

And they are: people are discriminated against for being rich or poor, students at schools discriminate against each other for a variety of reasons, the social class a person is said to belong to, the way one is dressed, the way one speaks, the music one listens to, the country one comes from, the color of the skin, the ethnicity somebody belongs to and so on. This is a fact I have witnessed myself in the classroom; there are students who come from middle or upper class families who discriminate against the ones who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or some students who come from lower social backgrounds discriminate against the ones who come from a higher social class: the "Flaites" and "Cuicos". And discrimination does not end in social class differences, if students are intelligent, they are called "Mateos" and if they cannot learn as fast as the rest they are referred to as "Porros" by their classmates. The articulation of social class with gender and ethnicity and discrimination based on skin color complicates even more the issue. It is clear that, even though different Governments have tried to eradicate socioeconomic discrimination, it is still present in our society and therefore it is reflected in schools.

⁶¹ Speaking with S. E Hinton (taken from the book *The Outsiders*, Edition 2009)

Dysfunctional families

The story includes many dysfunctional families; all the characters come from either broken families or families who are facing different problems: the father of Johnny is an alcoholic, and his mother is irresponsible and abuses him, both his parents beat him; the mother of Two-Bit has to work in a bar to support him and his kid sister after his father abandoned them; Dally became a juvenile delinquent because it was the only way he could survive; Steve hated his abusive father; Sodapop dropped out of school in order to get a job and support Ponyboy and Darry dropped out of school and refused a college sports scholarship to become the head of the household, he had two jobs in order to take care of the family. Being neglected by their families and the constant lack of affection caused a deep effect on them and they found in the gang a sense of belonging and acceptance.

On the other hand, we see less of the family life and personal problems of the Socs but Cherry mentions that Steve, a Soc, hates his father because he neglects him, and the parents of Bob give him expensive cars and clothes but do not give him any real attention.

The topic of “Dysfunctional families” is relevant to mention because in schools with a high index of vulnerability many students come from dysfunctional families, be it a mono-parental family, kids who live with grandmothers, grandparents, etc, or kids who have no parents and live in the group homes of SENAME.

Stereotypes

This is another topic that students can easily relate to. All characters in the book are discriminated against because of their appearance; the Socs are rich, spoilt and mean, and because of that they are never blamed for anything, nor do they spend time in prison, because their wealthy parents always help them out. In contrast, the Greasers are considered hoods, because they are poor, wear jeans, and are constantly blamed for everything bad that happens.

Ponyboy hopes that by pointing out that Greaser characters, deep down inside, do not correspond to the stereotypes people have of them, he can perhaps make the prejudices disappear: *“Someone should tell their side of the story, and maybe people would understand then and wouldn't be so quick to judge a boy by the amount of hair oil he wore”*⁶²

He wanted to use literature for people to understand that one cannot discriminate against others just because of the way they look.

Literature

One of the most important symbols present in the book is Literature. In the same way literature is important in this work as a means to help students to cope with their own problems and with life itself, literature is essential in the life of Ponyboy because it is not only an escape from his problems, it is also his way to express his feelings and ultimately find healing.

We see through literature how Ponyboy thinks and sees himself and others. He mentions that he had to read *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and Pip reminded him of he and his friends. *“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.”*⁶³ Ponyboy later on remembers and recites a poem by Robert Frost called *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, which becomes highly relevant. This poem helps him and Johnny to analyze situations and mature, implying that literature can always help you with your problems or at least offer you support and give you a new mindset. Ponyboy and Johnny understand that growing up and facing reality is a necessary and unavoidable part of life. Literature also helps him create a bond with other characters, for example Cherry Valance, who was also keen on reading.

⁶² The Outsiders, p. 179

⁶³ The Outsiders, p. 15

At the very end of the book Ponyboy finds hope in literature, it becomes the means he wanted to use to tell his story and the story of kids who face difficulties in life:

I sat down and picked up my pen and thought for a minute. Remembering. Remembering a handsome, dark boy with a reckless grin and a hot temper. A tough, towheaded boy with a cigarette in his mouth and a bitter grin on his hard face. Remembering--- and this time it didn't hurt--- a quiet, defeated-looking sixteen-year-old whose hair needed cutting badly and who had black eyes with a frightened expression to them. One week had taken all three of them. And I decided I could tell people, beginning with my English teacher. I wondered for a long time how to start that theme, how to start writing about something that was important to me.⁶⁴

Ponyboy is devastated by the death of his friend Johnny, but he learns that his story deserved to be known and that somehow other kids might find inspiration or relate to it, but just as important, people with prejudices might get to understand the hardships other people have to go through.

Identity

The greased hair is the marker of identity of the Greasers. They distinguish themselves from other gangs, such as the Socs who drove expensive cars and dressed in expensive clothes.

At the beginning of the book one of the Socs who jumped Ponyboy tells him *"We're gonna do you a favor, greaser. We're gonna cut all that long greasy hair off."*⁶⁵ Cutting the hair of a Greaser would probably be one of the worst offences a Greaser could receive, because by doing so they are robbing them of their identity, and without their own identity Greasers would be Greasers no more.

⁶⁴ The Outsiders, p. 179-180

⁶⁵ The Outsiders, p. 5

Although kids nowadays might not grease their hairs like kids in the book did, they have their own ways to show their individuality and identity: tattoos, dying their hair, piercings, etc. and it is fascinating to see how after fifty years people keep finding new ways to show how different they are from the rest.

3.4 Critical reading of *The Outsiders*: Historical Perspectives from 1967 to the present time.

No book is perfect. Almost 50 years have passed since *The Outsiders* was published and naturally many things have changed since that time and it is necessary to take time and analyze them.

I personally believe that *The Outsiders* is an amazing book to teach in class for all the reasons I have previously mentioned, but there are still points that concern me and that cannot be left behind. One of them is the lack of positive female role models and the way women are portrayed in the story.

In *The Outsiders* there is a lack of positive female gender roles for high risk girls, which translates into high risk female students of today having practically no role models or characters to relate to, but which obviously does not mean they cannot relate to the situations lived by the boys. The only girls that Ponyboy relates to are middle class Socs girls.

There are no female Greasers in the story, only brief references or hints about women who might have been Greasers like Sandy, the girlfriend of Sodapop, who is mentioned but never appeared as a character and who ends up rejecting any contact with the Greaser boys. There are also references to the many blonde girls Two-Bits used to go out with and to Sylvia, a girl who had an on-again, off-again relationship with Dallas and who was cheating on him while he was in jail. The only mother in the story, the mother of Johnny, is portrayed as a mean woman who does not care about her son and who is abusive; she is a flat and negative character with no redeeming qualities. She is described by members of the gang

as “a little woman, with straight black hair and big black eyes like Johnny's. But that was as far as the resemblance went. Johnnycake's eyes were fearful and sensitive; hers were cheap and hard.”⁶⁶ Therefore Greaser women and female figures close to the gang have mostly been portrayed negatively, as bad and mean women, with the exception of the mother of Ponyboy, whom he describes as “*beautiful and golden, like Soda, and wise and firm, like Darry.*”⁶⁷ Unfortunately, his mother died in a car accident some time before the story in the novel takes place. The mother of Two-Bit became a barmaid to support him and his sister after their father abandoned them (the mother of Ponyboy and Two-Bit are both briefly mentioned only); and obviously Socs girls, who we as readers and Ponyboy himself gain a deeper understanding of through the characters of Sherri ‘Cherry’ Valance and her friend Marcia.

