



THE OUTSIDERS: PRE-READING ACTIVITY



The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton is written from the perspective of Ponyboy Curtis, a 14-year-old boy in 1960s Oklahoma. Ponyboy and his friends are called *greasers*, a term used to describe the young men from the poor side of town. The kids from the rich side of town are called Socs.

In the novel, the greasers, Socs, and the rest of society all make assumptions about others based on where someone is from, how they dress, and how they talk. Throughout the course of the story, we see how these assumptions affect the characters' decisions and interactions with others.

A **stereotype** is a fixed idea that people have about a group that is often untrue or only partly true. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, and they can be based on any number of factors, like gender, race, ethnicity, age, social class, nationality – anything that could indicate that a person is a member of a larger group.

Consider some common stereotypes that exist in society. Use the sentence frames below to prompt your thinking.

All _____ like _____.
(group of people) (interest)

Everyone knows _____ don't _____.
(group of people) (activity)

All _____ are _____.
(group of people) (quality)

People from _____ are usually _____.
(place) (quality)

After thinking about stereotypes in our society, reflect on your own thoughts and experiences. Answer the following questions.

- What are some common stereotypes that you've encountered? Has someone ever assumed something about you based on a stereotype? What happened, and how did it make you feel?

- How can stereotypes – even positive ones – be harmful to people?

- What do you think might happen in *The Outsiders*? Make some predictions about the characters, events, or themes of the novel.
