

SYNOPSIS

Fourteen-year-old Texas "Tex" McCormick fears that he will stay in Garyville, Oklahoma, while his big brother, Mason, goes away to college. Tex is a sleepwalker and has nightmares about the fight between his parents just before Clare, his mother, died of pneumonia after leaving home in the snow to attend a Christmas dance. Since her death, Tex and Mace fend for themselves while their father travels the rodeo circuits. When their money runs out, Mason secretly sells their horses. Tex, enraged by loss of Negrito fights Mace and loses.

With the promise of a basketball scholarship at the end of the year, Mace longs to leave Garyville. Even though he is frustrated with the job of raising a teenaged brother with little help from their father, Mason loves Tex. He resents Pop's absence and the man-sized job of keeping Tex out of trouble and making ends meet. In sharp contrast to their ragged lifestyle is the home of their close friends, the Collins kids, who live in affluence a half mile away.

Bob Collins takes his brother Johnny and Tex to the fair. Mason, strapped as usual, has only three dollars to give Tex for spending money. Later, at Charlie Collins' apartment, the younger boys drink too much. Bob's father, Cole, blames Tex and demands that his sons stay away from the McCormick boys. Mace stands up to his bullying. To complicate matters, Tex has fallen in love with Cole's daughter, Jamie.

At school, the McCormicks are polar opposites—Mason, the jock hero, and Tex, the academic failure and troublemaker. During a Saturday trip to the city for Mason to have tests for ulcers, Tex is accused of shoplifting, a fact which he conceals from Mace. On the way home, the boys are kidnapped at gunpoint by Mark Jennings, a hitchhiker who turns out to be an escaped convict wanted for drug dealing and murder. Before reaching the state line, Tex spins the truck off the road. The police, not far behind, shoot and kill Jennings. The boys are treated like heroes.

From news coverage of the incident, Pop learns about their adventure and returns home after a lengthy absence. Tex realizes that Pop seems more like a visitor than a family member, yet he admires and emulates his father. To his dismay, Pop prefers Mason, even though Mace is sarcastic and critical. Pop gets a job and promises to buy back Tex's horse after his first paycheck. However, Negrito's new owner refuses to sell.

At school, Tex and Johnny glue exploding caps to classroom typewriter keys to disrupt nine weeks' tests. Helen Johnson, the principal, calls their parents for a

conference and warns Tex that she has given thought to expelling him. Mace, fearing that Pop won't show up, appears in Tex's behalf. After Pop arrives, Mace blurts out that he resents caring for Tex, who is not even Pop's son, since Pop was in prison for bootlegging when Tex was conceived.

Tex, shattered by the news, flees the school office. Lem Peters, old-friend-turned-drug-dealer who drives by, gives Tex a ride, but first Lem stops to straighten out a drug deal. Tex gets into a fight with Lem's customer and is shot in the side with a soft-nosed .22 bullet. Outside a shopping mall, he telephones his girlfriend Jamie for help. Cole dispatches an ambulance. At the hospital, Pop explains the situation that caused his wife to conceive a child by a rodeo drifter.

A month after Tex gets out of the hospital, he prepares to take a job at Kincaide's stables. Mace decides to study restaurant management at a junior college. Tex, more mature and ready to assume responsibility for himself, insists that his brother go to college as planned.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

At age 16, Susan Eloise Hinton drew on her hometown experiences in Tulsa, Oklahoma to produce a minor revolution in teen-age novels. *The Outsiders*, published in 1967, paved the way for a wave of gritty, tough, action-packed works rendered in realistic teen argot. As Thomas Fleming notes, Susan Hinton completed a first novel "at an age when most are still writing 300-word compositions." With the proceeds, she attended the University of Tulsa and graduated in 1970.

Married to David Inhofe, Hinton continues to live in Tulsa and write young adult fiction. Her subsequent novels—*That Was Then, This Is Now* (1971), *Rumble Fish* (1975), and *Tex* (1979)—appear regularly on school book lists for teenagers. In 1988, *The Outsiders* was named as one of the standard works which young people should read.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Credited with helping to set a new direction in young adult fiction, S. E. Hinton receives mixed reviews, most of them raves. On the negative side, some voices decry the glorification of violence and macho behavior, which they fear will encourage young people to emulate Hinton's heroes. One nay-sayer sees little maturity in Hinton's later works. Paxton Davis criticizes the fast-moving plot of *Tex* for having "too much going on here."