When asked by a fan about why her main characters are always male, Hinton answered in the FAQ section of her website that she began using male characters because she found it easiest since her friends were mostly male, and because she thought “*nobody would believe a girl would know anything about my subject matter.*”⁶⁸ She goes further and explains why she has kept using male characters through the years:

“(1) boys have fewer books written for them (2) girls will read boys' books, boys usually won't read girls', and (3) it is still the easiest for me. My elementary age book, *The Puppy Sister*, is told from a female point of view. Female puppy, that is, if that counts.”⁶⁹

One point that stands out is the change in terms of understanding gender. The “invisible” Greaser girls of that time are the high-risk, highly visible girl students of today who will be reading this book. Ponyboy describes Greaser girls as “*Tough,*

⁶⁶ *The Outsiders*, p. 123

⁶⁷ *The Outsiders*, p. 123

⁶⁸ <http://www.sehinton.com/misc/faq.html>

⁶⁹ <http://www.sehinton.com/misc/faq.html>

*loud girls who wore too much eye makeup and giggled and swore too much.*⁷⁰ They were considered the “bad” girls, those who smoked cigarettes, drank alcohol and had sex freely as opposed to the “good” virginal middle class girls who help Ponyboy overcome his problems. So what about those high-risk Greaser young women who are not in the book? Since there are no hints of them, it is a topic that is left to our imagination; therefore this can be a great idea to discuss in class with students. Also to stimulate a discussion about what kind of behaviors are acceptable for *all* young girls nowadays. Even “nice” girls today drink, smoke, and swear.

Another area that is not discussed in the book, but that is relevant to discuss is racism or skin color. Although the book does not focus on race, but only talks about social classes, unfortunately in a country like Chile social class, although not publicly said, is associated with having a lighter color or darker color of skin. I myself have seen students being discriminated against for the color of their skin and for belonging to a lower social class than the rest. Therefore it is important to raise awareness and talk about this topic in class in order to prevent racism and discrimination. The concepts of ethnicity and nationality have also become more important today. There are high school students from Mapuche backgrounds, students from Perú, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti and other countries in the classroom and we need urgently a plan to make classroom an inclusive and safe place for everybody.

A third area that I would like to mention is the total deconstruction of gender roles and definitions. What about those students who no longer fit into the traditional binary categories of male/female? What about students who identify themselves as LBGT? What would have happened, for example, if Socs girls had been portrayed as mean women who swore, stole and got into fights on the streets? What would have happened if Ponyboy would have had a relationship with a male member of the gang? Or what would have happened if he had been a *girl* or *transsexual*? It

⁷⁰ The Outsiders, p 14

seems that today, pushing the gender boundaries has become an important topic and deserves to be kept in mind and discussed.

3.5 The importance of Fan Fiction today

Over the last decades society seems to be more open in discussing these themes, to the point that it is easy to find literary works online in which the characters from an infinity of books, including *The Outsiders*, are not defined by the categories of male/female. It seems like *fan fiction* which The Oxford Dictionary defines as: *fiction written by a fan of, and featuring characters from, a particular TV series, film, etc.*⁷¹ has become a tool which serves to respond to the needs of a society that every day is more open to accepting change. Nowadays readers who are discontent with the way a character is portrayed in a book, or feel dissatisfied by an element in the story, turn to the world of fan fiction, a world that keeps growing everyday thanks to the internet. Anybody can write fan fiction, all you need is to use your imagination and then you can re-write a story, add or take out whatever you did not like in the first place and turn it into a completely different story. It seems that there is a compulsive need to express what we feel and somehow I believe that fan fiction has become a sort of voice for people, those who love the stories they are reading, but feel that something is lacking or that something does not feel quite right. For example as is mentioned in this work, females greasers were merely mentioned in the book, but there was not a greaser girl present in the story, thus girls bothered by this fact decided to create Greaser girl characters and put them in the story. Even though the book does not show cultural diversity or gender inclusivity, it can be used to bring up the topic and how society has changed in respect to these issues over the last 50 years.

⁷¹ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fan_fiction

PART III: TEACHING

1. Links with other curriculum areas

There is little room to discuss identity crisis in the classroom. Although the Chilean curriculum includes “Clases de Orientación” in which this topic can be discussed, there is not enough depth to it. There are also very few instances in which important topics such as discrimination, violence, bullying, injustice, etc, can be discussed and even less instances in which they can be linked with the arts, that is why I believe that literature can work as a bridge to achieving these goals.

I designed a map⁷² in order to show that a literary piece not only can be used in literature class, but it can also be linked to different curriculum areas. I want to make clear that the map has nothing to do with the lesson plans here included. I designed it especially to show that a book can be used in different subjects.

Because of the importance literature has, it should incorporate areas across the curriculum and integrate literature into other subjects is a way of non-violent input that can help students to understand how literature can be a way to develop identity, self confidence and wholeness.

The Outsiders has so much to give to the reader in terms of values and culture, doing activities in class (microteaching) can help students to enjoy, understand and appreciate literature in ways they had not done before. Just reading a book and having it tested, does not always get them involved with a story, and will ultimately make them look at literature with disdain instead of pleasure. Instead doing different activities which involve getting them to comment on it, to share their own experiences, to listen to what other people have to say about the story they had just read, to give them interpretation and meaning is a good idea to keep them engaged. Each teacher may employ different strategies to achieve this, but in the end, it will help them to grow more fluent as readers, help them to have a better understanding, interpretation and appreciate literature in different ways.

⁷² Please go to the Annex section

Brown and Stephens in their book *Young Adult Literature: Sharing the Connections* state that “*Students construct meaning from what they have read through talking or writing*” and that, “*in order for students to achieve increasingly higher levels of satisfaction with the literature they encounter, teachers need to intentionally guide their experiences*”.

Thus, the role of the teacher is essential if we want students to appreciate and have more satisfying literary experiences; by using microteaching and having students work with books after or while they are reading them students will construct their own meanings and refine their own opinions, besides they will also explore more in depth the motives behind the actions of every character in the book, giving ultimately meaning to it.



2. Microteaching Lesson Plans

In the next pages there are microteaching activities I have designed based on the book *The Outsiders* that can be implemented in the classroom



1. INTRODUCING THE NOVEL

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Engaging the students.

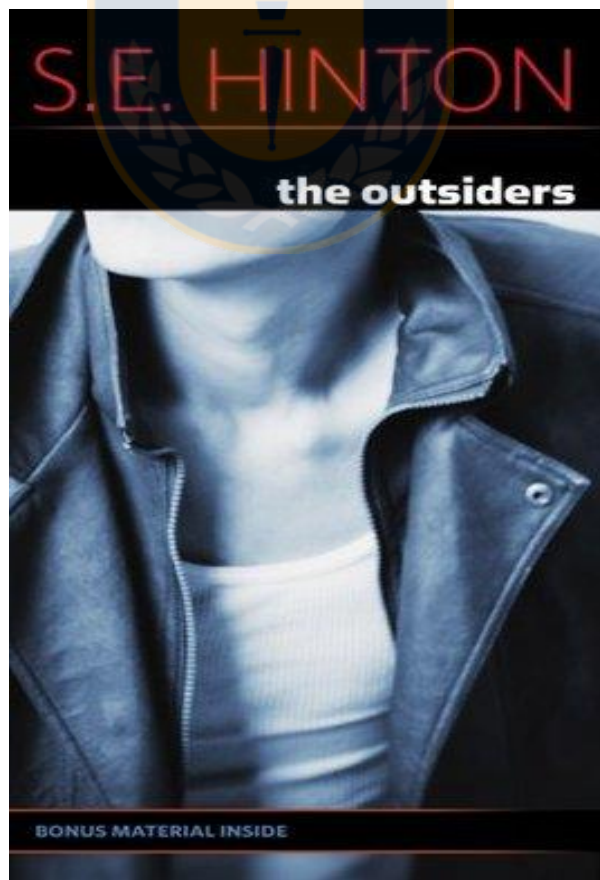
Time: Estimated by the teacher

Materials: Projector. PPT. Copies of the cover and back cover of the book.

