

**We are *The Outsiders*:**  
**A Playful Response to Literature Curriculum Unit**

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**Abstract**

“To play” is a verb. It suggests an action on behalf of the player. This is not something that you normally see in a classroom. We do not play in school. We are there to learn. However, the idea behind this unit is to get the child to not just endure through another story, but rather to interact with it and use their imagination to make the story come alive becoming a player in this story of literature. It becomes more of a conversation with the literature and less of a chore.

In this novel unit, based on the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, students will explore a variety of topics that are relevant to their lives at the moment they read it. Often literature is lost on students because they cannot relate to the material or they find themselves daunted by tasks to be completed that are tiresome and worn out from overuse in the Language Arts classroom. The purpose of this unit is to not only explore the literary elements and the characterization found therein, but also to become a part of the literature and relate to it beyond the words on the page. This unit focuses on the concept of “playing” with literature as suggested by the title.

When a child is actively engaged with a selection of literature, that child owns the literature and the concepts found within it. The idea behind this curriculum unit is to have the child explore the concepts through the act of playing. There are a variety of ways in which the player interacts with the story. I invite you to come play with me and the children of my class.

**Narrative**

The novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton is the inspiration for this curriculum unit. This novel lends itself to become a literary playground for students at the middle and high school levels. As I look across my classroom, the challenge that I face this year as well as in years past becomes evident once again. I need to find literature that speaks and inspires students who are tired and bored with mundane selections read in yesteryears. I need to find activities that go beyond the typical Freytag’s Pyramid and KWL charts. I need to light a fire of passion for literature in 12 year olds. Talk about a challenge. Yet every morning when I wake up and every afternoon when I sit in front of a lesson plan book, this is the beast I find myself trying to tackle. This year is no exception. I hear the groans of complaint as I ask my students to pull out a sheet of paper. I know those

groans. I have heard them for years. Why should this year be any different? A new teacher does not necessarily mean fun and excitement in the Language Arts classroom. Little do they know that they are about to embark on an adventure that asks them to defy their typical approach to literature, confront literature from a new perspective, and threaten to leave them in love with works of literature, both short stories, poems, and full length novels.

## **Objective**

While teaching the unit based on “The Playful Response to Literature,” I will use the following questions to guide the unit: Who deserves a second chance? Why do some stories grab you and never let you go? How do our character traits reveal our motivations like character traits reveal the motivations of the characters in the novel? Why is it important to judge a person as an individual rather than a member of a group? Who am I really? What makes me “me”? We will explore the concepts of identity, redemption, family, stereotyping, guilt and innocence, and friendship. This complex novel is riddled with concepts that students are begging to explore.

My long term goals for this unit is to enhance communication skills in both the written and verbal forms, refine critical thinking skills, and offer rigorous, yet entertaining, ways to explore new literature. The strategies found within this unit involve a large amount of written and verbal communication in private, small group, and whole class settings. I will use multiple instructional tools and strategies which will be presented in a variety of formats. The unit will also contain a technology piece as part of their 21st Century Skills that are vital to their success in the future. Communication is vital for middle school students who are college bound, those that seek a leadership role, and to be active participant in their community and professions.

Another long term goal is teach writing through the use of literature. Students will be asked to respond to literature through creative means. The purpose of this is two-fold. First, students must be able to, again, effectively communicate via the written word. Second, they must be able to understand the literature to appropriately respond. This will be used to monitor both writing aptitude and reading comprehension. Both of these skills are important for students to be successful.

Finally, my ultimate goal is to inspire. I want my students to fall in love with stories and art of literature. The best way to accomplish this goal is to show students that literature is important, easy to connect with and relate to, and enjoyable. Often, literature is lost on our students because they are inundated with strategies. In our data driven world, the focus for teachers, unfortunately, becomes the skills required to pass a test and not the love of the literature that inspired them to be teachers in the first place. In this unit, my goal is to teach students how to use those skills to play with the literature, to

respond to the literature in such a way that they are not bored, but rather inspired by the work.