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Accolades to Hinton's emphasis on complex, lower class protagonists involved in peer pressure conflicts suggest that her message is hitting the right target—young readers. *Saturday Review* applauds Hinton for sensitivity, honesty, and keen observations about the teen years. Her skill in delineating character and her adroit plots based on coping skills have made her works a standard against which later YA fiction is measured. Another indicator of her influence is the success of movie versions of *The Outsiders*, *Rumble Fish*, and *Tex* (Walt Disney Productions, 1982, starring Matt Dillon), and of the Viking Press disc recording of *Rumble Fish*.

Susan Hinton's awards substantiate the initial enthusiasm that greeted her writing career. They include notable book of the American Library Association; best teenage book of 1967 by the *New York Herald Tribune*; *Media & Methods* Maxi award for 1975; and two-time choice of Honor Books in the *Chicago Tribune Book World's* Children's Spring Book Festival.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the theme of independence vs. responsibility
2. To analyze the parent/child relationship during the teen years
3. To comprehend the seriousness of drug dealing, alcohol, shoplifting, violence, marijuana, fighting, and guns
4. To analyze the results of poverty on family relationships
5. To discuss the methods by which order is maintained in a school
6. To evaluate life in a small town as contrasted with life in a big city
7. To describe the pressures of early marriage and child-rearing on teenaged parents
8. To evaluate how changing emotions and attitudes cause conflict between friends and family members

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To contrast life before and after Pop's return to Garyville
2. To note the value of Negrito as a pet
3. To list examples of Tex's immaturity
4. To project whether Pop reestablishes a father/son relationship with Tex
5. To contrast Cole and Pop as fathers
6. To note the change in Tex's outlook after he learns about his real father
7. To account for Tex's love of horses and to project his effectiveness as Mr. Kincaide's employee
8. To discuss Mace's change of plans for the future

9. To analyze the complex relationship between Mace and Tex

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this novel.

1. I blew it all in my fun-filled week at Acapulco. (Chapter 1)
(In an effort to impress on Tex their shaky financial situation, Mason resorts to sarcasm. He implies with his comment about Acapulco, a popular resort on the west coast of Mexico seventy-five miles south of Mexico City, that there is no money left for fun because they barely manage to afford necessities. With no warning, Mason changes his approach and demands in all seriousness: "Where do you think it went? Food, gas, clothes. How far do you think a couple of hundred bucks stretches?")
2. When I was helping Lem Peters break his Appaloosa colt, I got thrown probably ten times a day, and I never felt this bad. (Chapter 1)
(Tex often compares his response to experiences and challenges to his work with horses. He recalls with pride the achievement of breaking Lem's sturdy saddle horse marked with distinctive spots on its hind quarters. The job involves saddling and riding an untrained colt and training it to obey simple commands, such as walk and stand. The work is dangerous, sometimes resulting in broken limbs and internal injuries when a colt makes an unforeseen move.)
3. "You can leave for Timbuktu tomorrow for all I care," he said. "But you're not gonna find the horses and you're not gonna give me any more trouble tonight." (Chapter 1)
(To illustrate the hopelessness of looking for Negrito, Mason sarcastically urges Tex to travel to Timbuktu, a standard cliché meaning far away or off the beaten track. Located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in Mali, Africa, Timbuktu was a thriving city in the Songhai empire during the sixteenth century.)
4. After a while everybody got together and talked over an old subject, doing an Evel Knievel jump over the creek. (Chapter 4)
(Tex and Johnny spend their leisure time riding dirt bikes with other teenagers. Their role model, Evel Knievel, is known for arranging death-defying challenges and promoting public interest in their outcomes. A native of Butte, Montana, Robert Craig Knievel, originally a safecracker, thief, and con artist, became a daredevil motorcyclist, thrilling audiences with such stunts as leaping a fountain at Caesar's Palace, a famous Las Vegas hotel.)
5. I had to drink some barium and it really killed my appetite. (Chapter 5)

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(One method of ascertaining the status of stomach ulcers is to outline the area in barium sulfate, which gives a clear image of the alimentary canal on x-rays. Mason's symptoms suggest that the strain of taking over Pop's role and dealing with Tex's many boyish escapades has caused too much stress, leading to pain and bleeding from a lesion on the stomach lining.)