Note: The idea of these activities is engage the students, thus it is important to promote and encourage discussion.

Pre-Reading Activities

1) The teacher shows the students the front of the novel (Edition published by Speak, 2008) in order for students to anticipate the story. (Paratext)



1.1) The teacher points out that the author of the book is **S. E. Hinton**, then teacher asks questions like:

- *What does the name tell us about the author?*
- *Do you think the author is a man or a woman?*
- *Could a young girl write a book about boy gang members? Why or why not?*

After that the teacher explains the students who Susan. E. Hinton is.

1.2) Then the teacher moves to the title *The Outsiders*

- *Why do you think the title is all in lower case letters? Does that affect the meaning it might convey? In what way?*
- *What does the word “outsiders” suggest to you? (brainstorming)*
- *Have you ever felt like one? When? Why?*

1.3) The teacher now focuses on the image:

- *What image do we see?*
- *What gender is the person in the picture? Is it easy to tell?*
- *What can we say about the person and the clothing?*

Possible answers: he/she is wearing a leather jacket, a white t-shirt, looks young.

- *Does it say anything about his/her character? behavior? attitude?*

Possible answers: he/she looks like a rebel, looks rude, might ride a motorcycle, might be a gang member.

- Students predict what the book might be about based on the title and the illustration on the front cover

2) The teacher shows the students the back cover, asks for a volunteer student to read aloud the back cover and then asks students some questions like the following:

- *What does it mean to be able to count on someone?*
- *Did you think the person depicted on the cover was a gang member (earlier predictions)? Why or why not?*
- *What does this short paragraph say the book is about?*

A heroic story
of friendship and belonging

Ponyboy can count on his brothers. And on his friends. But not on much else besides trouble with the Socs, a vicious gang of rich kids whose idea of a good time is beating up "greasers" like Ponyboy. At least he knows what to expect—until the night someone takes things too far.

"This remarkable novel gives a moving, credible view of the outsiders from the inside...we meet powerful characters in a book with a powerful message."
 —*The Horn Book*

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2. WHO ARE THE GREASERS?

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Students will gain insight on the Greaser subculture of the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States.

Time: Estimated by the teacher (45 min. or less)

Materials: PPT. Projector. Trailer of the movie The Outsiders

Pre Activity:

Teacher will ask students about a role model they have

- Who is your role model? / Who is the person you admire the most? Why?
- What do you have in common with this person?
- Have you ever tried to imitate him/her somehow? Their style, their clothes, their way of thinking?

Main Activity:

Teacher presents a PPT to the students about the Greasers, their lifestyle, their fashion, and icons of the subculture.

Interaction while presenting the topic is necessary because the idea of this presentation is to get students interested in the topic.

- *Is there any similarity among these pictures and the image on the front cover of the book *The Outsiders*?*

Possible answers: A boy is wearing a white t-shirt too, someone is wearing a leather jacket, they look rude just like the boy on the book cover, etc.

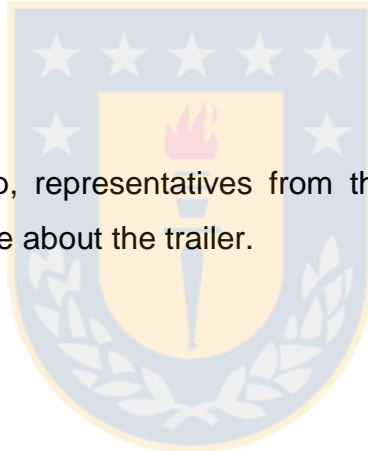
Now that the teacher has finished the presentation students will understand a little more about who Greasers were and will be able to get to know the main characters of the story. The teacher will use the 1 minute film trailer to introduce the characters and get students into the book. They can watch the trailer several times.

In small groups they will discuss the trailer.

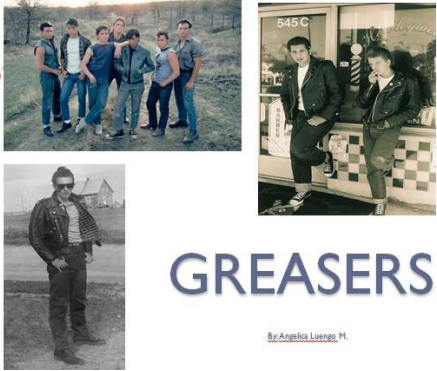
- Describe the boys in the trailer. (Using previously discussed vocabulary)
- Are they close? How can you tell?
- In the trailer there is only one girl introduced, Cherry. How is she dressed? Who do you think she is? Does she look like a greaser?
- What would you do if you met these kids on the street?

Post activity:

Back in the whole group, representatives from the small groups will share the answers their groups gave about the trailer.



PPT Greasers



CONTEXT

- Post World War II
- After the war, American youths were looking for entertainment and identity following the war-hero image from World War II generation.
- The greaser became an individualistic iconic image as a role model to escape boredom.

Who were the Greasers?

- Youth subculture popularized in the 1950s and early 1960s in USA.
- Middle and lower class teenagers
- The subculture Greasers were stereotyped and categorized as reckless, dangerous, and rebellious juveniles
- Often neglected and misunderstood youths

The name Greaser

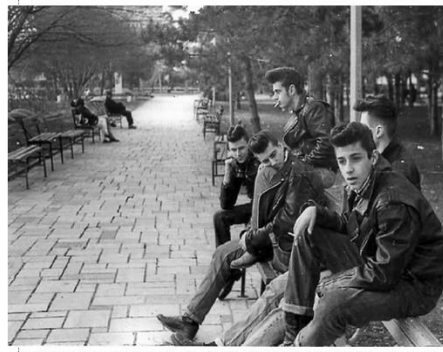
- “Greaser Act”: Law created in California against Mexicans to protect Californians from Mexicans who were unarmed, but not peaceful or quiet people.
- The name “Greaser” was given to the Mexicans that greased carts in the mid-1800's, one of the worst jobs that anyone could have, which made the name “Greaser” one of utmost disrespect.
- It was assumed that the name "greaser" came from their greased-back hairstyle.

FASHION

- Tough look
- Bad boy image



- White or black t-shirts
- Jeans
- Military boots or Converse Chuck Taylor All-Stars



HAIR

- Hair styles made greasers stand out
- Greasy hair
- Slicked back with creams, gels and other hair products.

JACKETS

- The leather jacket, popularized by pilots during World War II, became an icon of greaser culture.
- It marked greaser youths as daring and adventuresome youngsters.
- Although leather jackets were a fashion icon, some Greasers wore less formal jackets like denim.

LIFESTYLE

- Love of big hair, hot rods and Rock n Roll music. (like Elvis Presley Johnny Cash, Chuck Berry, etc.)
- When Elvis hit televisions worldwide, he became an icon with his own style of greased back hair and Rock n Roll music.
- The American Greaser often raced their hot rods amongst themselves, while the British Greasers were better known as die hard bikers.

