The Grass Isn’t Always Greener

It is very easy for me to agree with the famous proverb, “The grass is always greener on the other side.” Sometimes I look at my life, my possessions, my little pieces of happiness, and I compare them to what other people have. I begin to think that other people have better things than me, and I even begin to think that some people have everything that they could ever want in life. When I read S.E. Hinton’s The Outsiders, I sometimes feel like Ponyboy, who thinks that only the people who have it rough are the greasers and the only people that have good lives are the Socs. When Cherry says that “Things are rough all over” (33), she’s trying to tell Ponyboy that Socs have difficulties just like and different from greasers, and that having money doesn’t mean you don’t have problems. After reading the whole story, I begin to see that she’s right.

The greasers and Socs have similar problems, many of which are just a part of growing up. They both have problems in school, in their families, with their friends and even with their relationships to the opposite sex. There are kids in each group that experiment with alcohol and other drugs. For example, Bob and Randy drink and so does Two-Bit; many greasers smoke and so does Randy and other Socs. The greasers have people who use violence to solve their problems, like Soda, Dally and Tim Shepard; similarly, Bob and Randy use violence as well. Another problem they share is that their group doesn’t get a long with other groups, which results in tons of problems for everyone.

Even though they have lots of shared problems, the Socs have different problems that the greasers aren’t fully aware of, and visa versa. When Cherry and Pony are
walking home from the movie, they talk about the different problems. Cherry says that the greasers have too much emotion and the SoCs are often fake and hide their emotions (35). Pony writes, “SoCs were always behind a wall of aloofness, careful not to let their real selves show through” (36). The SoCs have the problem of always having to put on a show of fake emotions so they hide their true feelings. Cherry said that she hates beer parties, but she’d brag about one to a friend (35). Randy doesn’t want to rumble the greasers, but he’s too afraid to share those feelings with his buddies for fear that “they’d think I was off my rocker or turning soft” (103). Then again, the greasers have too many feelings that are often violent. They take things more personally than the SoCs, like how Pony always gets into fights with Darry. Of course, greasers and SoCs have other unique problems too, including: money, grades, girls, cars, reputations, and even the different “worlds” that they live in.

If I were like Pony, I’d think that SoCs didn’t have problems because they have more money than greasers, but Pony learns early on that money is not the thing that separates the groups. Pony says to Cherry, “It’s not money, it’s feeling – [SoCs] don’t feel anything and [greasers] feel too violently” (36). Bob seemed like the perfect guy that most parents would be proud. However, Randy said that Bob’s parents “gave in to him all the time. He kept trying to make someone say ‘No’ and they never did. They never did” (102). His problem was that he was so rich, good looking and popular that nobody ever thought to set up limits for him, including his parents, and he learned to be totally out of control.

In a way, money, looks and popularity made Bob die. That’s really important because we all want those things at some time or another because we sometimes think that people with those qualities have better lives. After reading The Outsiders, we see that groups of people have similar problems and different problems, no matter how much money they have or what clothes they wear or how good looking they are. Cherry was able to say that with the simple phrase, “Things are rough all over” (33). Pony finally believes Cherry after talking with Randy before the rumble. He writes, “Things were rough all over, but it was better that way. That way you could tell the other guy was human too” (104).