6. "You'll think it's a big deal when you end up in McAllister," Mason said shortly, and Lem didn't try to talk to him again. (Chapter 6)

(Lem tries to rationalize his sale of drugs by remarking, "Everybody is doin' stuff like this, I'm just into a little more than most people. I could tell you about some guys in Garyville . . . it ain't any big deal. Mason, who learned in childhood the result of criminal behavior when his father was jailed for bootlegging, predicts that Lem will go to the penitentiary in McAllister, Oklahoma.)

7. I mean, the year Lem and Connie were going together it was the romance of the century, even kind of Romeo and Juliet, since their folks did everything they could to break them up. (Chapter 6)

(Tex compares Lem and Connie's courtship and later his own romance with Jamie Collins to the Shakespearean tragedy, Romeo and Juliet, which was based on a popular romance which circulated during the sixteenth century. The real Romeo and Juliet lived in Verona, Italy, in 1303 and were the subject of short stories, plays, and romantic poems by Matteo Bandello, Pierre Boaistuau, William Painter, and Arthur Brooke. Shakespeare appears to have been heavily influenced by the Arthur Brooke version. The balcony in Verona where Romeo is said to have wooed his love is still a tourist attraction.)

8. Negrito was tearing around some barrels, set up for barrel racing. (Chapter 7)

(Barrel racing requires a carefully trained and controlled horse, which must stop and turn in limited space to maneuver in and out of the obstacles in its path. Tex comments, "Even though he could turn on a dime and hand you back a nickel change, I had never done barrel racing with him and was amazed to see how good he'd caught onto it in so short a time. After bending around the last barrel so sharp his rider's foot nearly touched the ground, Negrito flattened out in a dead gallop finish." This episode in the novel indicates what a good home Negrito [or Nicky, as he is renamed] has found.)

9. He'll make the grade in aggie school, though, 'cause he sure knows how to breed his weeds. (Chapter 9)

(Lem waits for Dwayne Kirkpatrick near the school yard. He admires Dwayne's ability to grow quality marijuana and predicts that Dwayne will do well in agricultural college. Because Lem is intoxicated from

the effects of his wares, he fails to follow a normal line of conversation. He offers to sell white crosses, tablets of caffeine marked with a cross on top which are a fake form of speed, but Tex rejects the offer.)

10. Yeah, Mason is a lot like she was, proud as Lucifer, a bulldog for grudges—she never spoke to her parents again after they tried to break us up. (Chapter 11)

(Pop compares Mason to Clare McCormick, whose spirit was as proud as Lucifer, the brightest angel who was forced out of heaven for refusing to worship God. Like Lem and Connie and Jamie and Tex, Pop and Clare had a Romeo and Juliet courtship which led to alienation between Clare and her parents. To tie Tex with his mother's good traits, Pop diplomatically mentions her success with animals, "especially horses.")

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the novel.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe Tex's relationship with horses.

(Just as Clare McCormick talked with animals, Tex speaks to Negrito as though he were human. "There ain't no bear in that bush," he says. "You've never even seen a bear, you dumb horse . . . You don't even know what one looks like." Tex discerns the horse's capabilities and pushes Negrito to a peak of performance and obedience. In an evaluation of horses in general, Tex notes, "Horses are like real little kids. Now is what's important.")

Beyond the trainer role, Tex is openly affectionate, allowing his feelings to show through when Mace drops the bombshell: "I sold them." Tex's need for a one-on-one relationship with a horse pushes him to fight his brother, wander about the neighborhood in search of Negrito, and foster vain hopes that he can restore Negrito to the small paddock that adjoins the McCormick house.

When Tex and Negrito are briefly reunited in Muskogee, Tex has the animal's welfare uppermost in his mind, even though his heart longs to have his horse back. Tex dashes eagerly toward the sound of hoofbeats and observes the changes in Negrito, who is barrel racing with his new owner. Tex, overcome with emotion, comes close to tears. The picture of Tex and Negrito tells much about the boy, whose finer instincts reveal themselves in his gentle, intuitive response to the animal.)

2. Describe Pop's homecoming.

(On November 1, Pop calls after having watched Mace and Tex in the TV news interview. Mace

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sarcastically reminds Pop that he has neglected to communicate with his family, but he and Tex are thrilled on the day of Pop's arrival. Both boys leap up and race to the station wagon, "hugging and dancing around and laughing." At that moment, Tex realizes that Pop was no longer family: "He was just the same as he always was, but he was unconnected. Almost like he was a visitor."

Mace deliberately soft-pedals his delight and grinds out a single message for Pop's benefit: the boys need a regular father, not a part-time one. The confrontation spurs Tex to remark, "You're sure not giving him any reason to stay." Like a recalcitrant child, Pop promises to do better. To prove good faith, he promises to get the horses back.