GREASER WOMEN

- Greaser women are merely mentioned in The Outsiders



ICONS

- Marlon Brando "The Wild One"
- James Dean "Rebel Without a Cause"
- Elvis Presley

MARLON BRANDO

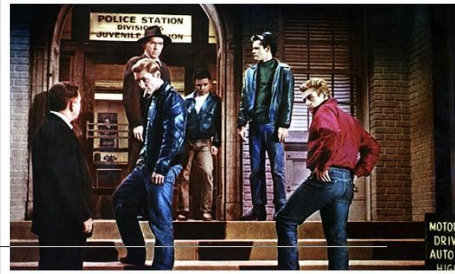
The wild one (1954)

- Outlaw biker movie.
- His character is a motorcycle gang leader who passes through small towns causing trouble.
- Black leather jackets, white t-shirts, skin tight jeans, and motorcycles
- Youth rebellion

JAMES DEAN

Rebel without a cause (1955)

- Dean epitomized youths' search for identity during the 1950s.
- His character is an outcast trying to fit in with his peers.
- His red jacket reinforced the notion of individualism even within the social boundaries of greaser culture.
- His tragic death made the leather jacket that he frequently wore, even more symbolic of the rebellious greaser seeking adventure.



INSIDE THE BOOK! DISCUSSING CHAPTER 1

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Describing

Time: Estimated by the teacher

Materials: Projector to show the pictures below and vocabulary. PPT. Worksheet.

Pre Activity:

Teacher will give the students a sheet of paper with vocabulary related to describing characters and will explain it.

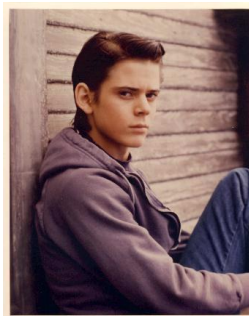
Main activity:

Students will be given a worksheet with the description of the Greaser gang and other characters that Ponyboy makes. Now they will see pictures of the characters and describe and compare them

THE OUTSIDERS: GREASERS AND SOCS



Sodapop



Ponyboy



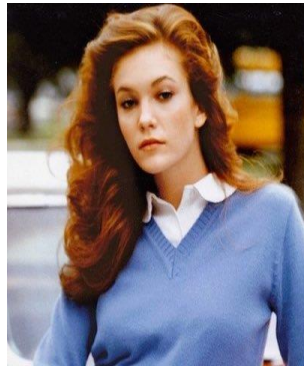
Johnny



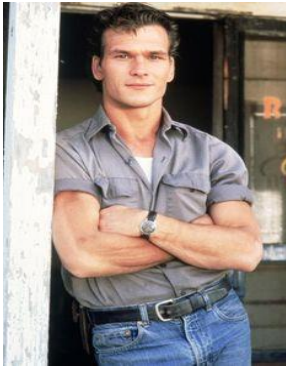
Randy



Bob



Cherry



Darry



Marcia

Students will describe the characters with their own words and will compare them.

Example:

- *What does Johnny look like? He has long hair, wears a jeans jacket, looks the youngest*
- *What about Darry? He has muscles, is muscular. He looks old, has short hair*
- *Can you tell which characters are greasers and which are Socs according to the way they dress?*

Post-Activity:

Students will compare and contrast Greasers and Socs using a worksheet provided by the teacher, which is presented on the next page.

Worksheet: **Who belongs where?**

Name: _____

There are two groups in *The Outsiders*: The **Greasers** and the **Socs**.

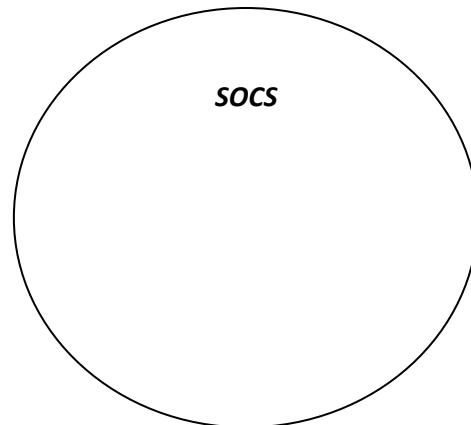
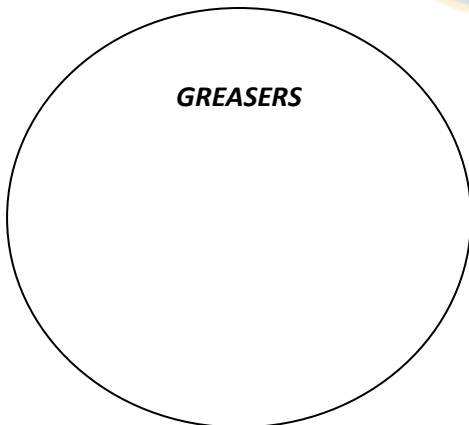
Greasers: Kids who come from a low social class and a poor neighborhood

Socs: (Short for Socials). Kids who come from a higher social class.

Activity:

In the box below there are names that belong to each group, four of them are Greasers and four of them are Socs. Place each name in one of the groups and at least 3 characteristics of each person.

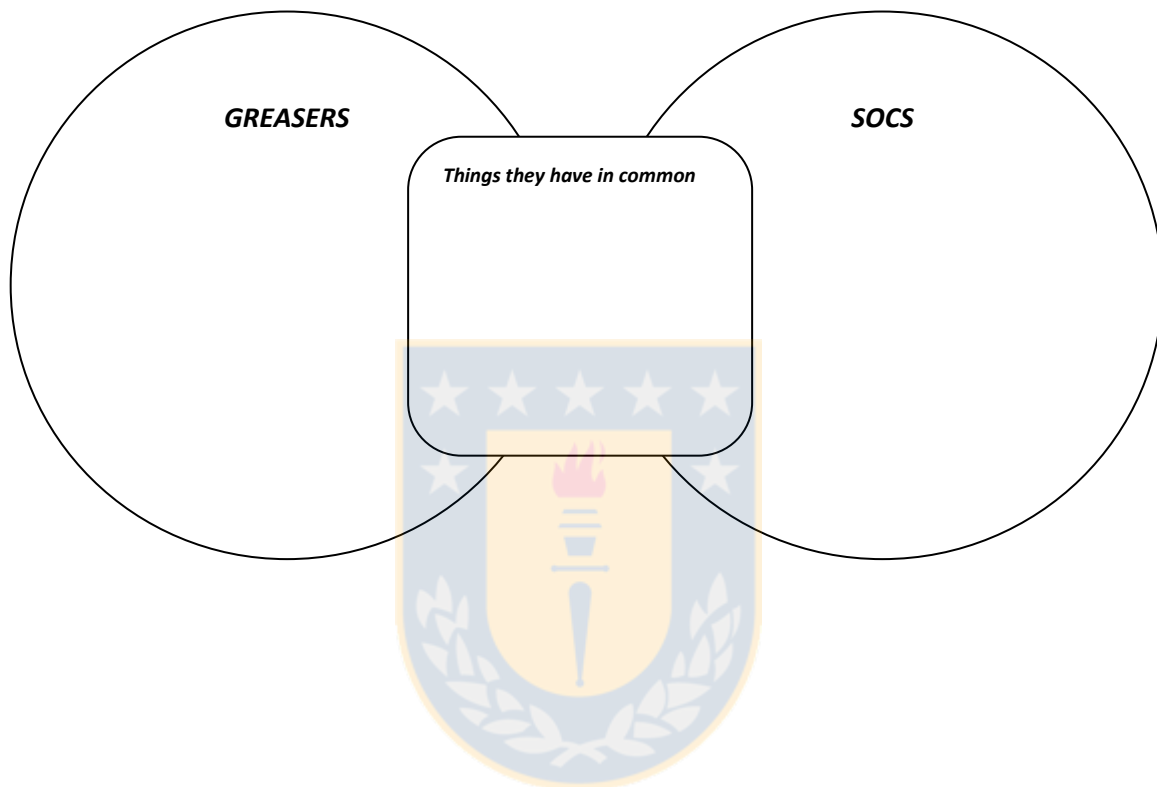
Sodapop – Ponyboy – Johnny – Randy – Bob – Cherry – Darry – Marcia





Activity 2:

Now using the circles below, describe how each gang is different. Write at least 3 adjectives that you believe would fit each gang. Then in a middle circle, write at least three things that they have in common, what they share.



