

Name:

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## *Notebook Check #2: Essay Dissection*

Supplies you need:

- Green highlighter/marker
- Yellow highlighter/marker
- Blue highlighter/marker

Directions:

1. Use your GREEN highlighter/marker to highlight/underline the thesis statement in this essay.
2. Use your YELLOW highlighter/marker to highlight/underline the quotes (with in-text citations) in this essay.
3. Use your BLUE highlighter/marker to highlight/underline the transition words/phrases in this essay.

**Prompt:** Throughout *The Outsiders*, S. E. Hinton creates many different scenes featuring male-female interactions. What was Hinton trying to accomplish in these scenes; what is the main idea that she is trying to get across to the audience?

### **Cherry Valance & Male-Female Relationships in *The Outsiders***

Throughout history, men and woman have always seemed at odds; men tend to favor war and brutality, while women embrace nurturing femininity and peace. S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* plays on this idea, featuring many instances of male-female interactions to illustrate the idea that male-female relationships are the mostly likely to succeed between the Socs and the Greasers. In agreement with this idea is author Joshua Goldstein's "difference feminists," who embrace the idea that women think differently than men, especially when it comes to war and violence. Although no relationships are perfect, and the relationships between the two gangs will never be in complete harmony, Hinton's belief is that male-female relationships inspire hope for a better future, as displayed through the interactions between her characters.

Throughout the novel, there are many instances of flirtations between boys and girls, but the most positive relationships that are formed are actually between the Soc girls, and the Greaser boys. In chapter 2 of *The Outsiders*, Hinton details an interaction between Two-Bit, Marcia, Ponyboy and Cherry, which is both innocent and playful (Hinton 26). Because this flirtation between the two gangs is innocent and nonviolent, it suggests that there could eventually be some sort of harmony between the Socs and the Greasers.

Cherry easily bridges the gaps between the two gangs many times throughout the novel, even though Bob, her boyfriend, was the Soc that was murdered in a violent fight between Ponyboy, Johnny, and the Socs. Cherry's feelings of responsibility for the encounter, and for the unfair fight between Johnny, Ponyboy and the Socs, causes her to feel guilt; when speaking about Cherry, Dally says, "She said she felt that the whole mess was her fault... and that she'd keep up with what was comin' off with the Socs in the rumble and would testify that the Socs were drunk and looking for a fight and that you fought back in self-defense" (Hinton 86). Because of these feelings of guilt, Cherry begins to act as a spy for the Greasers. This is yet another instance through which the two gangs interact in a nonviolent way, making Cherry Valance the best example of Hinton's women peacemakers throughout the novel.

This idea of peace between the two gangs was completely unheard of for Ponyboy. After finding out about Cherry's agreement, Ponyboy states that, "...Cherry Valance, the cheerleader, Bob's girl, the Soc, was trying to help us. No, it wasn't Cherry the Soc who was helping us, it was Cherry the dreamer who watched sunsets and couldn't stand fights. It was hard to believe a Soc would help us, even a Soc that dug sunsets" (Hinton 86).

This passage alone is an indication of how alien and new this concept was during Hinton's time. Even Ponyboy, the most hopeful, innocent, and caring of all the Greaser boys, wasn't used to positive relations between the two gangs. This relationship between Cherry

and Ponyboy becomes very important, and is what gives the reader hope for a brighter future.

Joshua S. Goldstein's *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* details the idea of "difference feminists," as those who "argue that women, because of their greater experience with nurturing human relations, are generally more effective than men in conflict resolution and group decision-making, and less effective than men in combat" (Goldstein). Goldstein argues that because women approach these ideals differently, they are "more likely than men to oppose war, and more likely to find alternatives to violence in resolving conflicts" (Goldstein). This idea of "difference feminists" agrees with Hinton's design of Cherry Valance; even though Cherry is a Soc, she is very against the gang violence that takes place, and even feels that the death of Bob, and the violent fight between Johnny, Ponyboy and the Socs was her fault, and that she must fix it.

Hinton made sure to emphasize that not all male-female interactions within the novel are positive, though. Throughout the novel, Ponyboy's brother Sodapop idolizes his girlfriend Sandy, and is extremely faithful to her. Meanwhile, Sandy becomes pregnant and as the story develops, Hinton indicates that Sodapop is not the father (Hinton 111), and that even if he was, her family would never allow for Sandy to marry a Greaser. This instance is a reminder to the readers that women are not faultless, and enforces the idea that all of these characters are human; women are not the perfect answer to creating peace within the novel.

In the end of the novel, Hinton leaves the reader with a feeling of uneasy hope. Although nothing becomes completely resolved between the gangs, the last interaction between Ponyboy and Cherry gives the reader some sort of anticipation; "Hey,' I said suddenly, 'can you see the sunset real good from the West Side?' She blinked, startled, then smiled. 'Real good.' 'You can see it good from the East Side, too,' I said quietly" (Hinton 129). This interaction is meant to remind the reader that both the Socs and the Greasers see

things from the same perspective, giving them a bridge on which to build. But, because the conversation isn't smooth and happy, it is a subtle reminder that finding peace will be difficult.

S. E. Hinton's implications are that male-female relations are the best way for the Socs and the Greasers to create peace. This idea is in agreement with Joshua S. Goldstein's "difference feminists" because they believe that women and men behave fundamentally differently when it comes to war relations, and the best representation of this idea is through the character Cherry Valance.