Then Pop ruins his gesture by forgetting the date of Tex's birth. Mace, in a fury, roars out of the driveway in the pickup, his standard approach to anger and frustration. Tex is quick to forgive Pop's gaffe, but they both agree that Mace, who is suffering from an ulcer, takes things harder.)

3. Describe the effects of alcohol on Tex.

(When "Jet Set" Charlie Collins presses Bob, Johnny, and Tex to consume alcohol mixed with 7-Up, they drink more than they can handle. Bob attempts to slow the boys' consumption, but the trio becomes inebriated. At first, the sound of Tex's voice intrigues him as he gets louder and more talkative. Heaped on the back seat with Johnny "like puppies in a litter," he arrives home in an obvious state of drunkenness.)

Mace immediately recognizes that Tex's vomiting is caused by drinking. Tex breaks out in a cold sweat, lurches unsteadily through the house, and curls up in bed, alternately freezing and sweating. Whirling sounds and music fill his head. He wakes up in moonlight after sleepwalking to the living room.

The next day brings misery rather than relief. Tex's hangover causes flu symptoms. Nausea and sensitivity to light are followed by dizziness, pale skin, malaise, and dry heaves. He sickens at the thought of a bloody Mary to cure his hangover. After Mason mentions school, Tex is certain that he cannot make himself sit through classes. He questions himself: "What I couldn't figure was, if drinking made you sick, why anybody'd want to do it?"

4. Explain Tex's behavior at the creek.

(A disagreement over Cole temporarily stymies Tex's friendship with Johnny. At the gravel pits, the afternoon gathering place, Johnny ignores Tex and insists on trying to jump the creek, even though no one in the group has taken the challenge in the past. Johnny realizes that he cannot get up adequate speed to make the jump. He slides to the edge, shredding clothing and flesh in the process.)

Tex quickly covers for Johnny to protect his ego. Tex takes Johnny's part in the dare and revs the cycle

so that he can complete the jump. Thinking like a rodeo rider, he makes the leap, "[parting] company—the cycle going in one direction and me in another." The leap destroys his only jacket.

The gang cheers Tex's stunt while he catches his wind. Johnny admires Tex's gutsiness and re-allies himself with his old friend. Tex sums up their relationship: "Johnny, there are people who go places and people who stay, and I think we stayers ought to stick together." Like two old veterans, they head for home, taking turns pushing the cycle: "Johnny limped a lot, and my back ached terrible. We both felt fine.")

5. Explain why Tex is accused of shoplifting.

(At Westmall in the city, Tex looks at merchandise with little hope of buying because he does not have much money. After hunting for a paperback copy of Smokey the Cowhorse, his favorite book, he shops through the sporting goods store and selects a new lure as a means of reviving the brothers' mutual interest in fishing.)

Homing in on a likely lure that he can afford, Tex plans to spend his remaining money on the gift and to leave the cost of lunch to Mason. The shotguns catch his eye, and he deposits the lure in his shirt pocket so that he can check the balance on a gun. He wanders a bit more through tennis and skiing gear when he is stopped by a salesman who points out the warning against shoplifting.

Tex at first does not connect the incident with his own behavior. The salesman escorts Tex to Ed's office. After the salesman pulls the lure out of Tex's pocket, the boy breaks out in a "cold, sick sweat." Nothing he says makes much difference with the store employees, who believe that Tex is a shoplifter. Because Tex did not try to leave the store with stolen merchandise, Ed lets him go with a warning. Nauseated by the experience, Tex stands outside the store in a daze.)

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. How does Hinton employ coincidence to piece together parts of the plot?

(As Tex stands outside the sporting goods store mulling over the events that led to the accusation of shoplifting, Jamie interrupts him. By chance, she and "three or four other girls" happen to be shopping at the same mall in a nearby city. Tex, whose puppy love for Jamie sets his emotions in a whirl, comments later: "I'd gone through ten times as many emotions in that one day than I usually did in a week at home.")

Another chance occurrence happens on the day that Tex waits outside Helen Johnson's office until Pop can come for a conference. At lunch break, Tex avoids the cafeteria and goes to the smoke hole. He notices Lem's blue car and spends some time in

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conversation before returning to the office. After the climactic scene in which Pop, Mace, and Tex meet with Mrs. Johnson, Tex runs out of the building in response to learning that he is not Pop's son. Again, Lem happens to be nearby and gives Tex a ride.

