

**“Soda Attracted Girls like Honey Draws Flies”:
The Outsiders, the Boy Band Formula, and the River of Adolescent Hormones**

My presentation will make a case that contemporaneous events such as the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement were not the only ones that shaped *The Outsiders*. In the same way that the 1960s were a time of massive political, social, and economic change, so too was it a time of equally profound developments in the realm of popular culture, especially music for teens and adolescents. In 1964, The Beatles exploded onto the American musical landscape, generating hysteria wherever they went. Then, the following year, The Monkees made an equally big impact on national entertainment, dominating both television ratings and radio airwaves. Taken collectively, these phenomena changed the nature of Top 40 songwriting in the United States while they simultaneously gave rise to what would come to be known as the “boy band.”

The Outsiders was conceptualized, composed, and released against the backdrop of the rise of the boy bands. In what has become an oft-mentioned biographical detail, S. E. Hinton was only sixteen years old when the novel was released. It is difficult to imagine that anyone during the mid-1960s could have been unaware of the mania generated by The Beatles or The Monkees, but especially someone like Hinton who was a teenager.

My talk will examine *The Outsiders* against the backdrop of all-male pop singing groups during the 1960s such the Beatles and The Monkees. More specifically, I will make a case that Hinton’s classic YA text incorporates a variety of elements from the emerging formula for boy bands. Doing so not only places the 1967 narrative in fuller dialogue with its original historical era, but it also adds a previously overlooked facet to the book’s initial attraction and ongoing appeal. *The Outsiders* certainly caters to adolescent desires for literary realism, but it doesn’t hurt that the book also caters to budding sexuality. Accordingly, my presentation will take up the theme of ChLA 2018 conference by examining the river of adolescent hormones that runs through Hinton’s 1967 novel.