

Ms. Cavallaro

English 7

Explanatory Essay

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The Outsiders by S.E Hinton is a novel written about two gangs of teenage boys living in Oklahoma. The Greasers, the poorer gang on the East Side, and the Socs, the rich gang on the West Side, are rival gangs who often get into vicious fights. Both gangs, however, go through rough times and face many challenges while growing up. The theme of the novel *The Outsiders* is that change is a part of life that forces people to grow.

The first example of the theme that change is a part of life that forces people to grow is when Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry's parents die in a car accident. The brother's lives change drastically after this event and they are forced to grow up quickly. Sodapop and Darry both get jobs and drop out of school to support their family. Ponyboy says, "Darry didn't deserve to work like an old man when he was only twenty.... now he didn't have time between jobs to even think about college" (Hinton, 16). This quote shows the theme of *The Outsiders* because it shows how a sudden change happened when Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry's parents died. This change forced Darry grow and learn how to live without his parents, which meant giving up college to work two jobs. Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry's parents dying in a car accident shows the theme of the novel.

The second example of the theme that change is a part of life that forces people to grow is when Ponyboy and Johnny run away after Bob is killed. Ponyboy and Johnny run away to an abandoned church where they are forced to change their looks, provide for themselves, and stay

indoors. Johnny grows by taking care of Ponyboy while they are in hiding. Ponyboy says “I was glad I had to run away with him instead of Two-Bit or Steve or Dally. That would be the one thing they’d never think of—soap” (Hinton, 72-73). The quote shows how Johnny changed into a leader and looked after Ponyboy while they were on the run. He thought of important things they needed to buy and do in order to survive. Clearly, Johnny grew when he was forced to run away after Bob’s death.

In the book *The Outsiders* many of the characters go through changes in their lives. Ponyboy, Sodapop, and Darry’s parents die in a car accident when the boys are all still teenagers. Also, Ponyboy and Johnny live temporarily on the run after they are in a gang fight and kill Bob. Both of these are examples of major changes in the characters’ lives. Throughout all of these difficult situations the boys learn and grow up. As you can see, the theme of *The Outsiders* is that change is a part of life that forces people to grow.