

The Outsiders

Teacher's Booklet

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Introduction

Synopsis

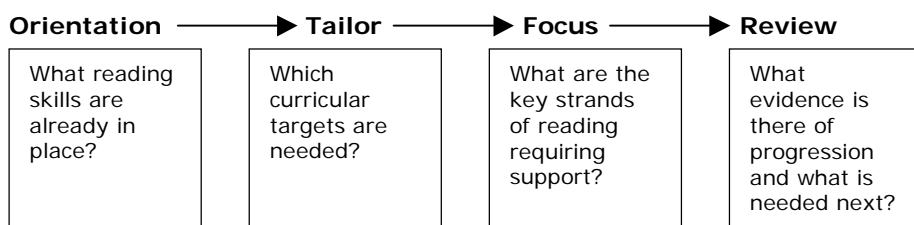
The Outsiders is a brutally honest portrayal of youth culture. Hinton makes no attempt to dodge or disguise the truth about life on the streets of America in the 1960s and captures what is essentially still unresolved today; the unfair distribution of wealth; the lack of opportunity and access to education for all; the misfortune families need to endure and overcome and the ever present violence that flares up as a result. The narrative of fourteen-year-old Ponyboy manages to skilfully move between the tragic waste of potential and the enduring hope for the future and the reader is left as passionate for change as the young author was in 1967.

Delivering progression in reading

These teaching materials are designed to help teachers provide opportunities to deliver tailored progression in pupils' reading skills when studying *The Boy in the Burning House*. It is envisaged that these materials could be integrated with a broader scheme of work around the novel that might include work to support pupils' progression in writing and speaking and listening.

The materials offer a streamlined approach to planning and assessment linked to the National Strategy's Progression Maps¹ and the APP Assessment Grids². Activities are provided for each of the Reading Assessment Focuses (except for AF1) to allow the teacher to target the materials to their class' particular needs. For each Assessment Focus, differentiated activities are provided using the pen portraits defined in the National Strategy's Progression Maps as *competent, active, and reflective* reader. This approach allows for a differentiated approach to a whole class novel helping all pupils to make maximum progress.

Using the teaching support in class



The teaching support consists of three parts:

- Orientation tasks (for use when reading chapter one)
- Differentiated activities for each Reading Assessment Focus
- Assessment tasks (for use at the end of the novel).

Orientation tasks

These tasks provide an opportunity for teacher and pupils to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading. It is envisaged that this information will be combined with other prior attainment data such as KS2 Test and Teacher Assessment data, APP task and ongoing assessments to form curricular targets.

Differentiated activities

As the activities for each Reading Assessment Focus are linked to a section of the novel, the materials can either be used in their entirety to ensure coverage of all Reading Assessment Focuses or as appropriate for specific targets and then as a model for further work on that target Assessment Focus, using the text to develop identified skills.

Differentiated activities chosen by the pupils will differ according to their strengths and weaknesses across the Assessment Focuses. For example, if a pupil has strengths in AF3, he/she might work on the task for an active reader. However, if the same pupil has an identified weakness in AF5, it might be more appropriate to work on the task for the developing reader. Extending the tasks for AF5 over the reading of several chapters, using the format of the tasks on page 6 as a model until progress is secured, might be more appropriate than moving on to AF6 in this case.

Assessment tasks

At the end of the unit, there is a page of suggested Assessment Tasks that could be used in conjunction with the APP Assessment Grids to assess pupil progress in reading and support target setting.

¹ <http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/progressionmaps>

² http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/downloads/enapp178905av_guide_read_y_7.pdf

Orientation Tasks – Chapter 1 (p1–19)

The following tasks could be completed during or after the reading of the first chapter. The page references might be helpful for note making during the initial reading.

Tasks requiring skills in information retrieval (AF2)

- Use information in the first chapter to describe a *Greaser* and a *Soc*.
- Use information in the first chapter to describe the three brothers Soda, Darry and Ponyboy.

Task requiring skills in inference (AF3)

- What can be inferred about Ponyboy's world from the following quotations in Chapter 1?

...it's the abbreviation for the Socials, the jet-set, the West-Side rich kids. (p2)

We're poorer than the Socs and the middle-class. (p2)

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. (p3)

I'm not saying that either Socs or greasers are better; that's just the way things are.

the warfare is between the social classes (p11)

...Socs. And you can't win against them no matter how hard you try, because they've got all the breaks (p11)

Tasks on use of structure (AF4)

Draw a graph to show how the atmosphere moves from calm to tense and back in the first chapter:

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Calm | x | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tense | | p1 | p2 | p3 | p4 | p5 | p6 | p7 | p8 | p9 | p10 |

Describe how Hinton has used an effective blend of first person narrative, action and dialogue in the first chapter and explain what effect this has on the reader.