Within these objectives, I must also consider the Common Core Standards for English/Language Arts. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools recently adopted the Common Core Standards as a basis for yearly objectives. The idea is that all students will “master” these objectives making them well-rounded thinkers and innovators with 21st Century Skills. This unit encompasses the following objectives:

- ❖ RL.7.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
  - We will determine the theme of the text and analyze how the theme develops in and among the chapters of the novel.
  - We will also provide an object summary of the text itself.
- ❖ RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
  - We will discuss how S.E. Hinton develops the characters of Ponyboy and Johnny with discussion that revolve around how the characters change throughout the course of the novel. We will examine how Ponyboy and Dally respond to the death of Johnny (Point of view). Also, we will alter the point of view from which a selection of the story is told. We will use this to show how an alternative point of view can show character development.
- ❖ RL.7.7: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version.
  - We will watch the film version of *The Outsiders*. In addition to this viewing, the students will also participate in a Reader’s Theater activity in which they will act out a selection from the text and also act out the story as told from a different perspective.
- ❖ W.7.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  - During Socratic Seminar, the students will begin to develop arguments based on their point of view. By the end of the novel, the goal is to have students make their arguments, defend those arguments using the text, and finally provide counterarguments within the academic conversation. You can later take these very arguments within the academic conversation and use them to create a written piece in which the students use argumentative style writing with support from the text and counterarguments also using textual support.

- ❖ W.7.3 : Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
  - We will create narratives based on imagined experiences of various characters in the story. We will re-create events in the story using alternative viewpoints and sequence events as they pertain to that character’s life.
- ❖ SL.7.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
  - Students will work in whole group settings (Socratic Seminar), groups (Reader’s Theater, Cooperative Learning Groups, Journaling/“Facebooking”) and one-on-one (RAFT, alternate endings).
- ❖ L.7.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.

## **Background**

Randolph Middle School stands out among local middle schools. Our school has worked hard, and our students even harder, to shine in our large urban school district. We are a Honors School of Excellence. There are over 1100 students representing 32 nationalities, among the most diverse in the city, enrolled in my school which encompasses three programs: International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB), Exceptional Children Program, and Horizons.

According to the IB website, the programme is a non-profit educational foundation that is focused on the well rounded, internationally minded student. A student attending a school with this programme benefits by actively participating in the components which heighten critical thinking, gain an understanding of issues that impact people both domestically and abroad, and develop a true concept of the role of the individual in the international community. The Exceptional Children’s Program focuses on the personal development of students with physical and/or mental disabilities that inhibit them from participating in a regular education program. These students, however, still meet IB requirements tailored to their specific needs within the Exceptional Children’s Program. Horizons students are among some of the most talented in the district. It is a talent development and advanced studies program that offers a challenging and motivating environment for highly gifted students. These students much have an IQ of at least 145 and be working two to three years above grade level among other qualifications. They, also, still meet IB requirements within their specialized program. Basic demographic information of the school is as follows: 49% female/51% male, 48% free or reduced lunch, 71% minority population, and 87% of students are at or above grade level in

mathematics and reading. My class specifically is a 7th Grade Honors Language Arts. These students are performing above grade level on North Carolina End-of-Grade standardized tests for English/Language Arts. I do however have several students on Personalized Education Plans for a variety of reasons. Two students are on Individualized Education Plans for physical and mental health issues. Finally, I have 16 students among the three classes that are considered English Language Learners. All of these students have specific needs that must be met while at the same time I am trying to challenge my students that scored significantly above grade level.

### **Rationale for unit**

This novel is a catalyst for the critical thinking skills that are vital to middle school education. *The Outsiders* dramatizes many situations and themes that are applicable to the everyday life of a preteen such as identity, community, family, justice, and prejudices. The novel spurs discussion and launches students into a conversation concerning a range of valued ideologies. A unit of study constructed around this novel will stimulate the learner to examine a text and respond in an appropriate manner however appropriate is deemed in the context of a playful response. It will force the student to pay attention to topics that they can relate to and see that subject matter come alive in the text as well as in their lives. The originality of the novel and the movie re-creation allows for a more intertextual approach to the literature as well as lends itself to a “playful” response.

This unit fits well into the IB curriculum. Though this novel does not appear to be “internationally minded”, it does however have themes that transcends boundaries set by ethnicity as well as age. The concept of identity in this novel allows the diverse population of students in my school to have a conversation about what forms identity and the values therein. Who am I really? What makes me “me”? The idea of prejudice further spurs this conversation among the student population. Students are encouraged by this novel to determine upon what they base the concept of identity. Why is it important to judge a person as an individual rather than a member of a group? Finally, it investigates the views of justice. It forces students to look at someone’s actions and determine if that person is justified in that action. Do they deserve a second chance? We will explore all of these questions and concepts within our unit focusing on how it is portrayed in the novel and how it pertains to our world, our communities, our lives.

