

Focus Your Reading

Vocabulary Words to Know

Study the following words and definitions. You will meet these words in your reading. Be sure to jot down in your word journal any other unknown words from the reading.

rumble—to engage in a gang fight

mugged—attacked with intent to rob

lynx—a wildcat with thick, soft fur, a short tail, and tufted ears

bawling—crying or sobbing loudly

reckless—without care for consequences or danger

vacant—empty; unoccupied

nonchalantly—in an unconcerned manner

incredulous—doubtful; disbelieving; skeptical

stocky—solidly built; sturdy or chubby

roguishly—deceitfully; mischievously

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Paul Newman is an actor who starred in many films in the 1950s and 1960s. He is famous for his classic good looks, sparkling blue eyes, and method acting. Paul Newman also founded Newman's Own, a food company that donates profits to charities.

An **editorial** is an article in a publication expressing the opinion of its editors or publishers.

Will Rogers was best known as a folksy philosopher. He was a movie star, a comedian, a famous broadcaster, and a political writer. He was raised in Oklahoma and had Cherokee heritage on both sides of his family. He was even in the Guinness Book of World Records for throwing three lassos at once: one around a running horse's neck, one around its rider, and the third around the four legs of the horse!

Corvair and **Mustang** were the names of small sports cars with high performance engines. They were popular drag racing cars in the 1960s.

Rodeos are tournaments in which cowboys' herding skills are tested. Calf roping and bull riding are a couple of the competitions that take place in a rodeo.

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Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. Why do you think Ponyboy loves going to the movies? What role do the movies play in your life? What do movies do for Ponyboy?
2. What does Ponyboy mean when he says that he does well in school but “doesn’t use his head”?
3. What are some of the reasons Ponyboy gives for Darry’s strict rules? Why doesn’t Ponyboy think Darry loves him?
4. What is Johnny’s life at home like? What do the greasers give Johnny that he doesn’t experience at home?
5. How does Ponyboy feel when the Socs tease him?

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aloofness—a distant or reserved manner
elite—the best or most skilled members of a group
boxcar—an enclosed railway car used for transporting freight
stammered—said in a halting manner
territory—a sizable geographic area or region

premonition—an advanced warning
contemptuously—scornfully
bleak—cold and harsh; gloomy and dreary
panic—sudden overpowering fear
apprehensive—fearful or uneasy about the future

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Snooker is a variety of pool played with fifteen red balls and six balls of colors other than red, in which a player must shoot one of the red balls into a pocket before shooting at one of the other balls.

The **FBI** is the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which conducts investigations for the Attorney General and safeguards national security.

A **hermit** is a person who lives apart from people and society.

Bootlegging is the illegal distribution or production of highly taxed goods.

Hank Williams was one of the greatest country singers and songwriters of all time. He was born in Alabama and had to overcome many hardships to pursue his dream of becoming a musician. When Hank was seven years old, his father disappeared, and Hank helped support his family by selling peanuts and newspapers and by shining shoes. He taught himself to play the guitar and formed his own band at the age of fourteen.

The Beatles were an English rock band that rocketed to stardom in the 1960s. The four members were John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr. They were famous for their music, their moplike haircuts, and their attractiveness to adolescent girls.

A **reformatory** is a penal institution for reforming young offenders.

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1. Why are greasers and Socs so concerned about their reputation? How are they seen by society?
2. Why does Ponyboy dream about the country?
3. Why does Ponyboy think that Dally could never love anyone or anything?
4. Why does Ponyboy feel bad when he talks about his home life to Johnny?
5. What does Ponyboy believe isn't fair about being a greaser?

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siege—the surrounding of a town or fortress by an army in order to capture it

disguised—changed in appearance to prevent recognition

reluctantly—unwillingly

sullenly—gloomily; in a bad-tempered manner

gallant—spirited and courageous

detached—indifferent; not emotionally involved

indignant—angry because of injustice or unworthiness

horizon—the line along which the earth and sky appear to meet

hauled—pulled, dragged, or carried

conviction—a strong opinion or belief

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

The **electric chair** was invented in 1880 to electrocute criminals sentenced to death. The device is still in use today in Alabama, Oklahoma, and Virginia.