Hinton uses these coincidences to move the plot toward its resolution. Although it is not unlikely that Lem would be in the neighborhood if he conducts drug deals with students, it is not wholly believable that Tex would meet him twice in one day and just at the point when Tex needs a friend. It is less likely that Tex would happen on Jamie and her friends at the mall, since he and Mason travel into town for Mace's doctor's appointment.)

7. How does Mark Jennings rationalize murder?

(To keep Mace and Tex in line, the hitchhiker, a desperate killer, remarks that he has little to lose by killing again. He explains that he does not like killing, but in two cases, he had to kill, even though he admits he might "get to liking it.")

His advice about prison is chilling: "... if you're young ... kill somebody right off the bat. Then let 'em know you'd do it again. People'll leave you alone then." In a disjointed monologue about his last crime, Mark recalls, "... him lying there looking up at me, and he says, 'Get it over with,' and it was like all the air out of a balloon. All these years of planning, waiting, to dig the look on his face, and then I just didn't feel like finishing it." Jerking back to the business at hand, Mark threatens to kill Tex if he increases his speed to incite the policeman that is behind them.)

8. How does Tex learn the truth about his father?

(At the hospital, Tex is allowed only family members at first. Pop introduces the subject of Tex's parentage, a subject that Mace accidentally introduced at their last meeting. Pop takes all the blame for Clare's infidelity. He indicates that Clare rejected his part in bootlegging from the first and resented being left alone while he served his prison sentence. As he quotes her words, "If you're dumb enough to do that stuff it'll be you that pays for it, not me.")

Pop analyzes the fear and anger that lead Clare to a rodeo rider, the "yeller-eyed-tomcat" that fathers Tex: "There she was, nineteen and alone and working as a waitress, while I sat up there in the pen with the worst trash that ever walked the earth due to my own stupidity." Mindful that this information is setting a negative image in Tex's mind, Pop interjects: "She never regretted having you, Tex, don't think that. She loved you same as she did Mason."

Pop concludes his narrative with the failed hopes of his marriage. Clare and he never trusted each other, even though they moved to Garyville and began their lives anew. The night she walked out to

attend the Christmas dance, Pop followed her. Neither he nor Clare expected her cold to result in the pneumonia which ultimately killed her.

Pop halts his narrative at this point and leaves Tex to get some rest. Tex makes no comment about the story, but when he is alone, he reports, "I pulled the pillow over my face and cried for a long time.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How does the author create a sense of authenticity to the relationship between Tex and Mace?

(The give and take between the McCormick brothers seems normal for an older brother dealing with a lively, but mischievous younger brother. It also seems predictable that the younger boy would resent some of the attention given to a basketball star. The outstanding passages, however, deal with other subjects, such as sex and Tex's parentage.)

When Tex wants reassurance that his approach to romance is correct, he goes to Mace for confirmation. Mace, who is unusually candid, gives gruff, masculine advice ["You know, that's all"] and appends an honest disclaimer: "I can't tell you what it's like. I never done it." Tex is both surprised and confused by Mace's confession.

Bridling at Mace's comment that Tex does not belong with Jamie, Tex pleads for an occasional lie rather than such brutal honesty. Mace's remark says more about Mace than about Tex: "... all my life I wanted somebody who knew more than I did to tell me the truth. I really wanted that. I never got it. I had to learn it all the hard way. I'm just giving you a present I always wanted.")

10. What does this novel say about love?

(There are many types of love in this novel—love of family, of friend, of member of the opposite sex, of brother. Tex feels the tug that accompanies all aspects of love. He wants to love his family, but realizes that he is not Pop's son. He turns to Johnny for consolation, yet, even though they are best friends, the situation at the Collins' household strains their relationship.)

Romantic love with Jamie comes at a good time for Tex, but is too soon for Jamie, who is younger than Tex. He tries to comprehend her coolness and behave like a gentleman while sorting out his own feelings about love and sex. He renews his romance with Jamie at the hospital and smooths out tattered relations with the Collins family, even extracting a grudging bit of condolence from Cole.

In the end, it is brotherly love that salves the wounds he suffers, for the most satisfying of his relationships is the one he cements with Mace. The terror of Tex's brush with drug dealers and the fear of dying lead his brother to a cathartic outburst at the hospital emergency room, where Mace fights Lem for endangering Tex's life. Mace's tears for his brother's

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welfare prove something to Tex that words cannot say.