### **Strategies to be implemented during CTI unit: Instructional Strategies**

#### **Reader’s Theater**

The use of Reader’s Theater elicits a variety of responses from students. However, the approach can change a child’s perception of Reader’s Theater. It can offer a different context in which students are exposed to a text. It allows for a more enhanced comprehension of the text, creates a strong interest in the text, and shows students how to interact with a text that is not limited to just completed comprehension check questions

(though they are valuable). This strategy provides reading practice over and over again to build understanding and fluency. It also lets them out of their seats for awhile, a huge benefit for middle schoolers. This strategy is particularly beneficial to kinesthetic learners. It allows a student to show a more creative side while still demonstrating knowledge of the literature at hand. This is an activity in which students, while reading directly from scripts, are able to tell a portion of the story in an entertaining way that needs little to no resources other than the novel itself.

### Role-Play Scenarios

An additional strategy being used, similar to Reader's Theater, is known as "Role-Play" Scenarios. Students, especially at the middle school level, are concrete thinkers. I think there is a benefit to allowing students to take the ideas and situations found within the novels and projecting themselves into the story. The idea is not that the reader becomes a character, but rather they are themselves faced with the same challenges and choices as that character. The strategy is great for character development in addition to the literacy aspect. When they have a chance to practice making decisions in the face of adversity, they understand the conflicts within the story as well conflicts in real life. Role Play has the ability to develop and enhance content skills as well as skills need to be successful in the future. Studies have shown that those involved in role play are involved in the construction of their learning. This enhances critical thinking skills.

### Character Development Writing and Perspectives

We write best when we write from the first person point of view. As a result, I have a tendency to allow my students to create many assignments written from the first person. I allow them to become characters and write, write, write. It is amazing how the students' writing develops and how much better it seems to be when I give them this opportunity. In this particular, unit students will write from the first person point of view. The twist is that they have to become a character other than the one telling the story. If the story is told already being told in First Person, they will have to choose another character. If the story is being told in Third Person, then the student may become the main character to reveal the thoughts as well as the actions of the character. This allows students to become a part of the story rather than a spectator looking in on the characters.

Another great way to "play with literature" that I use in this unit is the concept of "playing" with the perspective from which the story is told. Challenge your kids to change the perspective from which the story is told and determine how the outcome might differ. For example, you can have the students change the gender, the age, the relationships, or the race of the character. Once they have changed the perspective, ask

students to write about how the outcome might change. Would the conflict be different? How would the interactions between the characters change? Would the character make different choices?

### Socratic Seminar/Paideia Seminar

Socratic Seminars will be implemented throughout the course of the unit to gain an insight of the students' perspective on the information being presented within the unit. The lesson is conducted using a strategy known as Paideia Seminar, which is a great tool for fostering students' participation in the whole class interaction. According to the National Paideia Center's website, Paideia increases students' factual recall, develops students' literacy skills, and strengthens students' conceptual understanding. This is done through didactic instruction which increases students' factual recall, intellectual coaching which develops students' literacy skills and seminar dialogue which strengthens students' conceptual understanding. Seminar is a student lead activity during which I serve as facilitator. These strategies are appropriate for my students because it allows them an opportunity to enhance peer interaction, writing skills, verbal communication, problem solving and critical thinking skills. The idea behind the Socratic Seminar is to engage students in academic conversations with the teacher as the facilitator and not a participant. If you are anything like me, you will find it very difficult not to contribute. However, it is important to remain unbiased and not contributing. The seminar is best if you do not guide the conversation but rather allow the students to guide themselves to explore the topics at hand.

### Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative Learning Groups vary from Paideia/Socratic Seminar in that they allow students to interact on a smaller scale. Many of the lessons found within this unit will depend on Cooperative Learning Groups. These groups will be selected by the teacher or by the students depending on the activity, focus, and rigor. The groups are small so the students feel more comfortable, but it still allows me as the teacher to challenge students. Often, I will divide the groups, so that I can give specific instructions based on capability. High achievers and those who are deemed "Talent Development" will receive more rigorous activities while those who are struggling will receive activities tailored to their needs. Other times, I will divide them into small teams, each with students on varying achievement levels. The groups are small enough so that each student feels that they can contribute to the task and work together while no one is being "left behind." Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students must work through conflicts and problems that arise until all members understand the concepts and

can successfully complete the assignment. This gives students a sense of ownership and achievement in their work within the group.