GETTING INTO CHAPTER 1

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Becoming familiar with the main topics and themes in chapter 1

Time: Estimated by the teacher

Materials: Projector. PPT. The book or copies of Chapter 1,

Note: The idea of these activities is engage the students, thus it is important to promote and encourage discussion.

Pre Activity

Teacher asks the students to remember the main characters from the book and writes them on the board. The teacher asks them if they remember if they were Greasers or Socs

Main Activity

1) Now the teacher asks the students to read the chapter in groups of four. Each group organizes itself in order to read the chapter. They will help each other with the vocabulary and the teacher will help them.

- A possible small group organization: a recorder (writes things down), a reporter (responsible for reporting back to whole group), a student --who is perhaps more proficient in English-- to keep the group on task and speaking in English (English police person, group leader), a researcher who will look up vocabulary and other information on his or her smart phone or tablet.

2) Teacher gives students questions from chapter 1 to answer in their small groups in order to promote critical thinking.

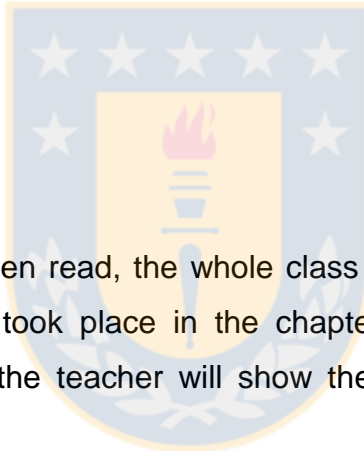
- *What do you think is the most important value when it comes to friendship?*

- *How would you describe the relationship Ponyboy has with his friends and brothers?*
- *By the descriptions Ponyboy gives, on whom do you think he relies the most? What are the qualities of a person you can rely on?*
- *How does Ponyboy describe his life? Does he seem content?*
- *What does Ponyboy do that makes him different from his friends and brothers? Regarding this, do you think Ponyboy is discriminated against by his friends or do you think they respect him for being different and embrace the differences? Give evidence from the book.*

After answering these questions, students should be able to discover **the main themes** in chapter one: friendship, loyalty, alternative family structures, individual and group behaviors, etc.

Post activity

Once the chapter has been read, the whole class will sit in a semi-circle and will discuss the events that took place in the chapter. The idea in this is to get the students to talk. Finally the teacher will show them the scenes from the movie related to chapter one.



THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY IN *THE OUTSIDERS*

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Theme: Relating the novel to life today. Sharing emotions and feelings in *The Outsiders*: friends and family, developing a feeling of belonging.

Objective: Explore and discuss about the challenges and pressures characters feel in the novel and what challenges and pressures teenagers feel today.

Time: 45 min.

Materials: Projector. PPT. Worksheet

Pre Activity:

The teacher will write **quotes from the book** on a power point presentation and students will answer some questions in a worksheet. Pick quotes that concentrate important meanings in the book and that will stimulate a conversation.

“Even if they did have their own troubles. I really couldn't see what Socs would have to sweat about--- good grades, good cars, good girls, madras and Mustangs and Corvairs--- Man, I thought, if I had worries like that I'd I'd consider myself lucky.” (*The Outsiders*, Chapter 2, page 36)



Madras shirt



Corvair



Mustang

““We have troubles you've never even heard of. You want to know something?” She looked me straight in the eye. "Things are rough all over.””
(The Outsiders, Chapter 2, page 34, 35)

- Do you agree that having money, fast cars, and expensive clothes, mean you are happy all the time and don't have any problems? Explain.



Worksheet “Everybody has their own problems”

Name: _____

1. Read the quote and think about what you believe this quote means, and the emotions the characters are trying to convey.

“Even if they did have their own troubles. I really couldn't see what Socs would have to sweat about--- good grades, good cars, good girls, madras and Mustangs and Corvairs--- Man, I thought, if I had worries like that I'd consider myself lucky.” (*The Outsiders*, Chapter 2)

““We have troubles you've never even heard of. You want to know something?” She looked me straight in the eye. "Things are rough all over.””
(*The Outsiders*, Chapter 2, page 34, 35)

2. Writing: Using the vocabulary, the Venn diagram and the ideas presented earlier, what kinds of problems do the Greasers have? What kinds of problems do the Socs have? Do both gangs share some common problems? Write at least five sentences.

“NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY” Part 1

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Interpreting a poem

Class aim: Students will be able to interpret the poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost in the context of the novel.

Class length: 25 minutes approx.

Materials: Sheets with the poem, projector, whiteboard, markers

Note: The teacher tells students that this poem expresses one of the most important themes in the novel and helps Johnny and Ponyboy develop a closer friendship.

Warm up :Questions

Students re-read the poem in the context of the chapter. What happens before and after the poem is introduced? Who understands it better and why, Johnny or Ponyboy?

Pre Activity introducing Robert Frost

-Teacher shows pictures of Robert Frost and explains the students who he was



Main Activity

- Interpret the poem in the context of the novel

-Teacher asks a student to read the poem out loud. If students do not know a word, the teacher gives the meaning.



“NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY” Part 2

Theme: Interpreting a poem within the context of the novel

Level: Advanced (for English class) / Elementary if used in native language

Class aim: Students will be able to comment on their own interpretation of the poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost

Class length: 30 minutes.

Resources/materials: PPT presentation, sheets with the poem, projector, whiteboard, markers,

Pre Activity PPT introducing Context of the Poem

-Teacher shows in a power point presentation the time in which the poem was written and she/he compares it with the time it is shown in the book

Main Activity

Students discuss and answer the following question with a partner.

- Who recited the poem first in the book?
- How did it get reinterpreted by Johnny and why?
- Who understands the poem better? Johnny or Ponyboy? Explain.
- What important theme in the novel does the poem relate to? Explain.

Post activity

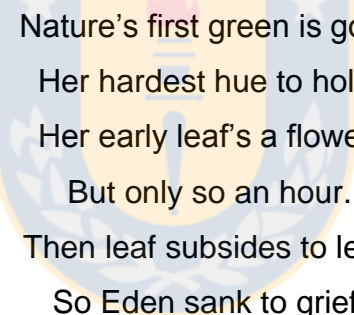
Exchanging ideas with the rest

-Students get in groups of 4, discuss their ideas with each other and write a small paragraph.

Poem:

Nothing Gold Can Stay

(Robert Frost 1874 – 1963)



Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

STEREOTYPES

Name of the Unit: “The Outsiders”

Objective: Discussing Stereotypes

Class length: Estimated by the teacher

Materials: Projector, PPT with words, sheets of paper

Pre-reading

In Spanish, ask students what they think a stereotype is. Get students to talk about stereotypes in Spanish: cuico, flaite, peloise, ñoño, porro and later ask which characters in the novel correspond to these stereotypes in Spanish. Write down answers on the white board. Then introduce words in English having to do with stereotypes:

nerd,

bully,

gangbanger,

snob,

retarded

Class outcomes: Students will be able to identify vocabulary in English related to stereotypes and then identify stereotypes according to the images.

Materials needed: Flashcards of vocabulary in English relating to stereotypes, examples: bully, juvenile delinquent, tough guy, loser, violence, dangerous, gang member...].

Images representing stereotypes... gang members, urban tribes, middle class, upper class, working class... [cuica, peloais, flaite, chana...]

Post Activity

Write a paragraph about stereotypes based on in-class discussion (either in Spanish or English). Should we think twice before accepting the stereotype we have of a person without getting to know that person on a personal level? Why?