At home to recuperate, Tex and Mace continue to dance around the loving words that each wants to say. Mace voluntarily gives up his goal to take the basketball scholarship. Tex, matured by his experience, rejects Mace's offer and acknowledges Mace's role in his life as surrogate father. Mace confesses that the hitchhiker brought out fears that Tex would someday turn bad out of hate.

The two boys discuss love in terms of the absence of hate. Mace, weeping silent tears, recalls Tex's words at the hospital: "I don't hate you Mason. I don't hate you." Reverting to their old role of surrogate father and son, Mace remarks that Tex is getting gun cleaner on the table. Their tense moment turns to laughter. They decide to go fishing.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Make a comprehensive list of similes from the novel to illustrate the author's reliance on comparison as a means of expression. Divide the list into categories, such as concrete and abstract objects or plants and animals. For example, when Tex is describing the growth of shopping malls, he says, "Across a stretch of parking lot was a big sporting goods store, a movie house, a record shop, and an ice cream parlor. If you didn't know better, you'd think stores multiplied like rabbits." In a later example, he says, "Anger flashed over me like a freak lightning storm." In both models, Hinton refers to images from nature as a means of comparison.
12. Write an essay on the importance of fatherhood. Use examples of Cole's behavior with his five children and Pop's behavior with Mace and Tex. Include examples from Mace's attempts to be a father to Tex.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. On poster paper, make a family tree of the seven Collinses and the three McCormicks. Under each name, list traits that describe the characters, such as *ambidextrous* for Mason or *dimpled* for Tex.
 2. Compare Tex's description of depression in chapter 3 with a clinical description in an encyclopedia or psychology book. Decide whether Tex is really a victim of depression or just down in the dumps.
 3. Discuss Tex's reaction to drinking and its aftereffects. List the physical and psychological symptoms that appear at each stage: drinking, drunk, hung over.
 4. Write a newspaper account of Mark Jennings' death or the shooting that occurs during Lem's drug deal. Quote eyewitness accounts. Create headlines for the article.
 5. Make a list of every rule and law that Tex breaks, such as riding double on a motorcycle, entering the typing room unlawfully, and driving without a license.
6. Interview a social worker and ask what happens to children whose parents fail to support them or care for them. List the methods by which local social service agencies rescue abandoned or neglected children and place them in more stable environments.
 7. Role-play the night that Tex, Mace, and Lem sneak into the Collins' house. Alternately assume the roles of mischievous teenager and irate parent.
 8. Watch a tape of the Walt Disney film version of *Tex*. Decide whether the actors fit your concept of each role. Note information that is left out or changed.
 9. Explain how pets like Negrito help people deal with frustration and loneliness. Suggest breeds of animals that might benefit different types of people.
 10. Make a list of colorful similes, which S. E. Hinton sprinkles liberally throughout the novel. For example "'You hate a lot of people?' I asked him. The word was taking on a whole new definition for me. Like the word 'water' would change for somebody drowning."

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VOCABULARY TEST

Complete the sentences below with words from the list that follows.

1. A _____ is like when you breed a chestnut to a black and get an Albino colt like its great grandfather.
2. If I was ever late feeding the horses, they'd start trotting up and down the fence, _____.
3. He was a mean-looking _____, and we shot off before he got a chance to do much more than holler, "You kids want to kill yourself, go jump off the Mad Mouse!"
4. He was long-legged, _____, worse than me about bumping into things and knocking things over.
5. "I ought to know something about _____—look who has a motorcycle and who doesn't," Jamie said.
6. "Sure," I said, ignoring the _____ and snickers from the other guys.
7. It was a relief to me that Jamie always said what she thought without _____ around or playing games.
8. I was trying to give Johnny a way to get out of a try, but he looked at me like I was _____ him.
9. If one person does all the talking, that's a _____.
10. It was just like the bedroom, not some big _____ of empty white space.
11. Jamie _____ the corners of her mouth down.
12. Mason is _____. That means he can use either his right or left hand.
13. Just have a seat in the _____. You'll be there awhile.
14. Usually she would give me a _____ grin and say, "Try not to let it happen again."
15. It wasn't going to be next time he got back from a trip, or when Mason left or when I went on the _____ with him.

ambidextrous asinine carnie circuit contemptuous defiant dialogue
 discrimination dumbfounded expanse foyer gawky gibes gyp hare-brained
 hedging incommunicable monologue nickering quirked razzing throwback wry

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Name the speaker of each of the following quotations. Then name the person who is being addressed.

