

Name:

If you ANNOTATE, complete the following several times throughout the text:

- Summarize main ideas and label them MI, then underline their supporting details.
- Circle words you do not know or key words (the most important words for this article's topic) and use context clues to define them
- Connect it to the unit we are studying using evidence from the text



AoW6: “Why ‘The Outsiders’ Lives On: A Teenage Novel Turns 50”

By HAYLEY KRISCHER MARCH 12, 2017

TULSA, Okla. — On a particularly windy day in the Crutchfield neighborhood here, the writer S. E. Hinton was touring the renovations of the future Outsiders House museum. The rundown Craftsman bungalow was where the Curtis brothers — Darry, Sodapop and Ponyboy — lived in the 1983 Francis Ford Coppola movie based on Ms. Hinton’s book The Outsiders.



S.E. Hinton, a teenager when she wrote “The Outsiders,” at the bungalow in Tulsa, Okla., that stood in for Ponyboy Curtis’s home in the 1983 film adaptation of the novel. Credit Andrea Morales for The New York Times

The book, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this month, was arguably one of the most influential young adult books of its time.

Since The Outsiders was first published in 1967, over 15 million copies have been sold. It is a constant on middle-school and high-school reading lists and has been translated into 30 languages. Fanfiction.net counts 8,100 stories based on the book. The hashtag #staygold, which is inspired by a Robert Frost poem that appears in the book, is attached to more than 300,000 Instagram posts. Search the internet for “stay gold” and you’ll find both the name of a cafe on the Jersey Shore and a Swedish rock band’s debut album. Ms. Hinton fields daily questions on Twitter from fans who ask, “What do you think when people say ‘Stay golden’ instead of ‘Stay gold’?” (Answer: It makes her cringe.)

That The Outsiders has permeated the culture so deeply is still somewhat surreal to even Ms. Hinton. “The rest of my books I wrote, but ‘The Outsiders’ was meant to be written. I got chosen to write it,” she said. “That’s the only way I can deal with it.”

Ms. Hinton, who still lives in Tulsa, goes by Susie. In 1966, Ms. Hinton’s editor, Velma Varner, suggested she use her gender-neutral initials out of concern that her given name, Susan Hinton, would “throw some of the boy readers off.” She continued to use the initials, even in more recent publications.

When Ms. Hinton was 16, after failing creative writing in her junior year of high school, she wrote The Outsiders. The teacher who failed her was not happy that Ms. Hinton liked to mention this in every interview. She sold the book when she was 17. It was published when she turned 18. It has, quite literally, always been part of her life.

For Ms. Hinton, the book is something of a time capsule of her own emotionally driven teenage angst. “I think that’s why it still resonates with teens, because they feel like that,” she said. “Your feelings are over the top. You’re feeling and seeing injustice, and you’re standing up against it.”

In The Outsiders, justice comes by way of class warfare between the greasers, a gang of poor teenage boys, and the Socs, the rich kids from the other side of town. What may be most remarkable about the greasers is their ability to show great affection and emotion despite the masculine-dominated cultural norm of the 1960s. In almost every chapter, someone is crying or on the verge of tears.

“You’d be hard-pressed to find a book where boys are this emotional,” said Daniel Kraus, books for youth editor at Booklist, a review magazine published by the American Library Association. “They’re crying, they’re embracing.” This adds to the greaser mythology, Mr. Kraus said.

Jennifer Buehler, an English education professor at St. Louis University, believes that the greasers’ experience, and their need to be seen as human, is similar to what many marginalized groups today are also trying to claim. “The fact that the character development is so strong in this book plays a crucial part in its power and its enduring relevance,” she said.

While Professor Buehler believes other factors contribute to the book’s endurance — the universal title and the seemingly genderless author — she credits librarians and teachers for supporting the book from the start. In 1988, an influential award further cemented the canonical status of the book, she said, when it received the first Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in writing for young adults. “So even though ‘The Outsiders’ was 21 years old, and the movie had some life, there’s something about that literary award from the world of librarians and library service that helped teachers along their way.”

“I’m as amazed as anybody else that it’s lasted as long,” Ms. Hinton said. “So many people say to me after reading it, ‘I’m looking at people differently now than I used to,’” she said. “Let’s all quit judging each other.”