THE OUTSIDERS TATTOO BOOK



Theme: The Outsiders, tattoos,

Level: Elementary.

Class aim: Students will be able to use their imagination and art skills to create a tattoo for a character of the book that they choose or about one of the gangs: Greasers or Socs. All the tattoos will become a book that will be called “The Outsider’s Tattoo Book”. Have them write *descriptions* of the tattoos and what they mean.

Class length: 45 minutes.

Resources/materials: Blank sheets, pencils, pen, images of tattoos, projector.

Warm up: Questions

-Teacher asks students what they think about tattoos.

- What do you think about tattoos?
- Do you have any tattoo in your body?
- If you have not, would you ever consider having one?

Pre Activity: Images

-Teacher shows images of different tattoos and asks the students which tattoo might correspond to which character in the book.

Main Activity: Design a tattoo

-On a blank sheet of paper, students use their imagination to create a tattoo for one of the gangs or for a character they liked. It can be anyone, even the characters that were only briefly mentioned in the book/movie.

Post activity:

-Each student will present their tattoo to the class and talk in deep about the process of creation, Then the class will try to guess for whom it was designed.



CREATING A RAP

Theme: Creating a rap for *The Outsiders*

Level: Intermediate

Class aim: Students will be able to understand the characters' lives.

Materials: Music from *The Outsiders*, Notebook

Class length: 45 minutes.

Warm up: Food for thought

-Name a song which has had a big impact on your life. Name a song that you feel is telling your own story or feelings at a certain time.

Pre Activity:

Listening to songs

-Some scenes from the movie with background songs are played and students discuss about the importance of the songs being played in those scenes, teacher can provide the lyrics and translate them for them if necessary.

Main Activity:

Creating a rap

- Students create a rap for Ponyboy, the gang, or any character or event related with the book. If not all students feel confident about creating a rap, they can create any kind of song or a poem.

Post activity

Presenting

- Some students can read what they wrote or if they feel confident they can even sing their raps or songs.



TO THE MOVIES!

Class aim: Watch the movie The Outsiders, (2005 version)

Resources/materials: Projector, computer, The Outsiders movie, speakers

Pre Activity

-Teacher introduces the movie and actors to the students.

Main Activity

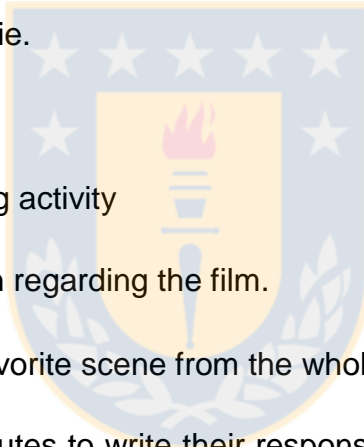
- Students watch the movie.

Post Activity Pair sharing activity

Teacher poses a question regarding the film.

- Which was your favorite scene from the whole movie? Why?

Students are given 5 minutes to write their response. Then they pair off to discuss their response with a partner for a total of 6 min.



TO THE MOVIES PART 2

Theme: The Outsiders Movie

Level: Intermediate/Advanced

Class aim: To read a fragment of The Outsiders and create a comic strip

Class length: 90 min.

Resources/materials:

Warm up: Question

-Students are asked what they thought of the movie they watched last class.

Pre-Activity

-Students get together in groups of 4 and then each group is given a fragment of a scene that did not appear in the movie.

Main activity

-Students organize themselves and by using the descriptions from the book they will create a comic strip for the scene they were assigned

Post activity

Presenting the scenes

Teacher asks each group to present their comic strip. Students comment the scene they draw and say if they think it was necessary in the movie.

CHANGING BEHAVIOURS

Theme: Changing behaviours

Level: Advanced (for English) (Elementary if used in native language)

Class aim: Students will discuss how the way people behaved in *The Outsiders* has changed nowadays

Class length: 40 minutes.

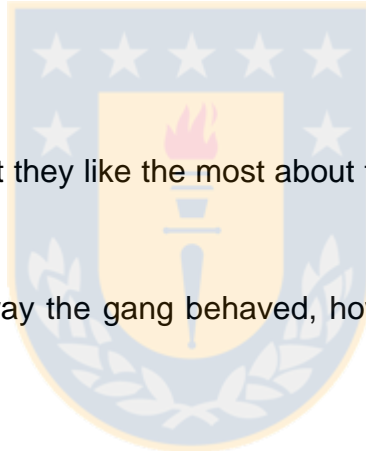
Resources/materials: Projector, whiteboard, markers

Warm up

Questions

-Students are asked what they like the most about the time in which *The Outsiders* is set.

Possible answers: The way the gang behaved, how close the gang was, the way Socs girls behaved.



Pre Activity

PPT showing pictures of the 60s and from nowadays

-Teacher shows students the difference in the way people dressed, talked, and how life was in the 60s and how it is now.

Main Activity

Students discussion

-Students get in groups of 6 (mixed groups including men and women)

-Students will discuss the following questions

-How do you imagine Greaser boys nowadays? Would they still be Outsiders?

-Is there any Urban tribe you would associate them with nowadays?

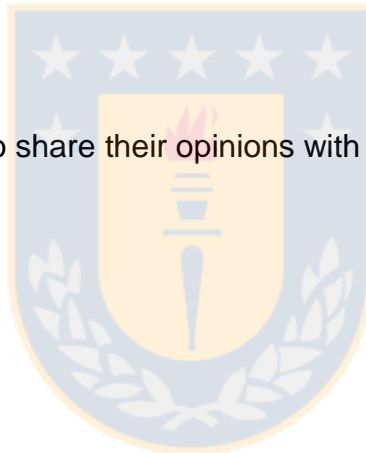
-What do you think about the role women had in *The Outsiders* and the roles they might have nowadays?

-What do you think about Greaser girls? Why are they not portrayed very much in the novel?

Post activity

Exchanging ideas

-Teacher asks students to share their opinions with the rest of students.



Game lesson plans

ACTIVITY 1: BEING THE OUTSIDERS!

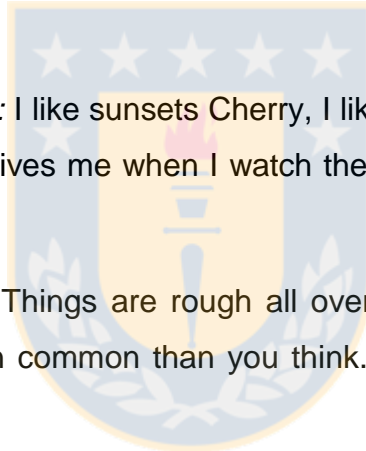
Directions:

Students get in groups of 4 and are given a set of cards with different characters from *The Outsiders*. The cards are put down at the centre of the table and in turns, 2 students pick cards and make up a short dialogue between the characters on their cards or use one they have read in the book. The rest of the group will pay attention to the short dialogue.

For example:

Student A picks Ponyboy: I like sunsets Cherry, I like the calmness and beauty and the sense of freedom it gives me when I watch them, all of our problems seem so small and insignificant.

Student B picks Cherry: Things are rough all over Pony. I believe Greasers and Socs have much more in common than you think. We have problems and watch sunsets too.