### RAFT Forms

RAFT is a “system to help students understand their roles as writers (R), the audience they will address (A), the varied formats of writing (F), and the expected topic (T).” Almost all RAFT papers are written from a perspective other than the writer’s own point of view. It also allows the students to play with the audience to whom they will write. This writing assignment deviates greatly from the standard “constructed” essay. The student is given creative license within the context of their own writing. It helps students structure their writing assignment while at the same giving them the chance to be creative. It teaches them to write to a specific audience and helps them to focus on that audience. As a teacher, I can choose to give my students one of the aspects, all of the aspects, or none of the aspects. It is a liberty that varies depending on the assignment at hand.

### Prequel, Sequel, and Alternate Endings

This strategy is fun for the kids and wildly entertaining to grade. This is an advantage for everyone involved. The students create prequels, sequels, or alternate endings to the story being read. This activity will help the child to analyze the literature, pay attention to details all while expressing their own creative style. Depending on the level of the student, you can also hold them accountable for continuing within the same writing style as the author. Using this as a post reading activity can help reinforce comprehension as well as demonstrate a student’s knowledge of characters, sequence of events, and dictate their own ideas. (readingcoachonline.com)

### Journaling or “Facebooking”

This is a great activity for children to write back and forth and also implements the much needed student centered technology component. In this strategy, students create journals between characters. A forum or discussion board is created on the teacher’s webpage, or other education website such as a [www.wikipages.com](http://www.wikipages.com) or [www.edmoto.com](http://www.edmoto.com), for the students to use in small groups. Within those small groups, each child decides which character they would like to be with no child acting as the same



character. The students, in the computer lab or at home as an extended homework assignment, write back and forth to each other in journal style, relaying:

- ❖ the events of the day (or what happened in that day's reading)
- ❖ their role within the context of the events
- ❖ the conflict
- ❖ their thoughts, actions, and words
- ❖ other character's response to them

The students then are allowed to interact with each, an online community, as well as take the role of a character.

The strategy of "Facebooking" focuses on the development of characters which is strongly seen in the development of characters in the novel such as Ponyboy Curtis and Johnny Cade. It is a way for the students to explore the characters more in-depth and think about how that character changes over the course of the novel. Creating a fake "Facebook" page would allow the students to accomplish this goal. This does require internet connection which may pose as a problem for some students as it often is not accessible on network computers. If Facebook is blocked by your school network, you could try [www.myfakewall.com](http://www.myfakewall.com). Each student creates an information page about a character. This gives them the opportunity to think about characterization within a novel or story. The students have to consider what a character looks like, their interests and activities, quotes, and interactions with other characters. The students can then "add" each other as characters, and respond to each other via "Facebook." This strategy is relevant to the students as Facebook often monopolizes their spare time.  
([ilearntechnology.com/?p=3719](http://ilearntechnology.com/?p=3719))

### **Classroom Activities**

It is important to note that these activities will not be taught on consecutive days. I will be implementing these as pre, during, and post reading strategies. However, some days will require reading and other objectives within the curriculum to be met.

#### Pre-Reading Activities

##### *Socratic Seminar*

Prior to starting the unit, I will utilize an instructional strategy known as "Socratic Seminar." I use this strategy to gain an insight of the thoughts and opinions of my students as it relates to the unit questions and to the concepts which I teach within this unit. I will ask students the following questions:

- ❖ Who deserves a second chance?
- ❖ Why do some stories grab you and never let you go?
- ❖ How do our character traits reveal our motivations like character traits reveal the motivations of the characters in the novel?
- ❖ Why is it important to judge a person as an individual rather than a member of a group?
- ❖ Who am I really? What makes me “me”?

It seems that these questions have nothing to do with each other; the students still seem to be able to relate to the concepts and have very strong opinions. The only unifying resource is found within the novel itself. This opens students to the concepts that we will explore and gives you, the teacher, a springboard to guide conversation during the unit. However, be sure not to guide the conversation during the seminar. I always ask my students to speak at least three times to make the conversation interesting and not left to a few. Once, they have spoken three times, I ask them to take notes on things that they would like to say and tell them when the appropriate time is. This keeps the conversation from being dominated by a few students. Last, I would suggest that you ask students to summarize the previous speaker before they are allowed to contribute. This ensures that they listen to each other before speaking. Attached in Appendix A is the Evaluation for Discussion Rubric that I use to monitor student participation and decide how effective the Seminar was within a particular class.

