



I Wish I'd Written? The Outsiders

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I Wish I'd Written

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Justin Somper chooses S E Hinton's **The Outsiders**.

Justin Somper on a novel that 'almost condenses the teenage years into a haiku'?

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Why do I wish I'd written S E Hinton's **The Outsiders** ? Because it's thrillingly cool, searingly romantic, epic, sharp, poetic and enduringly relevant with a strong plot, engaging characters and dialogue to die for.

I first discovered Ponyboy's story in my early teens. We were, clearly, kids from different sides of the tracks but, as Ponyboy would say, we could see the same sunset. His story not only gave me an insight into a very different world, but also into my own. As an adult, it's Hinton's powerful 'and unnervingly relevant' indictment of mindless violence that leaps out at me. Back when I discovered the book, it was, more simply, her insight into what it means to be a teenager. Ponyboy's description of his brother Soda, who 'gets drunk on just plain living' and possesses 'too much energy, too much feeling' almost condenses the teenage years into a haiku.

Equally on the money is Cherry Valance's seemingly opposing view, 'We're sophisticated 'cool to the point of not feeling anything'. It seems like we're always searching for something to satisfy us, and never finding it.' There's a touch of F Scott Fitzgerald in Hinton's description of her equally beautiful but differently damned characters.

The Outsiders by S E Hinton is published by Puffin as a Modern Classic (978 0 14 131457 0, £6.99).

Justin Somper's next book, **Vampirates: Blood Captain** (978 1 416 90102 0, £6.99), will be published by Simon & Schuster in September.

[image:Justin Somper.jpg:left]

Photo of Justin Somper by Neil Kendall.



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