- _____ 1A. She hadn't really cared anything about him, I knew that. It was just a get-even thing with me that she was sorry for, later.
_____ 1B.
- _____ 2A. . . . you are not stupid, and you're not all that ignorant. But how anybody as simple-minded as you are has managed to survive for fourteen years is beyond me.
_____ 2B.
- _____ 3A. I ought to know something about discrimination—look who has a motorcycle and who doesn't. . . ."
_____ 3B.
- _____ 4A. What you dealin' in . . . ? Grass, speed, horse?
_____ 4B.
- _____ 5A. I'd appreciate it if in the future you didn't associate with my kids.
_____ 5B.

Part II: Underlining (20 points)

Complete each of the following sentences by underlining a word or phrase from the list in parentheses.

1. Tex breaks his arm while playing on (Johnny's motorcycle, shopping carts, the back of the pickup, the basketball team.)
2. After leaving in the snow to attend a Christmas dance, Clare dies of (a drug overdose, gunshot wounds, unknown causes, pneumonia.)
3. On the night that Pop promises to take Tex to buy Negrito back, Pop gets involved in (a conference with Mrs. Johnson, a pool tournament, overtime work at the mill, barrel racing.)
4. Tex is surprised to learn that (Jamie, Lem, Pop, Cole) placed the call for an ambulance.
5. When he was twelve, Tex was picked up for stealing a (vehicle, gun, horse, fishing lure.)
6. The fortune teller predicts that Tex will (stay, run away from home, go to college, learn the truth about his father.)
7. Mark Jennings reminds Tex of (a drug pusher, a convict, himself, Pop.)
8. Pop returns home after seeing the boys (in the mall, on the news, in Mrs. Germanie's office, on the basketball court.)
9. Tex is surprised to learn that Mason used to get in trouble by (fighting, pulling pranks, sneaking into the Collins' house, jumping the creek on a motorcycle.)
10. After Tex gets shot, Lem calls Connie to tell her to (look after Lem, Jr.; get rid of the drugs; send an ambulance to Kelly's apartment; report the stolen tape deck.)

TEX

Part III: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

1. In the emergency room, Tex cries and tries to beat up Lem for abandoning him in the parking lot.
2. Tex realizes that Negrito has a good home with his new owner.
3. Mason suffers guilt after he beats up his brother and leaves a scar on his face.
4. Lem asks Tex to tell the police that the incident at Kelly's apartment resulted from the theft of Lem's .22.
5. At school, Tex is known as a troublemaker, poor student, and pet of the basketball coach.
6. After Tex sneaks into Jamie's room, she shoots him with her water pistol.
7. Without telling the boys, Pop leaves the rodeo circuit and tries his luck at prospecting.
8. Mark Jennings admits shooting people and stealing cars to pay for his drug habit.
9. During Bob's episode of sleepwalking, he gets sick and throws up in the bathtub.
10. Cole changes his mind about the McCormick boys and offers to help Tex get a job at Mr. Kincaide's stables.
11. At the fair, Bob uses Jamie's money to win stuffed animals at the shooting gallery.
12. After he leaves the store where he is accused of shoplifting, Tex runs into Jamie and tells her how embarrassed he was to be accused.
13. Tex freely admits that his brother makes good chili.
14. Charlie, the oldest Collins kid, goes to med school, and Blackie lives in San Francisco.
15. Tex believes that "love ought to be a real simple thing."

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Discuss how Mason serves as a temporary father to Tex.
2. Explain why Tex refuses to let Mason give up his college plans.
3. Describe the relationship between Jamie and Tex.
4. Analyze Pop's motives for telling Tex the truth about his real father.

TEX

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Identifying Characters (20 points)

Locate a name from the list below for each of these identifications.

- _____ 1. sets fire to an art project.
- _____ 2. walks out in the snow and dies of pneumonia.
- _____ 3. serves a prison term for bootlegging.
- _____ 4. reminds Tex of himself.
- _____ 5. is not ready for sex.
- _____ 6. tells Tex that there are people who go and people who stay.
- _____ 7. attends the hitchhiker's funeral.
- _____ 8. is nicknamed "Jet Set."
- _____ 9. believes Tex lacks competitive spirit.
- _____ 10. is nicknamed "the ace."

