

that was then this is now by se hinton

that was then this is now by se hinton is a compelling young adult novel that explores themes of friendship, change, and the challenges of growing up. Written by acclaimed author S.E. Hinton, the book continues her tradition of addressing complex social issues through the eyes of teenagers. Set in the 1960s, the story focuses on two boys, Bryon and Mark, whose once inseparable bond is tested by the harsh realities of life and personal growth. This article delves into the novel's plot, characters, themes, and its significance in young adult literature. Additionally, it examines the book's reception and its ongoing relevance for readers today. Readers interested in coming-of-age stories and social dynamics will find this overview insightful and informative.

- Plot Summary of That Was Then This Is Now
- Main Characters and Their Development
- Themes and Motifs in That Was Then This Is Now
- Author Background and Writing Style
- Reception and Legacy of the Novel

Plot Summary of That Was Then This Is Now

That Was Then This Is Now by S.E. Hinton follows the lives of two teenage boys, Bryon Douglas and Mark Jennings, who grow up together in a tough neighborhood. The novel captures their friendship and the events that lead to significant changes in their relationship and individual perspectives. The story begins with Bryon and Mark running a small business selling stolen goods, but as the plot unfolds, the consequences of their actions become clear. The narrative highlights the struggles they face, including family issues, violence, and the pressures of adolescence. Through a series of dramatic events, Bryon begins to see the world differently, leading to tension and conflict with Mark. The story ultimately reveals how people change and how those changes can affect even the closest bonds.

Setting and Context

The novel is set in a working-class neighborhood in the 1960s, a time marked by social upheaval and economic challenges. This setting provides a realistic backdrop that influences the characters' decisions and lifestyles. The environment reflects the struggles of youth in urban America during this period, including issues such as poverty, crime, and family instability.

Key Plot Events

Several pivotal moments define the story and its message:

- Bryon and Mark's partnership in petty theft and its eventual fallout
- The introduction of Cathy, Bryon's love interest, who represents a different social world
- Mark's involvement with drugs and the resulting consequences
- Bryon's moral awakening and decision to change his path
- The ultimate strain on Bryon and Mark's friendship and their diverging futures

Main Characters and Their Development

That Was Then This Is Now by S.E. Hinton features deeply developed characters whose growth and conflicts drive the novel's emotional core. The story mainly revolves around two protagonists whose contrasting journeys highlight the theme of change.

Bryon Douglas

Bryon is the narrator and central character. He starts as a carefree teenager involved in illegal activities but gradually becomes more aware of the consequences of his actions. His evolving sense of responsibility and morality is a key aspect of the narrative, making him a relatable and complex character.

Mark Jennings

Mark is Bryon's best friend and partner in crime. Unlike Bryon, Mark remains more attached to their past lifestyle and resists change. His struggles with addiction and loyalty create tension and ultimately lead to the breakdown of their friendship. Mark's character embodies the difficulties of escaping a troubled environment.

Supporting Characters

The novel also includes significant supporting characters who influence the protagonists:

- **Cathy** – Bryon's girlfriend, who symbolizes hope and a different future.
- **M'Lynn** – Mark's sister, whose tragic fate impacts the story deeply.
- **Mama** – Bryon's single mother, representing stability and sacrifice.

Themes and Motifs in That Was Then This Is Now

The novel explores several important themes that resonate with readers of all ages, especially young adults. These themes contribute to the book's lasting impact and relevance.

Friendship and Change

A central theme is the evolution of friendship. The novel examines how people grow apart as their values and circumstances change. Bryon and Mark's friendship illustrates the bittersweet reality that not all relationships withstand the test of time and personal growth.

Identity and Morality

The story delves into the struggle of forming an identity amidst challenging social conditions. Bryon's journey highlights the importance of making moral choices and the consequences those choices carry. The novel encourages readers to consider personal responsibility and ethical behavior.

Socioeconomic Challenges

That Was Then This Is Now portrays the impact of poverty, family instability, and peer pressure on youth. These external factors shape the characters' actions and limit their options, reflecting the broader societal issues faced by many teenagers.

Motifs

- **Violence and Crime:** Recurring instances underscore the dangers of the characters' environment.
- **Loss and Change:** The motif of loss appears through family tragedies and broken relationships.
- **Growth:** The contrast between childhood innocence and adult realities is a consistent motif.

Author Background and Writing Style

S.E. Hinton is renowned for her authentic portrayal of adolescent life, and *That Was Then This Is Now* is a prime example of her skill. Having written her first novel as a teenager, Hinton brings genuine insight into the teenage experience.

About S.E. Hinton

Susan Eloise Hinton began writing at a young age, with her debut novel *The Outsiders* receiving critical acclaim. She continued to focus on themes relevant to young adults, such as identity, social class, and friendship. Her straightforward and accessible prose style makes her novels enduring favorites among readers and educators alike.