### *Cooperative Learning Groups*

Cooperative Learning Groups are pivotal in the success of this unit. Cooperative Learning Groups will be used to complete many of the assignments found within this curriculum. They also allow for differentiation in the classroom. In my class, I use a combination of data to sort my groups. Our school is pushing the concept of differentiation within all classroom settings. I choose to use the previous year’s End of Grade Testing Score, the lexile levels of each student, and also consider how well the student will work with others. You can group either homogeneous or heterogeneous. I think that working in heterogeneous groups will probably work best for these assignments. The fear that most teachers have is that one child will end up doing all of the work. If you organize your groups based not just on data but also personality, you will find that students will pull together. It is important the teacher be involved in the learning process as not to have one child do all the work. The students will work in groups to accomplish the following assignments before reading the text:

- ❖ **Stereotype Gallery Walk:** In this assignment, the teacher should hang up a variety of pictures from magazines, the internet, newspapers, and other sources. Hang

up the pictures around the room. Have students go around the room in their groups and answer the following:

- What do you think this person values?
- Do you think you would like this person? Explain.
- What stereotypes do you think this person deals with on a regular basis?

Students will have two minutes at each station to answer these questions and discuss it with their groups.

## During-Reading

### *Character Development and Changing Perspective*

I choose to allow my students to experiment with the point of view from which the novel is written, as if they were SE Hinton deciding how best to tell the story. I have them rewrite the first page of the novel using the following points of view:

- ❖ an outside, third person narrator
- ❖ Soda Pop
- ❖ one of the Socs that jumps Ponyboy

They complete this task as a Cooperative Learning Group in which each of the students writes from a different perspective and then shares their new perspective. Finally, they discuss as a group why they think SE Hinton chose Ponyboy's perspective rather than other characters and if they support that decision.

### *Cooperative Learning Groups*

The students will work in groups to accomplish the following assignments:

- ❖ **Wanted Posters:** This is a creative assignment that allows students to demonstrate knowledge of characterization within the text (Appendix B) by completing posters of each Character and how that character is involved in the novel.
- ❖ **Symbolism Collage:** This is another creative assignment in which students will analyze the text and display this analysis in a creative way. The students will be asked to gather a list of symbols that they find within the text itself. Then creatively display those symbols in the form of pictures, quotes, and reader reactions in a collage (Appendix C). Make sure to collect magazines and newspapers for a few weeks before beginning this assignment.

- ❖ **Characterization Chart:** The students will use this assignment to explain how the write uses methods of characterization to introduce us to characters and make them relatable to us. The students will be asked to pick three characters and complete the assignment based on those three characters (Appendix D).

### *Reader's Theater*

This is where the fun begins! In this activity, students are not required to work with their cooperative learning groups. I allow the students to pick their own group which gives them a sense of ownership from the very beginning. I find it best if you allow them to write their own scripts based on the text read the previous day. I have four Reader's Theater days in which my students are always asked to complete a play on the section of the story to perform for their classmates. I use the following selections as they are of high-interest and can also be used to teach plot elements:

1. Ponyboy and Johnny are in the park and are encountered with a situation involving the Socs. Johnny then stabs Bob, and he dies. This section reveals the conflict or the complication in the story.
2. When Johnny, Ponyboy, and Dally save the kids from the burning church. This is a part of the Rising Action.
3. The Rumble and Johnny's death. This is the climax of the story.
4. Finally, when Dally is shot by the cops as a part of the falling action.

After we have read each of these sections in the novel, we of course discuss the plots element. I would then have the students write their own scripts based on the story and act it out for the class. Then, as a second portion of our "play", I have the students re-write the script from a different perspective. I allow some creative license with this perspective writing. I let the students pick the point-of-view from which to tell the story.

### *Role-Play Scenarios*

This coordinates nicely with Readers Theater. During this activity, I take the same scenarios as listed above but rather than have the students become characters, I allow the students to project themselves and their individual personality into the scenario. So at

each point in the story the students are asked to consider the situations in which the characters find themselves. The students will then write a one to two page paper describing how they would react to the situation, what they would, and how they would resolve the issue if they were in it. This allows the students to relate to the characters.

