

Summary: Chapter 1

Name: _____

Ponyboy Curtis, the narrator, begins the novel with a story: he is walking home one afternoon after watching a Paul Newman film, and his mind starts to wander. He thinks about how he wants Paul Newman's good looks, though he likes his own greaser look. He also thinks that, although he likes to watch movies alone, he wishes he had company for the walk home.

Ponyboy steps back from his story to explain that walking alone is unsafe for greasers, the East Side gang of friends to which he belongs. When they walk by themselves, greasers attract the harassment of Socials, or Socs, the rich West Side crowd. Ponyboy says that greasers are poorer and wilder than the Socs, whom the newspapers condemn one day for throwing parties and praise the next day for good citizenship. Greasers wear their hair long and put grease in it. They dress tough, steal, and get into gang fights. They often carry switchblades, mainly to help them stand their ground against the Socs.

Ponyboy says he does not participate in typical greaser mischief because his oldest brother, Darrel (known as "Darry"), would kill him if he got into trouble. Ponyboy's parents died in a car crash, so the three Curtis brothers live together by themselves, an arrangement possible only as long as they stay out of trouble. Twenty-year-old Darry acts as head of the family. He is strict with Ponyboy and often yells at him. Despite his intelligence, Ponyboy lacks common sense, which frustrates Darry. Ponyboy feels great affection for his sixteen-year-old brother, Sodapop, whose charm and cheerfulness he admires.

Ponyboy returns to the story of his solitary walk after the movies. As he walks, he notices a red Corvair trailing him. He quickens his pace as he remembers how badly the Socs beat his friend Johnny Cade. The Corvair pulls up beside Ponyboy and five Socs climb out and surround him. One of them asks, "Need a haircut, greaser?" and pulls out a blade. The Socs begin to beat up Ponyboy, who screams for help. Ponyboy's brothers and the rest of their group appear on the scene and chase away the Socs. Darry starts to scold Ponyboy for walking home alone instead of calling for a ride, but Sodapop tells him to stop nagging.

The brothers and the other greasers make plans for the following night. Ponyboy decides that he and Johnny will go to a double feature at the drive-in with their friend Dally. Dally begins to talk about his ex-girlfriend, Sylvia, and Ponyboy thinks about the girls that socialize with the greasers. He wonders what it would be like to spend time with an upper-class Soc girl.

At home, Ponyboy, who loves to read, reads *Great Expectations* and thinks about how his life resembles the life of Pip, the main character in *Great Expectations*. Still shaken by his fight with the Socs, Ponyboy climbs into bed with Sodapop. The brothers talk about Sodapop's girlfriend, Sandy, whom Sodapop hopes to marry one day.

Summary: Chapter 2

The next night, Ponyboy and Johnny go with Dally to a double feature at the drive-in movie theater. They sit behind a pair of Soc girls, and Dally begins to talk dirty in an attempt to embarrass the girls. The girl with red hair turns around and coolly tells him to stop, but Dally continues to make suggestive remarks. He goes to buy Cokes, and Ponyboy talks to the red-haired girl, Cherry Valance. They talk about the rodeo and about Sodapop, whom Cherry describes as a "doll." She asks what became of Sodapop, and although the admission embarrasses him, Ponyboy says that Sodapop dropped out of school to work in a gas station. Dally comes back and offers a Coke to Cherry, but she throws it in his face. Dally tries to put his arm around her. When he will not listen to Cherry's protests, the usually quiet Johnny stuns Dally by telling him not to bother the girls.

Dally stalks off, and Cherry and her friend Marcia invite Ponyboy and Johnny to watch the movie with them. Two-Bit, one of Ponyboy's friends, comes to announce that Dally has slashed Tim Shepard's tires and is going to have to fight him. Tim Shepard is the leader of another greaser gang. Two-Bit explains the greasers' two main rules: always stick together and never get caught.

Cherry and Ponyboy go to get popcorn, and Ponyboy tells her about the time the Socs beat up Johnny. The leader of the gang that beat him, Ponyboy says, wore a fistful of rings. Cherry looks distressed and assures him that not all Socs are violent like the Socs that beat Johnny. She also tells him that Socs have problems just as the greasers do, but Ponyboy does not believe her.