Writing Style and Narrative Technique

The novel is narrated in the first person by Bryon, offering an intimate view of his thoughts and emotions. Hinton's writing is characterized by simple yet powerful language, vivid dialogue, and realistic character development. The narrative's pace and tone balance moments of tension with introspective reflection, engaging readers throughout.

Reception and Legacy of the Novel

That Was Then This Is Now by S.E. Hinton has been widely praised for its honest depiction of adolescent struggles and social issues. Since its publication, it has become a staple in young adult literature curricula and continues to influence readers and writers.

Critical Reception

The novel received positive reviews for its compelling characters and relatable themes. Critics highlighted Hinton's ability to address difficult topics such as drug use, violence, and moral ambiguity without condescension. The book was celebrated for encouraging empathy and understanding among young readers.

Impact and Adaptations

That Was Then This Is Now has left a significant mark on the genre of young adult fiction. It has been adapted into a film, further expanding its reach and impact. The novel's themes remain relevant, making it a valuable resource for discussions about adolescence and societal pressures.

Why Readers Should Explore the Novel

- Offers a realistic portrayal of teenage life and friendship
- Addresses important social issues relevant to youth
- Encourages critical thinking about morality and change
- Written by a respected and influential author in young adult literature

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'That Was Then, This Is Now' by S.E. Hinton?

The main theme of 'That Was Then, This Is Now' is the transition from adolescence to adulthood, exploring changes in friendships, identity, and moral values.

Who are the central characters in 'That Was Then, This Is Now'?

The central characters are Bryon Douglas and Mark Jennings, two close friends navigating the challenges of growing up in a tough neighborhood.

How does the relationship between Bryon and Mark evolve throughout the novel?

Bryon and Mark's relationship changes from inseparable friends to drifting apart as Bryon starts to see the world differently and make choices that Mark cannot understand or accept.

What role does family play in 'That Was Then, This Is Now'?

Family plays a significant role, highlighting the impact of broken homes and absent parents on the characters' lives, influencing their behavior and decisions.

How does S.E. Hinton address social issues in 'That Was Then, This Is Now'?

Hinton addresses social issues such as poverty, violence, drug use, and the struggles of inner-city youth, providing a realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by teenagers.

What is the significance of the title 'That Was Then, This Is Now'?

The title signifies the contrast between past and present, emphasizing the changes in the characters' lives and perspectives as they grow up and face new realities.

Additional Resources

1. *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton

This classic novel explores the lives of Ponyboy Curtis and his gang, the Greasers, who are constantly at odds with the wealthier Socs. It delves into themes of class conflict, friendship, and the struggles of adolescence. Like **That Was Then, This Is Now**, it offers a gritty, realistic portrayal of youth in a divided society.

2. *Rumble Fish* by S.E. Hinton

Centered around Rusty-James and his turbulent relationship with his older brother, this story highlights the challenges of growing up in a tough environment. The novel addresses themes of identity, family dynamics, and the desire to escape a violent lifestyle. Its raw emotional depth aligns it closely with **That Was Then, This Is Now**.

3. *Tex* by S.E. Hinton

Tex follows the story of two brothers navigating the hardships of rural life and personal loss. It tackles themes of loyalty, maturity, and the search for stability amidst chaos. The book's focus on brotherhood and youth resonates with the emotional core of **That Was Then, This Is Now**.

4. *Stay Gold* by S.E. Hinton

This novel revisits some characters from **The Outsiders** and explores themes of hope, change, and the struggle to maintain innocence in a harsh world. It captures the bittersweet transition from adolescence to adulthood, much like **That Was Then, This Is Now**. The story emphasizes resilience and the enduring bonds of friendship.

5. *Loser* by Jerry Spinelli

A story about a boy who is often ostracized and struggles to fit in, **Loser** tackles themes of acceptance, individuality, and perseverance. Like **That Was Then, This Is Now**, it portrays the challenges of growing up and finding one's place in the world. The book encourages readers to embrace their uniqueness despite social pressures.

6. *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier

This intense novel explores power, conformity, and rebellion within a high school setting. It shares **That Was Then, This Is Now**'s dark and realistic tone, examining how peer pressure and moral dilemmas shape young lives. The story's exploration of friendship and betrayal offers a compelling parallel to Hinton's work.

7. *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

Speak tells the story of a teenage girl grappling with trauma and finding her voice amidst silence. The novel deals with themes of isolation, healing, and the courage to stand up for oneself. Its honest depiction of adolescent struggles complements the emotional depth found in **That Was Then, This Is Now**.

8. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger

This classic coming-of-age novel follows Holden Caulfield's journey through teenage alienation and confusion. Like Hinton's work, it captures the complexities of adolescence and the yearning for authenticity. The book's introspective narrative offers insight into the challenges of growing up.

9. *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Monster presents the story of a teenage boy on trial for murder, exploring themes of identity, justice, and perception. Its use of a first-person narrative and courtroom drama creates a gripping exploration of morality and truth. The novel's focus on youth caught in difficult circumstances parallels **That Was Then, This Is Now**.

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