



Tex

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In many ways, *Tex* is the most successful fulfillment of the Hinton formula. The novel avoids the pitfalls of the earlier romantic versions of the Hinton story, and it succeeds where Hinton is best: in characterization and in relevant themes. The standard Hinton elements are here, but they coalesce as they never have before.

Tex and Mason McCormick have almost been abandoned by their father, who is following the rodeo circuit, and Mason has developed an ulcer taking care of Tex, being a star athlete, and working to get into college. He is even forced to sell Tex's horse, Negrito, when the two boys run out of money. The action is fast-paced: Tex and his friend Johnny are constantly getting into trouble, Tex and Johnny's sister Jamie develop a romance, and Mason's friend Lem is dealing drugs. In one of the multiple climaxes, Tex saves Mason's life when a hitchhiker pulls a gun on them. When Tex accompanies Lem on a drug deal, however, he himself is shot by one of the customers and ends up in the hospital. In the novel's denouement, Tex discovers who his real father is, and the various strands of this novel are neatly resolved.

Tex works because readers are carried along by the story and because the major characters are believable and sympathetic. The ideas in the novel work as well. Again there is the theme of “outsiders”—orphans, abandoned children, and loners. The resolution is much more satisfactory than it was in *Rumble Fish* (where readers last saw Motorcycle Boy dead and Rusty-James sitting alone on the California beach): Tex gains a new father (at least his name) and a new sense of family, works out his problems with his brother, and begins a romance. The conclusion is not without worries: “Love ought to be a real simple thing,” Tex complains in the end. “Animals don’t complicate it, but with humans it gets so mixed up it's hard to know what you feel, much less how to say it.”

Tex has a more mature ending than Hinton's previous novels and an affirmative ending for its youthful readers. Tex does not end up dead, in jail, or alone. In spite of the strikes against him (both from his environment and from within himself), he manages to survive and succeed.

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