### *RAFT Forms*

The RAFT Form will be given at three different times during the story with one final form as a post-reading activity. The students will address each of the following forms as it corresponds with the text. This can vary based on the academic conversations you have in your class. Sometimes, the concepts lend itself to a perfect RAFT Form.

#### Chapter 1-6:

1. R- Role of the Writer: Determined by the student
2. A - Audience: The members of the community in which the church is located
3. F- Format: Determined by the student
4. T- Topic to Explore: Do you think that Johnny and Ponyboy deserve to be turned in to the local police?

#### Chapters 7-8:

1. R- Cherry Valance
2. A- Ponyboy
3. F- Determined by student
4. T- Determined by student

#### Chapter 9-12

1. R- Dally
2. A- Johnny
3. F- Determined by student
4. T- Determined by student

### *Journaling or "Facebooking"*

This is where you implement your technology into your unit. View some of the resources listed above to determine the forum that is accessible to your students. For the intent and purpose of the unit, I will be referencing [www.myfakewall.com](http://www.myfakewall.com). In this assignment, students will work in their Cooperative Learning Groups. They will be asked to take on the role of a character in the story without have duplicate characters. For example, Kate will be Cherry, Parker will take the role of Ponyboy, Chris is Johnny, and Abby plays Dally.

The student must first create the information page for their character. They have to consider the methods of characterization in order to do so. The fake page must include:

- ❖ a picture that represents the character,
- ❖ quotes from the text as stated by the character,
- ❖ the character's likes and interests,
- ❖ their interactions with other characters,
- ❖ conflicts they encounter,
- ❖ and their reactions to said conflicts.

The students will go into the computer lab and communicate with one another just as they would if they were "facebooking" as themselves. The students will be asked to discuss:

- ❖ the events that took place on that day,
- ❖ how they reacted to the events,
- ❖ what others thoughts,
- ❖ and how they will fix the problem.

The conversation must be based on the text itself and include citations from the novel. This activity gives students the technology that they crave while allowing the teacher to monitor activity and productivity. The grade will be based on how well the student captures the characters, but more importantly how they view the concepts in the book as the character. The students will need at least five visits to make this activity worthwhile. The more the student can interact as the character, the better you can see how they capture the character.

After-Reading

*Prequel, Sequel, and Alternate Endings*

This may be one of my favorite assignments. It is one of my favorites to grade, because as a teacher you are allowed to see your students writing within a framework that allows them to be creative and entertaining. This concept is pretty easy. As the teacher, I will ask my students to write either a Prequel, Sequel, or Alternate Ending to the story. It is important as the educator to explain the difference between these three writing types to the students as it is easy to mix them up. I ask my students to pick one of the three styles and write it very well. The students need to know the guidelines you have for the task. I ask my students to write 2 to 3 pages, but encourage them to write more. I tell them that they must continue in the same writing style as SE Hinton. They should imitate her use of characterization, the dialogue of the characters, and the formality or informality used in the text itself. Finally, the students should be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of the characters, the sequences of events, and a knowledge of the text itself. This assignment allows for differentiation within the lesson plan. For my stronger students, I require them to create an alternate ending in which one character changes a decision and it affects the entire outcome of the story. For struggling readers, it is easiest to create a sequel in which they pick up where SE Hinton left off. This does require them to have a basic comprehension of the novel, but they are not bogged down with changing the content of the story.

#### *Socratic Seminar (One more time!)*

At the end of our unit on *The Outsiders*, we wrap up our conversation on identity and second chances by participating in Socratic Seminar. Again, be sure not to guide conversation, but rather allow the students to participate actively in this academic conversation. Remind them to site the text to support their claims within the conversation. This should be about the only contribution you make as facilitator. At the end, it is important that the students reflect on their concepts and views have changed due to the text and what they have learned during the unit. Ask students the following questions:

- ❖ Who deserves a second chance?
- ❖ Why do some stories grab you and never let you go?
- ❖ How do our character traits reveal our motivations like character traits reveal the motivations of the characters in the novel?
- ❖ Why is it important to judge a person as an individual rather than a member of a group?
- ❖ Who am I really? What makes me “me”?

