

"The shade of difference that separates a Greaser from a hood wasn't present in Dally. He was as wild as the boys in the downtown outfits... He had been arrested, he got drunk, rode in rodeos, lied, cheated, stole, rolled drunks, jumped small kids—he did everything" (Hinton 10). Pony's early description of Dally makes it clear that the Greaser's aren't a gang of hoods, but that he doesn't share this distinction. Dally is a different shade of grease entirely, one with a criminal reputation. He does all sorts of bad things. What Pony said also gives us a better idea of Dally's personality beyond being a criminal: that he's free-spirited, bold and defiant, but still cruel and immoral. He's a real bad boy, and maybe that's why Cherry, the Soc, would fall for him. Anyhow, while it may not excuse his crimes, it's also helpful to understand Dally's past as well.

As the story progresses, we learn more about Dally through his past. In Pony's conversation with Cherry, he thought of Dally, "wild, cunning Dally—turning into a hoodlum because he'd die if he didn't" (Hinton 38). What Pony is thinking gives us a little perspective on Dally's childhood, that he was probably forced into becoming a hood, or he wouldn't have survived. Dally's parents had probably abandoned him at a young age (see Hinton 76), and having spent three years on the wild side of New York, he saw things he wasn't ready to see. He grew up too fast and became hard and bitter, and never got to experience the purity and goodness of childhood. Instead he learned to see just the bad and ugliness of the world. We only ever got to know that side of him, and never got to see what was underneath it all. Maybe he was book-smart and kind like Pony or super-athletic like Darry. We'll never find out. The real tragedy here is that many kids growing up like Dally never get the opportunity to realize their talents, and end up hopeless like him.

Excellent analysis