ACTIVITY 2: GUESSING THE CHARACTERS

Directions:

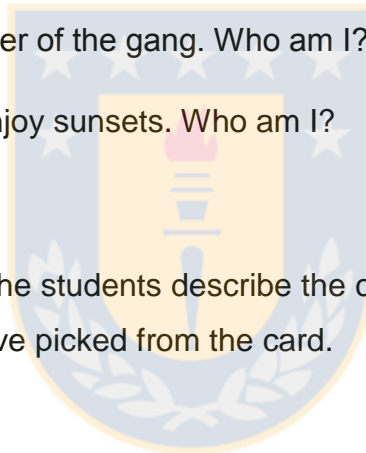
Students get in groups of 4. Students are given a set of cards with different characters from *The Outsiders*. The cards are mixed up and put at the center of the table. One student takes a card with a character and describes him or her, if the students do not remember much of the character they can help themselves with the brief description each card has on it. The student who guesses first and right keeps the card. The game ends once all the cards are been guessed. The student who ends up with most cards in his/her hand wins.

Example:

1. I'm the toughest member of the gang. Who am I?
2. I have red hair and I enjoy sunsets. Who am I?

*Variation:

Instead of having the students describe the characters in words they can act out the character they have picked from the card.



<p style="text-align: center;">DARRY (Darrel Shayne Curtis)</p> <p>Greaser. Ponyboy and Sodapop's oldest brother.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SODAPOP (Soda Patrick Curtis)</p> <p>Greaser. Ponyboy's brother. High school dropout.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PONYBOY (Ponyboy Michael Curtis)</p> <p>Greaser. A sensitive 14 years old who is the main character of the story.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TWO-BIT (Keith Mathews)</p> <p>The funniest and oldest member of the gang</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">STEVE RANDLE</p> <p>Greaser. Sodapop's best friend.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DALLY (Dallas Winston)</p> <p>Greaser. The toughest member of the gang who has no respect for the law.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JOHNNY CADE</p> <p>Greaser. Johnny kills Bob, a Soc. He dies a hero after saving kids from the burning Church.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BOB SHELDON</p> <p>Soc. Cherry's boyfriend. Bob is killed by Johnny in an act of self-defense.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">RANDY ADDERSON</p> <p>Soc. Bob's best friend. Randy refuses to fight in the big rumble.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CHERRY (Sherri Valance)</p> <p>Soc. Bob's girlfriend. A cheerleader who attends the same school as Ponyboy, who eventually becomes friends with him.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MARCIA</p> <p>Soc. Cherry Valance's best friend.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JERRY WOOD</p> <p>Jerry accompanies Pony in the ambulance after the fire. He doesn't judge Johnny, Pony and Dally and sees them as heroes.</p>

ACTIVITY 3: WHO SAID IT?

Directions: In groups of 4, students are given a set of cards with quotes from *The Outsiders*. One student picks up a card and reads it out loud, the other student have to try to guess which character said the quote.



<p>I was wishing I looked like Paul Newman...</p> <p>(Ponyboy)</p>	<p>Things are rough all over.</p> <p>(Cherry)</p>	<p>To Ponyboy: You don't ever think, not at home, or anywhere when it counts.</p> <p>(Darry)</p>	<p>Take your feet off my chair and shut your trap</p> <p>(Cherry)</p>
<p>That's why we're separated. It's not money, it's feeling. You don't feel anything and we feel too violently.</p> <p>(Ponyboy)</p>	<p>You know what a greaser is? White trash with long hair.</p> <p>(Bob)</p>	<p>I killed him. I killed that boy.</p> <p>(Johnny)</p>	<p>I swear, you three are the bravest kids I've seen in a long time.</p> <p>(Jerry Wood)</p>
<p>I'm not going to show at the rumble tonight.</p> <p>(Randy)</p>	<p>Greasers will still be greasers and Socs will still be Socs.</p> <p>(Randy)</p>	<p>We won. We beat the Socs.</p> <p>(Darry)</p>	<p>Stay gold Ponyboy. Stay gold.</p> <p>(Johnny)</p>

<p>Ponyboy, listen, don't get tough. You're not like the rest of us and don't try to be.</p> <p>(Two-Bit)</p>	<p>When you are a kid everything's new, dawn. It's just when you get used to everything that it's day. Like the way you dig sunsets, Pony. That's gold. Keep that way, it's a good way to be</p> <p>(Johnny)</p>	<p>All Socs aren't like that, you have to believe me, Ponyboy. Not all of us are like that.</p> <p>(Cherry)</p>	<p>Hey, can you see the sunset real good from the West Side? ... You can see it good from the East Side, too.</p> <p>(Ponyboy)</p>
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CONCLUSION

The present work pretends to help in the understanding of the importance that literature plays in classroom and why it should be used to help students.

I chose literature because I believe that teachers should be facilitators, not dictators and because through my personal experience I could realize that literature gives the students the freedom to express what is on their minds without being afraid of being labeled as “wrong”. It is the subjectivity of literature and the chance to identify with the characters that make it more appealing for students. It also provides an opportunity for the teacher to get to know his or her students, because class discussions on literature allow the students to speak their mind. It is important for the teacher not to tell the students how to interpret the text; the students should be able through exploration and trial and error to come up with their own ideas.

I decided to work with *The Outsiders*, a book I myself particularly fancy, because it is a classic many children in the Chilean classroom have never been introduced to and because its context is extremely valuable for teenagers.

In this work I focused primarily on high-risk students because I believe that the system has left them behind, marginalized. These students come to school completely unprepared, with little or no desire to learn at all and it is we, teachers, who need to guide them and motivate them to learn, encourage them to learn, but how are they going to learn when there is so much going on in their heads and at homes? Sometimes helping students to face their problems and accompany them through that journey is equally or even more important than teaching them a content that they are not interested in at the moment or will forget as soon as the test is over.

Although literature is a wonderful tool teachers can take advantage of, there is no denial that it can also have its drawbacks. As mentioned above, literature is so vast and rich, full of contents deeply rooted within our society and themes as universal

as love, friendship, family, stereotypes, discrimination, identity, violence, drugs, sex, abuse, rape, etc. that engaging in a conversation with students can lead to them being completely open with the teacher to the point of revealing situations a teacher may not be prepared for nor ready to deal with, for example a student might confess that he or she has been a victim of abuse, therefore the teacher may have the obligation to report it and consequently the trust the student had in him/her is betrayed, the bond is broken.

Parents are the ones who have the obligation to raise their daughters and sons, help them, guide them along the way, but it is part of being a teacher to care about the welfare of his or her students too, and when there are no parents at home to guide them, a caring and understanding teacher can make a big difference. I again share the words of Cozolino⁷³: *we learn better when we are face-to-face and heart-to-heart with someone who cares about us.*⁷⁴ And the same happens with literature, a good book, full of realism and experiences students can easily relate to, can help them feel that they are not the only person facing difficulties and that they can rise above every complexity that comes their way, because just like Cherry Valance says in the book, *“things are rough all over”*.