Tasks on use of language (AF5)

Hinton presents us with characters that have a sense of pride in their appearance and in their use of language. An example of this is when Ponyboy tells the reader about the difference between *Tough and tuff* on page 13. Find other examples of language use that is particular to the Greasers and explain what effect it has on other characters and on the reader.

Task requiring awareness of author as creator of text with a specific viewpoint and purpose (AF6)

What do the following quotations from page 17 tell the reader about the world that Hinton has set the novel in and what do you think she is trying to make the reader feel?

Darry worked too hard

Darry didn't deserve to work like an old man when he was only twenty

We just didn't have the money for him to go to college, even with the athletic scholarship he won.

Task requiring understanding of social context (AF7)

The Outsiders was written forty years ago with a contemporary setting. The world was different then in many ways but similar in others.

- On pages 9–12, Ponyboy introduces the gang. Research current concerns about youth culture and compare anti-social behaviour now to that in Ponyboy's neighbourhood.
- On page 13, Ponyboy aged fourteen talks about smoking with his friends. Research how attitudes to smoking have changed in the last forty years.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Find the main ideas in a text and support them with evidence](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how the characters are brought to life with vivid stories.

Activity:

Ask pupils to work in a group in role as Steve, Ponyboy, Cherry, Sodapop, Dally and Darry to discuss what happened to Jonny using evidence from the text on pages 32–36 to guide their characterisations.

Ask pupils to pick out the facts about what happened to Jonny to write a police report with all points supported with evidence from the text, e.g.

Steve Randle was one of the first to find Jonny. The first thing he noticed was that his jacket had a stain the colour of rust on the collar (p33)

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Use a short, well-chosen quotation within a sentence to show that I can refer closely to a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the codes of practice amongst the gangs.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to work in pairs in role with one as a boy new to the neighbourhood and one as a *Greaser*. The *Greaser* needs to give advice to the newcomer about the rules on behaviour in the gang by picking out examples from the text, e.g. *You must go to the Drive-in called The Dingo or Jays.* (p20)
- 2 Ask pupils to write to explain the daily life of a *Greaser* by embedding quotations as modelled:

Greasers tend to goof around at certain Drive-ins that are considered rough because there is always a fight going on there. They drink Coke and smoke Kools. They know who is their kind and who is not. They stick together and know they are a grease just like their buddy and won't let anyone from outside the gang call them trash.

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Tracing the development of themes and ideas in a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the quantity of violent incidents in one chapter.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to work in pairs to make a list of all violent incidents in Chapter 2, e.g. *always a fight going on, a girl got shot, a pretty good fight.* (p20)
- 2 Ask pupils to respond individually to the question: *To what extent does Hinton make shockingly violent incidents normal in order to explore how it affects the young people involved?*

Provide a model answer if necessary, e.g.

The violent incidents in this part of the novel are ongoing. They are everyday occurrences for fourteen-year-old Ponyboy and sixteen-year-old Jonny, although we do get a sense of them not liking it. Their ability to change the world around them and themselves is not straightforward and we see them doing their best in Chapter 2.

Initially, Ponyboy and Jonny are witness to a fight in which *switchblades* are drawn. They have been catching up on who was *in jail*, who could *whip who* and who had *stole what*.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: To use inference and deduction when reading a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on what is happening in people's lives because they are one type or another.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to consider why life is the way it is for Cherry and Ponyboy using the following model answers:
 - Cherry says that she is *searching for something else* despite having nothing *else to want* (p40). This suggests that she has _____.
 - Ponyboy tells Cherry that Soda's horse *got sold* (p42). Soda didn't make a fuss and Ponyboy saved up in hope of being able to buy it back. This suggests that life in the Curtis household was _____.
- 2 Ask pupils to find more information about Cherry, Ponyboy and Jonny's lives by reading between the lines and guessing rather than using the stated facts.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Interpreting layers of meaning](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the similarities in the lives of the young people.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to work in pairs considering the reference to sunsets on pages 42–43 answering the following questions:
 - Why has Cherry used the sunset as a link between them?
 - What prompted Cherry to ask Ponyboy about sunsets?
 - What can the reader infer about the fact that Cherry is now too busy to look at sunsets but Ponyboy isn't?
- 2 Ask pupils to respond to the layers of meaning in Ponyboy's reference to equality in "It ain't fair that we have all the rough breaks" (p45) and to sunsets when he says to the Socs "don't forget that some of us watch sunsets too" (p48).

