

## Sample Argumentative Brainstorming Page

**Prompt:** Write an argumentative essay in which you take a clear position on this question: Is *The Outsiders* still relevant and important for middle school students today? Argue for or against keeping it in the curriculum and support your position with evidence from the novel.

<b>Keep <i>The Outsiders</i> (Still Relevant)</b>	<b>Remove <i>The Outsiders</i> (Not Relevant)</b>
Highlights challenges teens still face, including peer pressure and family struggles	Young readers face different modern issues (cyberbullying, social media pressure, online identity)
Accessible language and relatable teenage narrator	Students may find it harder to connect to the outdated slang and cultural references
<u>Encourages empathy and creates discussion about stereotypes (1)</u>	Limited cultural and racial diversity
Shows consequences of violence and risky behavior	Frequent violence may negatively affect some readers
<u>Timeless themes of belonging, identity, and friendship (2)</u>	Focuses mostly on male characters, which may limit its appeal for readers of other genders
Explores tension between social classes, which is still an issue today	1960s Oklahoma setting has outdated gender roles and social expectations

After discussing with the class, **circle** the column title that reflects your position. **Underline** two different reasons in that column that support your claim.

Then, use the space below to brainstorm specific examples from the novel that could support each reason.

<b>Reason 1</b>	<b>Reason 2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cherry shows Ponyboy that Socs have problems too</li> <li>Ponyboy develops empathy for Cherry when he gets to know her better</li> <li>Randy admits he is tired of fighting and violence</li> <li>Ponyboy sees that Bob is similar to the greasers</li> <li>Johnny and Ponyboy have sensitive, thoughtful conversations at the church (not just "tough" greasers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ponyboy struggles with how the public views him because of stereotypes about greasers</li> <li>At the church, Ponyboy and Johnny bond over their dreams and feel understood</li> <li>At the hospital, the greasers support Johnny like family</li> <li>After the church fire, Ponyboy understands Darry's love and feels he belongs</li> </ul>

# Shared Writing Guidance

If students need support during the shared writing process, use the potential think aloud notes below as guidance to model an example where needed. This guidance aligns with the ideas on the Sample Brainstorming Page above.

<b>Determine Position and Reasons</b>	"First, I need to decide my position. I think <i>The Outsiders</i> is still relevant for middle school students. Now I need to pick two strong reasons to support that. Looking at our chart, a reason that stands out to me is that the novel encourages empathy and creates discussion about stereotypes. That's important because students today can still relate to how people are judged based on appearance, social group, or background. The other reason I want to choose is that the novel has timeless themes of belonging, identity, and friendship. Those are experiences all teens go through, no matter when or where they live. I'm going to use these two reasons to build my body paragraphs. First, I'll brainstorm examples for the body paragraph about stereotypes and empathy."
<b>Brainstorm Examples</b>	"One moment I'm thinking of is when Ponyboy realizes that Socs and greasers share similar struggles. Cherry tells Ponyboy that Socs also have problems, which challenges Ponyboy's stereotype that Socs have perfect lives."
<b>Evaluate Relevance</b>	"I want examples from the book that show characters seeing beyond the groups they belong to. For instance, Ponyboy realizes he and Cherry see the same sunset and think in similar ways, even though they're from different social groups. Randy visits Ponyboy and admits he's tired of fighting, which shows he's more than just a 'tough Soc.' Ponyboy also starts to see Bob as a real, complex person after talking with Cherry and Randy and seeing his yearbook picture. And then there's the conversations between Johnny and Ponyboy at the church, which are sensitive and thoughtful, challenging the stereotype that greasers are just violent or mean. Any of these examples might help me explain my first reason in my body paragraph."
<b>Zoom in to Select Specific Evidence</b>	"I know I want to use the scene with Cherry and Ponyboy at the drive-in, which happens early in the book. I'll check my annotations to find the exact part in Chapter 2. Here it is—Cherry says, 'Things are rough all over' (p. 35). I can see that this short quote is really powerful because it challenges the stereotype that Socs have no problems. Now I'll write this quote down on my outline, with a page number, and make a note about how it connects to my first reason, showing that the book encourages empathy and helps readers think beyond stereotypes."