I had the immense pleasure of meeting [S.E. Hinton](http://www.sehinton.com/) in Tulsa last month, and she very graciously agreed to an interview. Her debut novel, THE OUTSIDERS, which she wrote when she was sixteen, revolutionized the children's book world upon its publication with its realism and immediacy, a stylistic shift that is still reverberating to this day. She is the author of six other much-beloved novels, a picture book, and her new linked story collection, [SOME OF TIM'S STORIES](http://www.amazon.com/Some-Tims-Stories-Oklahoma-Storytellers/dp/0142411957/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1242149615&sr=8-1), was recently released in paperback, so please check that out.

*You grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and still call it home to this day. What does it mean to you as a place, and what it is it about Tulsa that keeps you there?*

Well, Tulsa is home, I was born here, still have family here, have friends I go back forty years with here. It's a city that supports the arts, it's easy to get around, it's easy to work here. Tulsa gets the same Internet, same magazines, same cable as larger cities, we have a strong film community that brings us the best foreign and indie movies.I like having a history with the place I live, seeing what is changing and what stays the same.

*“The Outsiders” is sometimes credited with creating and popularizing Young Adult fiction (YA) as a genre. Did you set out to write something new and different when you were writing? What was your mindset?*

I guess in a way I did set out to write something new and different with The Outsiders, because I wanted to read something that dealt with teen life as I saw it. There wasn't anything realistic for teenagers to read back then; I was through with the horse books, not ready for a lot of adult books, couldn't stand the "Mary Sue Goes To the Prom" books, so one of the main reasons why I wrote it was to read it. Also, I loved to write, and had been writing since grade school, and I was angry about the social divisions in my very large high school.

*Something I never knew about “The Outsiders” until we met is that even though you wrote it when you were only 16, it was actually your third novel. What did you learn about writing when you wrote those first two novels? What happened to them?*

Like everyone else, I learned from my mistakes. I think every book is practice for the next one. At that time I still needed a lot of practice so I wisely never tried to publish them.

*“The Outsiders,” “Rumble Fish,” “Tex,” and “That Was Then… This Is Now” have all been made into movies. What is it like seeing actors play the part of characters you created and having someone else’s vision shaping what the audience sees? Was it tough letting go of the control over your stories or did you enjoy it?*

I was lucky enough to be very involved in three of my movie adaptions, Tex, The Outsiders and Rumble Fish. Tim Hunter and Francis Coppola made me welcome on the set--I was there every day--and I got to be in on many aspects of film making. It's a community way of story telling, and I loved it. Luckily, too, the directors' vision was close to my own. As a rash generalization, I like actors. They think and talk about things writers do. I was very close to the Tex and Outsiders cast, (my horse played Tex's horse, and he was a star) they were great actors and good kids. I would love to work on a movie again. Working with the right people feeds your own energy and imagination.

*What is your writing process? Do you get it on the page and revise later? Outline? Plan ahead? Let the writing go where it goes?*

I think I've tried every writing process there is, trying to find an easy way to write a novel. If I do find it, I'll publish it and retire. Sometimes I revise as I go. Once I used an outline. One time I thought in terms of movies and wrote scenes out of order, as they occurred to me, and stitched them together later. I wrote That Was Then, This Is Now, two pages a day and did almost no revision. I originally wrote Rumble Fish as a short story, did the novel, and threw that one away because it was too easy, and wrote it again with Rusty James as the narrator, which was not easy at all. The Outsiders was forty pages long, single-spaced, typed, in its first draft. The third draft was the one Marilyn saw. The only thing I am sure of in my "process" is that it involves a lot of staring out the window.

*You have a reputation for avoiding the spotlight, which in these media-centric days is something of a rarity. Do you find it difficult to maintain a private life in today’s Internet-driven world?*

Nope, not really. Just say no to most interviews. I'm not living in seclusion here. Anybody who wants a look at me can go to the Reasoner's grocery store, it seems like I'm there every day. I've been happily married for thirty-eight years, I ride my horses, read books, swim in my pool, not a lot of headlines here.

Sometimes I get recognized, usually if I'm running into a drug store, with no makeup, unwashed hair and desperate for personal items, but it's not a problem.

How interesting can a person be who spends a lot of her working hours staring out a window?

*What advice do you have for writers who are just starting out?*

Write for yourself first. Don't study the market, it will change before you can get a book done. The writing is the thing to concentrate on. If you don't want to read it, nobody will.

REACTION & EVALUATION

*Directions: After reading this article and watching the movie clip, offer you opinion of Hinton’s choices. Give evidence from the book to explain why you think and feel the way you do.*