- ❖ How does “playing” with a story alter your opinion as a reader? Defend your answer.
- ❖ What can life teach us that school cannot?
- ❖ What does Ponyboy understand about life after he reads the letter written by Johnny after Johnny’s death?
- ❖ What does “staying gold” mean? How does it apply to you/us?
- ❖ Randy believes that violence does not solve problems. Do you agree? Have you ever made a decision that was not popular with others even though you knew it was right? What did you learn from that situation?

Appendix A is a group evaluation rubric to use with this discussion. It is made for the teacher, but you can modify it for students to assess the group if you like.

### *RAFT Forms*

Upon completion of the novel, the student should be asked to complete one more RAFT Form as follows:

1. R- Determined by student
2. A- Determined by student
3. F- Determined by student
4. T- Symbolism in the novel

### *Character Development Writing and Perspectives*

I constantly remind myself that we write best when we write from first person point of view. It is infinitely easier for a child to talk about themselves rather than about others. I allow students to project themselves in the story, and write from the first person. For some reason, their writing seems to be so much better that way. At the end of the novel, I ask students to pick their favorite scene. Then I ask them to write that scene over three different ways each time changing something about “themselves” or rather the character from which the story is told. For example, I will have them re-write the scene of Johnny and Ponyboy in the park after Ponyboy convinces Johnny to run away. However, in this twist, they are both girls. The students have to answer the following questions in the narrative that they write:



- ❖ Would the conflict be different? Would the characters find themselves faced with a different struggle?
- ❖ How would the interactions between the characters change? Or would they change? Would the dialogue change
- ❖ Would the characters make different choices?
- ❖ How would the outcome be different?

Then I ask the students change something about the identity of the character. They can choose the race, the age, the social class, the relationships between the characters, or even the time period in which the story is told. They must use the same scenario and only change one aspect of the character. The results of this are amazing.

## Evaluate the Discussion in Socratic Seminar

<u>Exemplary</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>
Everyone participated.	Most students actively participated.	The conversation was dominated by a few students.
Everyone spoke clearly so that all students could hear.	Most students spoke up, but a few were difficult to hear.	Several students were hard to hear and were asked to repeat themselves.
Everyone listened and was able to summarize the previous speaker.	Most students were able to summarize the previous speaker, but a few were unable to do so.	Several students were not listening and could not summarize the previous speaker.
Students were able to stick to the topic throughout the whole discussion with little to no sidebar conversations.	Students occasionally got off topic and were redirected. There were few to no sidebar conversations.	The students were often redirected in their conversation. There were many sidebar conversations.
Most students were able to make a connection between themselves and the text and perhaps even a few made connections between this text and another text.	Students were able to make a few connections between their lives and the events in the text.	Students struggled making connections with the novel.
Many students were able to cite support from the text when making their argument.	Several students were able to cite support.	Students struggle making connections with the novel.
Students were able to defend their position and offer counterarguments to those who disagreed.	Students were able to defend their position, but could offer limited counterarguments.	Students were incapable of defending their position.

Notes:

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Students who spoke once	Students who spoke twice	Students who spoke three times

## Appendix B

### **Wanted Poster**

Directions: As a group, you will create Wanted posters for characters from *The Outsiders*. You should select three characters from the novel. You will decide what the character is wanted for (ie: loyalty, betrayal, rivalry, etc.). Your poster should include all of the following (but feel free to add more if you find it necessary)

- Name of character
- Wanted for acts of \_\_\_\_\_ and consequences of their actions according to the text
- Specific acts that the character does to help you determine what they are wanted for
- Personality traits and the method of characterization that helped you determine those traits
- Nickname or alias (if they have one)
- Detailed physical description based on what you've read in the text and include a picture

## Appendix C

### **Symbolism Collage**

In this activity, you and your Cooperative Learning Group will come up with symbols that you find in the novel. The task is relatively easy; the analysis not so much. In this collage of pictures, quotes, and reactions, you and your group will decide upon what symbols you find within the text and ones we discuss in class.

1. List these symbols,
2. what they represent,
3. a quote that led you to your inference,
4. and your group's thoughts and reactions to this idea.

From this list, create a collage filling the entire page with pictures and words. There should be no blank spaces on your poster. For your pictures you may use magazine pictures, pictures from the newspaper, or pictures you printed from the internet.