Blackie Bob Charlie Clare Coach McCollough Cole Connie
Dwayne Kirkpatrick fortune-teller Helen Johnson Jamie Johnny Kelly Laura
Lem Peters Mark Jennings Mason Miss Carlson Mona Nicky's owner Pop Tex

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. At Westmall, what is Tex accused of shoplifting?
- _____ 2. What severe punishment does Mrs. Johnson consider for Tex?
- _____ 3. Who whirls the truck around and stops it on the brink of a ditch?
- _____ 4. What do Johnny and Tex glue to the typewriter keys?
- _____ 5. What did Tex's real father do for a living?
- _____ 6. Where does Mace get a job near the end of his senior year?
- _____ 7. What news do the boys take to Bob and Johnny the night they break into the Collins house?
- _____ 8. Who calls the ambulance to pick up Tex?
- _____ 9. What is Negrito's new name?
- _____ 10. Whom does Pop call a "yeller-eyed tomcat"?

TEX

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

- _____ 1. I've already belted _____ once about that and I'd hate to hit a hurt kid, but you watch your mouth when you talk about your momma.
- _____ 2. Pop never had been much for booze, partly, I think, because his prison stretch had something to do with _____, but mostly because he didn't need it.
- _____ 3. I haven't paid the _____ bill lately.
- _____ 4. Charlie's too much of a playboy and now Bob's got it into his head that he wants to be a _____.
- _____ 5. Pop's in a _____ over in Broken Arrow. No telling how long he'll be there.
- _____ 6. Then a guy I knew talked me into going to New Mexico to _____—that was where I was this summer.
- _____ 7. _____ is ambidextrous. That means he can use either his right or left hand.
- _____ 8. _____, you can't do two book reports on *Smokey the Cowhorse*.
- _____ 9. Your far past: You are a fourth-generation _____.
- _____ 10. "I WANT THOSE _____ BACK!" I grabbed another jar and smashed it into the sink, breaking a few dirty dishes.
- _____ 11. Tell you what—when you go to college, when you go out to the airport, I get to _____, okay?
- _____ 12. Go ahead, _____! Dump me! Everybody else has and I don't know why you should be any different!
- _____ 13. I'd gone through ten times as many _____ in that day than I usually did in a week at home.
- _____ 14. I'm just a _____, it ain't like I'm selling it out on the streets or somethin'.
- _____ 15. . . . then out of the clear blue sky she said, "Where on earth did you get those _____?"

Bambi Bob bootlegging cowboy dimples drive emotions feed gas go along
go-between horses Lem lures Mason mine for uranium
painter pool tournament Pop priest rodeo rodeo rider shoplifting sing Tex

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Explain why Tex is a good choice of employee for Kincaide's stables.
2. Contrast the home scene in the Collins' household with that of the McCormicks.
3. Describe how Tex involves himself in a drug deal.
4. Discuss crimes and broken rules in Tex's past.

TEX

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. throwback | 9. monologue |
| 2. nickering | 10. expanse |
| 3. carnie | 11. quirked |
| 4. gawky | 12. ambidextrous |
| 5. discrimination | 13. foyer |
| 6. gibes | 14. wry |
| 7. hedging | 15. circuit |
| 8. razzing | |

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------------|------------------|
| 1A. Pop | 4A. Mason |
| 1B. Tex | 4B. Lem |
| 2A. Mason | 5A. Cole Collins |
| 2B. Tex | 5B. Mason |
| 3A. Jamie | |
| 3B. Johnny | |

Part II: Underlining (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. shopping carts | 6. stay |
| 2. pneumonia | 7. himself |
| 3. a pool tournament | 8. on the news |
| 4. Cole | 9. fighting |
| 5. vehicle | 10. get rid of the drugs |

Part III: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T | 11. F |
| 2. T | 7. T | 12. F |
| 3. T | 8. F | 13. T |
| 4. F | 9. F | 14. T |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. T |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Identifying Characters (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Tex | 6. fortune-teller |
| 2. Clare | 7. Miss Carlson |
| 3. Pop | 8. Charlie |
| 4. Mark Jennings | 9. Coach McCollough |
| 5. Jamie | 10. Mason |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. fishing lure | 6. restaurant |
| 2. expulsion | 7. the birth of Lem, Jr. |
| 3. Tex | 8. Cole |
| 4. caps | 9. Nicky |
| 5. rodeo rider | 10. Tex's real father |

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. Mason | 9. cowboy |
| 2. bootlegging | 10. horses |
| 3. gas | 11. drive |
| 4. priest | 12. Lem |
| 5. pool tournament | 13. emotions |
| 6. mine for uranium | 14. go-between |
| 7. Mason | 15. dimples |
| 8. Tex | |

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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