Peroxide is a common disinfecting agent that is also a harsh hair bleach.

Gone with the Wind is a well-known novel written by Margaret Mitchell. The story chronicles the life of Scarlett O'Hara in Georgia during and after the Civil War. The book was made into an Oscar-winning movie starring Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh.

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1. What does Darry tell Ponyboy after the fire? How does it make Ponyboy feel?
2. How does Ponyboy feel about hunting? Why is he afraid to tell Dally he feels this way?
3. How does Johnny feel when he learns that his parents aren't out looking for him?
4. What does Dally mean when he is worried that Ponyboy and Johnny will "get hardened in jail"?
5. Why is Johnny happy to be in the burning church?

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hesitation—a pause or doubt before acting, speaking, or deciding

genuine—real; sincere

delinquents—people who fail to do what is required by law or obligation

self-defense—the right to use whatever means reasonably necessary to protect oneself against violence or threatened violence

recognized—known to be something perceived or experienced before

hitch—to catch

charity—help or relief given to the poor

gasp—inhaled sharply with emotion or shock

absent-mindedly—preoccupied; forgetful

aghast—stricken with horror; appalled

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

Public appeal is a term reporters use to describe what is appealing or interesting to the community or people in town.

The **press** refers to the newspapers and television stations that report news, and the people who do that work.

When Steve says that Sandy had to move because “it was either that or get married,” he is suggesting that Sandy is pregnant. At the time of the story, an unmarried pregnant girl would have had few acceptable options.

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1. Why do you think most parents aren't aware of the segregation between the Socs and the greasers?
2. Why is Darry so worried when Ponyboy tells him he had a dream the night before?
3. How does Soda feel when his girlfriend, Sandy, moves away?
4. Why does Ponyboy hate the Socs in the Mustang?
5. What does Ponyboy realize when he listens to Randy and Cherry talk about Bob?

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amplifier—a device used to make something louder

stifled—smothered; held in; muffled

reputation—the general estimation of a person or thing held by the public

survey—a questionnaire; a list of questions asked of different people

underprivileged—socially or economically disadvantaged

menace—a threat

leery—distrustful; wary

restless—anxious; antsy; fidgety

taut—tight

delirious—a temporary mental disturbance resulting from high fever, intoxication, or shock and marked by confusion, tremors, hallucinations, and incoherent speech

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

The **Arkansas River** rises in central Colorado and flows through south Kansas, northeast Oklahoma, and Arkansas into the Mississippi River.

“**Fuzz**” is a slang term meaning “police.”

An **alley cat** is a homeless cat that searches for food in alleys and streets. It is known for being scrappy and resourceful.

A **concussion** is a jarring injury to the brain, the result of a hard blow to the head.

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1. How does Ponyboy feel about fighting?
2. How does Dally feel about helping people? Why does he feel this way?
3. How does Ponyboy feel about drinking?
4. Why does Ponyboy pretend to be proud of having killed the Soc?
5. How did Soda and Two-Bit end up in jail once?

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pity—a feeling of sorrow for another's misfortune

vacuum—a space of emptiness

guardian—one who is legally responsible for the person or property of another

acquitted—cleared of a charge

idolized—regarded with excessive admiration or devotion

flinching—pulling back as if in pain

middleman—a go-between

veered—shifted suddenly from one course of direction to another

circumstances—conditions that must be considered in determining a course of action

bulletin—a brief report on a matter of public interest

Things to Know

Here is some background information about this section of the book.

The Carpetbaggers was a popular book in the 1960s written by Harold Robbins about power, money, and Hollywood dreams.

Perry Mason was a famous detective series created by Erle Stanley Gardner. It first began as a radio show before the courtroom drama was aired on television in 1957. In the shows, Perry Mason, a defense attorney, got his clients off by exposing the real culprit on the witness stand.

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1. Why does Randy come to visit Ponyboy before the hearing?
2. Why does Ponyboy feel proud of Darry and Soda at the trial?
3. What is significant about Ponyboy threatening the Socs with a broken bottle?
4. What is Soda's role in the family?
5. Why does Ponyboy suddenly become clumsy and forgetful?