Example Student

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English 7H

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Through the Eyes of The Outsiders

“The eyes are the window of the soul” is an old English Proverb. Many people say a happy person’s eyes sparkle and dance; a sad or depressed person’s eyes seem dull. It is also suggested that a serial killer’s eyes appear dark and evil. In *The Outsiders*, S.E. Hinton tells the story of 14-year-old Ponyboy and his struggle with right and wrong in a society in which he is an outsider. As Ponyboy, his brothers, and the lower-class gang of "greasers" battle the "Socs," the rich kids, Hinton creates a richness of characters who have been fondly embraced by readers since the novel’s first publication in 1967. ***Though Hinton provides very thorough descriptions of all of her characters, she places particular importance on their eyes; many of her characters’ eyes represent key facets of their personalities.***

Ponyboy’s oldest brother, Darrel, known as “Darry,” is a twenty-year-old greaser who is raising Ponyboy because their parents have died in a car crash. Strong, athletic, and intelligent, Darry has quit school. He works two jobs to hold the family together. The unofficial leader of the greasers, he becomes an authority figure for Ponyboy. When describing his oldest brother Darry, Ponyboy **states,** “He’s got eyes that are like two pieces of pale blue-green ice” (Hinton 6). He even tells Cherry, “He’s hard as a rock and about as human. He’s got eyes exactly like frozen ice. He thinks I’m a pain in the neck” (Hinton 42). Ponyboy considers Darry to be hard, even heartless, and the cool hue of Darry’s eyes reflects this inferred harshness. **Hinton’s detailed descriptions of Darry’s *eyes* support his authoritative, overly-protective *personality*, which is a key element to Ponyboy’s misconceptions and conflict with his older brother throughout the novel.**

The toughest member of Ponyboy’s group of greasers is Dallas. He is a hardened teen who used to run with gangs in New York. He has an elfin face and, unlike his friends, does not put grease in his white-blond hair. Dally’s violent tendencies make him more dangerous than the other greasers, and he takes pride in his criminal record. Ponyboy references Dally’s eyes in his detailed physical description: “His eyes were blue, blazing ice, cold with a hatred of the whole world” (Hinton 10)**.** Ponyboy feels the least comfortable with Dally. **The author of *The Outsiders* places particular importance on her description of Dally’s *eyes*, strongly contributing to a reader’s interpretation of the character’s tough, bitter *personality*.**

Johnny Cade is a sixteen-year-old greaser with black hair and large, fearful eyes. Though Johnny does not succeed in school, he approaches intellectual matters with steady concentration. The child of alcoholic, abusive parents, he is nervous and sensitive. Since his parents do not care about him, Johnny sees the greasers as his true family. In turn, the older boys, particularly Dally, are protective of him. Hinton repeatedly defines Johnny Cade by his wide, black eyes. “He had big black eyes in a dark tanned face” (Hinton 11) includes Ponyboy in his detailed description of Johnny in the novel’s first chapter. Throughout the novel, Johnny’s eyes are described as being round and huge when he is shocked or frightened, and glowing as he listens to stories of gallantry in *Gone with the Wind*. Ponyboy experiences an important realization while inside the burning church saving the children: “That was the only time I can think of when I saw him without that defeated, suspicious look in his eyes” (Hinton 92). **Hinton utilizes a vast variety of *eye descriptions* to support Johnny’s *personality progression* as he slowly transforms from a nervous, gentle, and vulnerable character to one who is brave and willing to sacrifice.**

S.E. Hinton creates vivid, realistic characters in *The Outsiders.* ***Rich emotional interactions and physical descriptions, including detailed reference to eye color and expression, add to the complexity of her characters’ personalities.*** Hinton’s *The Outsiders* invites readers to enter the exciting, emotional, and often disturbing world of a group of Oklahoma teens as they search for identity among the conflicting values of their adolescent society in which they find themselves outsiders.