Chapter 1 and 2 Questions and Answers

1. Who are the Socs and the Greasers?
The Socs and the Greasers are two distinct groups in this community who do not get along. The Socs are described by Ponyboy as “the jet-set, the West-side rich kids” (2). The Greasers, on the other hand, are poorer than the Socs. They are also more wild and wear their hair long and greased back. They “steal things, and drive souped up cars and hold up gas stations and have a gang fight once in a while” (3).

2. How is Ponyboy different from the other members of his gang?
Ponyboy is described as different from the rest of the Greasers at the very beginning of the novel. He says that he enjoys reading, drawing, and watching movies, but that the rest of the gang is not interested in things like that. He also doesn’t participate in many of the violent activities because his brother Darry would not approve.

Ponyboy’s relationship with Sodapop is more positive since “Soda tries to understand” (2) him. Soda also defends Pony. Darry, on the other hand, is always getting angry and hollering at Ponyboy. He states that “[Soda’s] always happy-go-lucky and grinning, while Darry’s hard and firm and rarely grins at all” (2). Darry is most likely this way because he has gone through a lot being forced to raise his brother’s after the death of his parents.

4. What does the reader learn about what happened to Johnny before the story began?
The reader learns that Johnny was attacked by four Socs. Ponyboy says that he “had seen Johnny after four Socs got hold of him, and it wasn’t pretty. Johnny was scared of his own shadow after that” (4). He explains remembering Johnny all cut up and half conscious crying after the attack.

5. What happens to Ponyboy when he walks home from the movies?
While Ponyboy is on his way home from the movies, a Corvair holding four Socs follows him. The got out, rounded him, and pulled a knife on him threatening “[w]e’re gonna cut all the long greasy hair off” (5). They
punched him, pinned him down and put a knife to his throat. Ponyboy screams for help and his gang comes to his rescue.

6. What is the difference between “tuff” and “tough”?
Ponyboy explains that “[t]ough and tuff are two different words. Tough is the same as rough; tuff means cool, sharp – like a tuff-looking Mustang or a tuff record” (12).

7. How does Ponyboy relate to Pip from Great Expectations?
Ponyboy relates to the character of Pip because Pip was “marked lousy because he wasn’t a gentleman or anything, and the way the girl kept looking down on him” (15). He felt similar since the Socs had also judged him. He tells a story of a girl in his class calling him a hood when he used his switchblade to dissect a worm in Biology to prove his point.

8. Explain what altercation at the drive-in?
While at the drive-in, Dally loudly makes rude suggestive comments about two girls sitting down in front. Ponyboy is embarrassed because they are Soc girls. Dally continues to harass the girls until one turns around and says “Take your feet off my chair and shut your trap” (21). The argument continues until Dally leaves.

9. Why doesn’t Ponyboy like referring to Sodapop as a ‘dropout’?
Ponyboy does not like referring to Soda in this way because he feels that it makes people think “of some poor dumb-looking hoodlum wandering the streets breaking out street lights” (23). He did not feel that this described the fun, happy brother that Soda truly was.

10. What does Ponyboy mean when he says, “I lie to myself all the time?” Do you ever lie to yourself? Why?
Ponyboy lies to himself by saying he doesn’t care about Darry and that it is irrelevant to him whether Darry loves him or not. In reality, he knows that he does care.
* Answers for the rest of this question will vary, but should make a connection to the students’ life in some way.

11. Discuss the theme of gender in these chapters. How do the characters treat members of the same sex, and of the opposite sex?
The author suggests in these chapters that male-female relationships between the Greasers and Socs are more peaceful and respectful than male-male relationships. The encounters between Johnny, Ponyboy, Marcia, and Cherry show that relationships between Greasers and Socs are positive, even though they are from different groups. Although Dally has a negative encounter with the girls, Johnny protects them because of their gender. He most likely would not have done this if the conflict were with another male. The male greasers and male Socs encounters consistently result in violence. This difference shows that the gang rivalry is one that is masculine in nature. It is also worth noting; however, that internal group bonding is also strongly masculine. The Greasers are all male, and they are protective and supportive of one another.

12. What is Ponyboy comparing Two-Bit to when he calls him a “chessy cat” on page 27? What two literary devices are used here?

Chessy Cat refers to a "Cheshire Cat, a proverbial grinning cat from Cheshire, in England as described in Lewis Carroll's Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland". In The Outsiders, Ponyboy was trying to describe that Two-Bit Matthews was smiling broadly, much like that of the Cheshire Cat. This is an example of a simile (comparing two unlike things using like or as), as well as allusion (to make a passing reference to something outside the text).

13. What literary device does the author use to describe Johnny’s mugging (pgs.31-34)?

The literary device used is flashback. This is a literary or cinematic device in which an earlier event is inserted into the normal chronological order of a narrative.