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English

16 November 2015

Stereotypes Do Not Always Define Who We Are

Sunsets are beautiful. It allows you to take a breath and reflect on both the roses and the thorns that life throws at us. It's no wonder that the characters in this story loved and mentioned them so much. The novel The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton is a fictional story about two rival gangs in Oklahoma who may see the same beautiful sunset but still experience the world in different ways. The rivalry between the Greasers and the Socs become violent and Ponyboy Curtis is left behind to tell us about his story. We see how each character struggles with the challenges that come with being young and being trapped inside limiting social expectations. The theme that stereotypes do not always define who you are is developed in this story when Ponyboy and Johnny heroically save kids from a burning church, when Cherry decides to help the Greasers, and when Randy has a heart to heart conversation with Ponyboy.

The theme that stereotypes do not always define who you are is developed when Ponyboy and Johnny decide to risk their lives and save kids from a burning church. What readers should know is that they were running from the police because Johnny killed Bob the Soc. They spent a week hiding in an abandoned church before Dally came to visit them. When they left for food they came back to a burning church and realized that they may have started the fire. In that instant, they

don't decide to run, they decide to save the kids instead. In Chapter 6, Jerry tells Ponyboy, " 'Mrs. O'Briant and I think you were sent straight from Heaven'" (Hinton 95). What's happening in this moment is Ponyboy is trying to explain to Jerry that he's a hoodlum, someone that's not worthy of such praise. Most people would look at him and think he was a thug or a thief but Jerry didn't see him that way. This moment illustrates how stereotypes do not always define you because Ponyboy didn't fit the stereotype of a violent, uncaring Greaser. In reality, he and Johnny were good people and Jerry recognized who they were based on their heroic actions, not their appearances. Another example that supports this theme is when a girl Ponyboy likes, shows him she's not what she seems.

The theme that stereotypes may not define a person is developed when Cherry decides to help the Greasers. What readers should know is that Cherry is a Soc while Ponyboy is a Greaser. When she learns that Ponyboy and Johnny are on the run because they killed Bob, she decided to do the right thing by telling the police what really happened and by acting as a spy against her own gang. In chapter 8, Cherry tells Ponyboy, "I wasn't trying to give you charity, Ponyboy. I only wanted to help." (Hinton 129). What's happening in this moment is Ponyboy got upset with Cherry and called her a traitor. He was upset about everything that happened and took it out on her. Although Cherry was sad about Bob's death it didn't mean that she agreed with his actions. She cared about Ponyboy's well being. This illustrates the theme that stereotypes aren't always correct because Cherry chooses to do what is right as opposed to what her gang expects her to do. This reveals that as individuals we are capable of change and capable of going beyond people's

expectations of who we are. Another example that supports this theme is when Randy gives Ponyboy a surprise visit.

The theme that stereotypes do not always define you is developed when Randy visits Ponyboy and has a heart to heart conversation with him. What readers should know is that Bob was one of Randy's best friends. Ponyboy and Two-Bit see Randy approaching them and assume that he is there to start trouble. On the contrary, Randy is there to confide in Ponyboy. In Chapter 7 he tells Ponyboy, "I'm sick of all this...Bob was a good guy...he was a real person" (Hinton 116). What's happening in this moment is Ponyboy is sitting inside Randy's tuff car and learns that Randy isn't going to the rumble. He doesn't believe that fighting or separation between groups is necessary any more. This illustrates the theme that we are more than other's stereotypes of us. Ponyboy expected Randy to take revenge or continue being a wealthy, heartless bully but instead, he found another human being just like him. Bob's death caused him to rise above the Soc label and reach out to a Greaser. It is clear that the theme that stereotypes are meaningless is strongly developed throughout the novel.

In the novel The Outsiders, the theme that stereotypes do not always define us is developed when Ponyboy realizes he's not only a Greaser, when Cherry goes against her own gang, and when Randy demonstrates he's a human being. This theme can be applied to readers today because we all struggle with what we look like on the outside and who we are on the inside. It's easy to judge others based solely on appearances, but if we took the time to foster friendships with people who are different from us, we could begin knowing who people are on the inside.