Appendix D

**Characterization Activity**

Direct Characterization: (What the narrator tells you about the character)

Actions of the Character:

Character's Thoughts:

Adjectives to describe your character:

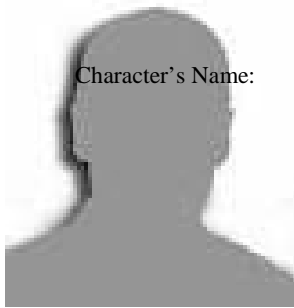
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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What the character says:



Character's Name:

Other Character's Reactions  
and Words:

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Physical Description (support  
your claim with references to the  
text):

**Bibliography**  
Teacher Resources

Adams, William. *Institute Book of Readers Theater: A Practical Guide for School, Theater, & Community*. Portland: University of Southern Maine, 2003.

This is a "field guide" for using Reader's Theater in the classroom. It gives practical suggestions for using this strategy.

Duncan, Jacqueline, and Madelaine Lockwood. *Learning Through Play: A Work-Based Approach for the Early Years Professional*. New York: Continuum, 2008.

Here you will explore the concept of play in the classroom and the psychological

benefits thereof.

Kagan, Spencer. *Kagan Cooperative Learning* . 1994. Reprint, San Clemente: Kagan Cooperative Learning , 1997.

This resource is great for teachers who want to optimize the use of the cooperative learning group in their classroom.

Literacy Connections. "Readersâ€™ Theater | Literacy Connections." Teaching Literacy Skills and a Love of Reading | Literacy Connections.

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/ReadersTheater.php> (accessed November 28, 2011).

This website is a great resource for the classroom. On this website, you will find a numerous amount literacy strategies including Reader's Theater.

Sloyer, Shirlee. *From the Page to the Stage: The Educators Complete Guide to Readerâ€™s Theater*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2003.

Dr. Sloyer identifies a variety of differentiation strategies to implement Reader's Theater into the classroom.

"Teaching Practices: The National Paideia Center." The National Paideia Center.

<http://www.paideia.org/about-paideia/teaching-practices/> (accessed November 28, 2011).

Using this website was used to research the concept of the Padiea Seminar/Socratic Seminar. It gives detailed instructions on how to implement that strategy.

### Student Resources

Alvarez, Julia. "Names/Nombres." In *Holt McDougal Literature Grade 7* . Evanston:

Holt McDougal, 2012. 804-808.

In this memoir, the writer discusses finding her identity in her name.

Bradbury, Ray. *Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed*. New York: Literacy Volunteers of New York, 1990.

In this story, students explore how setting can influence characters and ultimately change them.

Frost, Robert. *Several Short Poems*. New York: H. Holt, 1924.

Have students read "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost and discuss the symbolism of the poem and the implication it has in the novel.

Henry, O.. *Tales of O. Henry*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969.

The story "A Retrieved Reformation" chronicles a story about a man who changes his identity in order to change his lifestyle completely.

Hinton, S.E.. *The Outsiders*. New York: Viking Press, 1967.

This is the novel that the entire unit is based on. Each student would, preferably, have their own copy so that they could annotate the text as they read.

Hinton, S.E.. *That Was Then, This Is Now*. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

This is the second book in the series following *The Outsiders*. I always recommend it to my students who show an interest in reading more of Hinton's work.

Miklowitz, Gloria. *The War Between the Classes*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1985.

Similar thematically to *The Outsiders*, this story offers more diversity in characters ethnic background and the struggles therein.

#### List of Materials for Classroom Use

Alvarez, Julia. "Names/Nombres." In *Holt McDougal Literature Grade 7*. Evanston:



Holt McDougal, 2012. 804-808.

In this memoir, the writer discusses finding her identity in her name.

Bradbury, Ray. *Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed*. New York: Literacy Volunteers of New York, 1990.

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Henry, O.. *Tales of O. Henry*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969.

The story "A Retrieved Reformation" chronicles a story about a man who changes his identity in order to change his lifestyle completely.

Soto, Gary. "Seventh Grade." In *Baseball in April and Other Stories* . London: Sandpiper, 2000. 74-86.

This story talks about finding your identity and changing who you are to impress others.

Thomas, Piri. *Amigo Brothers* . New York: Scholastic, 2004.

This story is about two friends who identify themselves as brothers. They must face each other in the boxing ring and remain friends through the championship.

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