⁷³ The Social Neuroscience of Education

⁷⁴ 2013, 50

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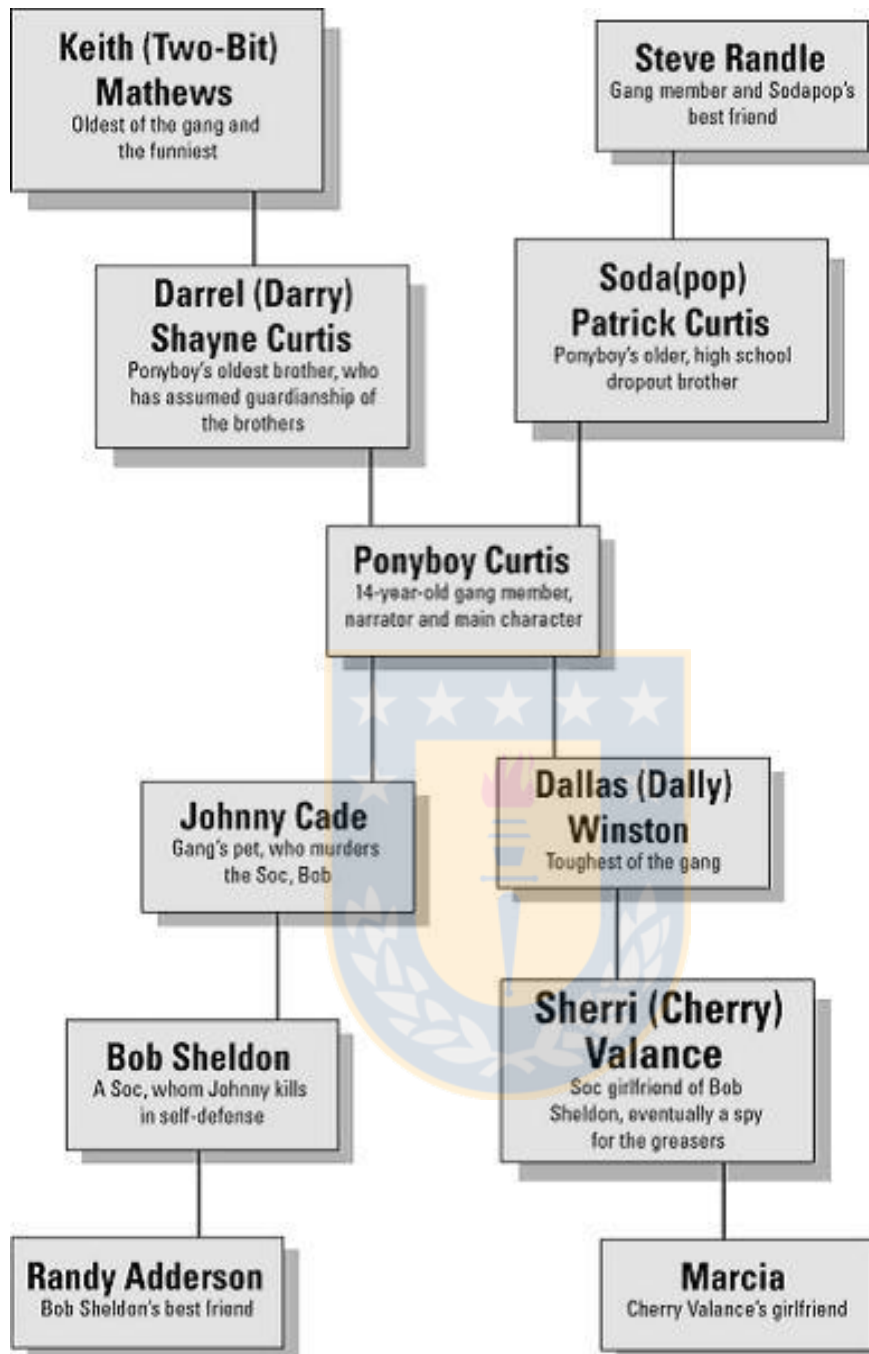


ANNEX 1 :

MAP OF THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHARACTERS⁷⁵



⁷⁵ <http://www.cliffnotes.com>



ANNEX 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTERS

Ponyboy Curtis:

Ponyboy, the protagonist of the story, is a fourteen-year-old boy who lives with his two brothers, Sodapop and Darry. They belong to a gang known as the Greasers. Ponyboy is different from the rest of the gang, he possesses a kind of sensitivity that is uncommon for a Greaser, he studies, he loves reading, enjoys movies, and likes watching sunsets. Because Darry, his older brother, scolds him often, Ponyboy believes that he does not like him, but actually Darry is strict with him because he does care and he wants a better future for him. Ponyboy loves and admires his middle brother Sodapop. Ponyboy befriends Cherry Valence, a Socs girl. Cherry tells him that even though Socs seem to be privileged kids, they also have problems: "I'll tell you something, Ponyboy, and it may come as a surprise. We have troubles you've never even heard of. You want to know something?" She looked me straight in the eye. "Things are rough all over." (P. 34-35)

Darrel Curtis:

Darry is Ponyboy and Sodapop's oldest brother and a Greaser. He was forced to drop out of school and work to support his brothers after their parents are killed in an auto accident. Darry becomes a parental figure for Ponyboy and Sodapop, he is the one who keeps the family together. Darry is afraid that Ponyboy will be taken from his side and put in a boy's home, thus he is constantly worried about him, nagging him and giving him advice.

Sodapop Curtis:

Sodapop is Ponyboys' younger brother, and a Greaser. He dropped out of school when he was 16 years old and works to help the family. According to Ponyboy, Sodapop is handsome like a movie star and he is good at understanding people.

What he lacks in intellectual intelligence, he makes up for with emotional intelligence.

Johnny Cade:

Johnny is a member of the Greasers. His appearance has been described as that of “a little dark puppy that has been kicked too many times and is lost in a crowd of strangers.” Johnny is considered “the gang’s pet, everyone’s kid brother” and is seen to be quite innocent. His alcoholic parents neglect him, his father constantly beats him, and his mother does not care about him, but he finds in tough guy Dally the love and affection his parents were not willing to give him. Johnny kills Bob, a Socs, in self defense and goes into hiding with Ponyboy. He saves the kids from a burning church and ultimately dies because of the terrible wounds.

Dallas Winston:

Dally, a Greaser, is the toughest boy in the gang. Ponyboy describes him as “tougher, colder, meaner” than the rest of the gang. Dally even had a criminal record and the first time he was arrested he was only ten years old. Ponyboy also says about him that “It would be a miracle if Dally loved anything. The fight for self-preservation had hardened him beyond caring.” He was a victim of his circumstances, and though he did not care about most things, he did care about the gang and especially about Johnny, for whom he felt deep affection and cared sincerely. Dally is not able to handle Johnny’s death and in an act of craziness, he makes himself get shot by the police and dies, as Ponyboy concludes “Johnny was the only thing that Dally loved.”

Two-Bit Mathews

He is the oldest member of the Greasers and the funniest one. His real name is Keith, but everyone calls him Two-Bit. He is famous for shoplifting and enjoys making fun of the police. He liked fights, blondes, and school.

Steve Randle

Steve is also a Greaser. He is Soda's best friend since school. He likes cars and works with Soda at a gas station.

Sherri (Cherry) Valance

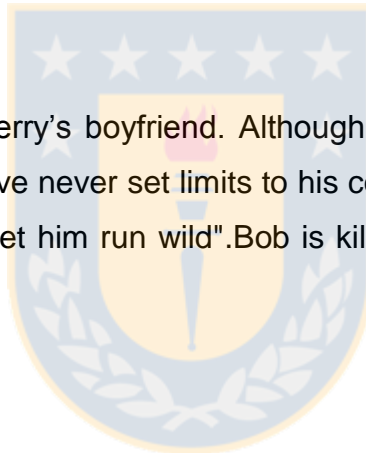
Although her real name is Sherri, she is known as Cherry because of her hair. Cherry, a Socs, is a cheerleader and she attends the same high school as Ponyboy. Cherry is a strong, wealthy, smart, but very sensitive girl. Cherry does not like fights and violence and just like Ponyboy she enjoys watching sunsets. Through Cherry, Ponyboy realizes that Socs, just like Greasers, have problems and that "things are rough all over"

Bob Sheldon

Bob is a Socs, he is Cherry's boyfriend. Although his parents have always been present in his life they have never set limits to his conduct, just like Randy, his best friend says: "His parents let him run wild". Bob is killed by Johnny in an act of self-defense.

Randy Adderson

Randy is also a Socs, and Bob's best friend. After Bob's death Randy starts questioning himself. He begins to feel regret about being involved in violence. Randy somehow respects Ponyboy.



Annex 3

Conceptual Map

Links with other curriculum areas