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: To develop an appreciation of Irony](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the leadership qualities shown in the older boys.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to establish a definition of irony and its purpose in writing, considering what would be the likely outcome for Cherry and Ponyboy in these genres:
 - in a romantic novel
 - in a horror story
 - in a contemporary novel using irony to expose the real life twists and turns involved in life for young people.
- 2 Ask pupils to work in pairs and reread pages 48–51 and answer the following questions:
 - What is ironic about Cherry's final words after all she has seen and heard *I hope I never see him again, or I will* (p48).
 - Why is she in danger of falling in love with Dally?
 - What is ironic about Jonny's parents not caring and Ponyboy *trembling at the thought of facing Darry* (p51)?
- 3 Ask pupils to write individually about Dally's role in saving Jonny and Ponyboy and how straightforward expectations of people aren't always helpful.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Use a range of imaginative reading strategies](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how crime leads to punishment.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to work in groups to consider each character and whether, so far, they have been treated as deserved or not, e.g.

*Ponyboy was out in the middle of the night and got involved in a stabbing.
His punishment so far is to have to cut his beloved hair off.
This is to some extent fair as he hadn't actually done anything wrong.*

- 2 Ask pupils to make links between Jonny and Ponyboy's crime in Chapter 5 and their punishment in Chapter 6 and consider the intentions of the author in structuring the novel in this way.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Text organisation and its effect on a reader](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how the author creates tension.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to consider why text is organised into chapters then ask pupils to look at pages 88–89 and consider the effect of ending with the information that Cherry had become a *spy* only to pick it up right at the start of Chapter 6.
- 2 Ask pupils to work in pairs to put the events of Chapters 5 and 6 into boxes.

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Jonny gets supplies | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|--|

- 3 Ask pupils to work individually to describe how the pace of the action is similar to the pace of the life for these two young boys.

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Synthesising information](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the way the text is organised so information comes at us in different ways.

Activity:

Ask pupils to link the following:

- the meaning in the Robert Frost poem on p81 to Ponyboy's appreciation of the sunrise on page 80;
- reference to *Sherman's siege of Atlanta* to Jonny and Ponyboy's stay at the church on pages 82–83;
- the neglect that Jonny feels from his parents and Ponyboy feels about Darry to the way they care for the children trapped in the church on pages 95–98.

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Identifying and commenting on a writer's choice of language](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the language of the street.

Activity:

- Ask pupils to work in pairs to collect words and phrases that define the setting as the streets of North America in the 1960s from these two chapters, e.g.

hair looking so lousy (p104);
getting a kick out of all this (p105);
help us out in a rumble (p107).

Ask pupils to respond to the question: *How has Hinton used language effectively to make the life of the boys seem real to the reader?*

Provide a model answer if necessary, e.g.

The Outsiders is a realistic novel about how young boys had to deal with a tough life in the 1960s. Hinton uses language like the boys really spoke to allow the reader to hear their voices and their points of view.

An example of Hinton's use of contemporary language is when Ponyboy is back at home with his buddies on page 109. Ponyboy tells us that his house is free for anyone to come and *lay over and cool off at* if one of the boys is *hacked off at his parents*.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: A writer's language choices and their effect on a reader](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the different language of the narrator and the kids on the street.

Activity:

Ask pupils to work in pairs to discuss how the language the boys use shapes them and guides other people's opinion of them. Ask the pairs to consider the fact that ultimately, the language means nothing because it is not real. Ponyboy says *He ain't a Soc... he's just a guy*.

Ask pupils to respond to the question: *How does Hinton explore different language use and its effect?*

Pupils should refer to:

- the conversation with the doctor on page 106
- the language used by the press on page 111
- the conversation between Ponyboy and Randy on pages 120–123
- the banter between Two-bit, Darry and Soda on page 141.

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Understanding and using key terminology](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the language techniques used by Ponyboy.

Activity:

Ask pupils to work in pairs to compare the slang of the streets to the pure and simple truths used in Ponyboy's narrative.

| Slang | Simple Truth |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| the big rumble (p113) ruin my rep (p117) punk out (p122) | they ain't goin' to put us in a boys' home (p113) to have somebody lay down the law...that's what we all want. (p121) can you see the sunset real good from the Westside? (p135) |

Ask pupils to respond to this question: *To what extent does Hinton want the reader to see beyond the language to the truth?*

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Understanding the writer's viewpoint](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the frustration felt by the characters, the author and the reader at this point.

Activity:

Ask pupils to work in pairs to consider if there is evidence in these chapters to suggest that:

- Hinton believed that people judged people by the way they looked and that this should change (p147).
- Hinton believed that there was an unfair waste of young people's lives going on around her and that this should change (p160).
- Hinton believed that people did know what was right and wrong but that was not enough to bring about change (p141–142).

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Commenting on the impact of a writer's choices](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on what Hinton wanted in response to her novel.

Activity:

- Ask pupils to read *About The Outsiders* on pages 188–189.
- Ask pupils to work in pairs to link the reasons that Hinton wrote the novel, described on page 188, to the sarcastic representation of *Greasers and Socs* on pages 141–142.

Ask pupils to respond to the question: *The Outsiders is referred to as a miracle of honesty. To what extent do you agree with this and what changes do you think are possible in the world in response to a novel?*

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Explaining the position of the reader, writer and director/narrator in relation to a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the possibilities this work offers.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to read *About The Outsiders* on pages 188–189 and discuss the relevance that the novel has to today.
- 2 Ask pupils to work in small groups to consider how the novel could be converted to a film in order to explore the different voices and how they might convey:
 - the characters being *Gone With The Wind*;
 - Ponyboy as narrator *staying gold*;
 - Hinton as author in 1967;
 - Julia Eccleshare as commentator in 2007;
 - the reader/viewer today.
- 3 Ask pupils to storyboard this section and make full use of voiceover combined with still images to really explore the author's *outrage by the way some in society are condemned to live on the margins* (p188).

FOR A COMPETENT READER

[Pupil target: Understand the social, historical and cultural context of a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on the details of Ponyboy's world.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to research reform school, social workers and poverty in 1960s America.
- 2 Ask pupils to consider to what extent is the fact that Ponyboy *couldn't care less about what Randy thought* on page 169 an indication of hope for the future?
- 3 Ask pupils to research and discuss America today and decide how Hinton's novel might have instigated change.

FOR AN ACTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Understand the difference between factual account and fictional interpretation of historical facts](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how fiction to some extent allows the issues being addressed to become more real as we look at a range of perspectives.

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to discuss how a factual account might be in danger of creating pity whereas fiction could create anger about the lives of people on both sides.
- 2 Ask pupils to consider how the description on page 168 could be applied to several characters, *A reckless, hot-tempered boy, cocky and scared stiff at the same time* (p168) and could be applied to boys on the streets of America and elsewhere today.

FOR A REFLECTIVE READER

[Pupil target: Exploring the context of a text](#)

Features to explore when reading:

- Focus on how the context shapes the people

Activities:

- 1 Ask pupils to work in groups to discuss stereotypes and how use of them can have a negative impact on families and communities.
- 2 Ask pupils to discuss how the characters in the novel break out of their stereotypical role and represent hope for the future.

Ask pupils to respond to the question: *To what extent are Darry, Soda and Ponyboy products of the world they are unfortunate enough to be born into?*

Darry, Soda and Ponyboy are young and poor at a time when divisions based on wealth are particularly acute. They have frustrations that represent the frustrations of a generation and they overcome adversity in a way their real counterparts are still trying to do forty years later.

One example of the characters being more than *victims of environment* is how Darry responds to his responsibility as a guardian. Darry is referred to as being a good guardian who makes Ponyboy *study* and tell him where he is and who he is with at all times. Darry yells at Ponyboy more than his father did. Once Ponyboy realises that this is all because he does love him and care for him just like a good parent, then we see how there is hope for Ponyboy to get on and succeed in life.

Information retrieval (AF2)

Who was at court and what was said?

What was Ponyboy asked to do by his English teacher and what did he do?

Inference (AF3)

What can we infer about Two-Bit's feelings about himself when he says, *Ponyboy, listen, don't get tough. You're not like the rest of us and don't try to be...* (p177).

What can we infer about Jonny's feelings about himself when he says, *Their lives are worth more than mine, they have more to live for. Some of their parents came by to thank me and I know it was worth it.*

Use of structure (AF4)

How does the ending of the novel represent a suitable starting point in sorting everything out?

How has Hinton matched the pace of the novel to the speed at which it might be read and how does this make it seem all the more real?

Use of language (AF5)

The simple truths are often conveyed using complex symbols.

How does Hinton use colour to emphasise key points on page 185?

How does the image of the three boys tying in the race lit by stars on page 183 work to represent the family and the community of young people in general regardless of *gang*?

Awareness of author's viewpoint and purpose (AF6)

Hinton's specific viewpoint and purpose is on the surface throughout this novel, but the depth of feeling it explores is sometimes surprising.

When Darry accuses Ponyboy of *living in a vacuum* on page 180, what do you think he is saying and what do you think Hinton is saying to young people in 1967?

When Soda shouts at Ponyboy for realising why Darry is so protective and at Darry for *bugging* Ponyboy *about every little mistake he makes*, what do you think Soda is saying to the pair of them and what do you think Hinton is saying to families and communities all over the world?