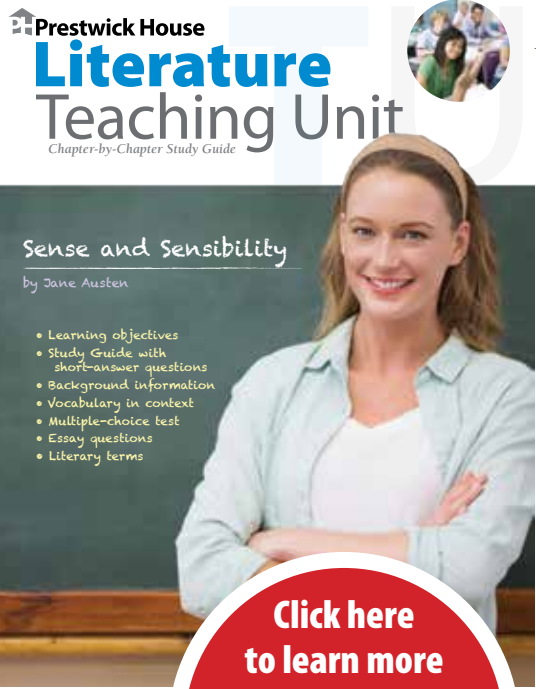




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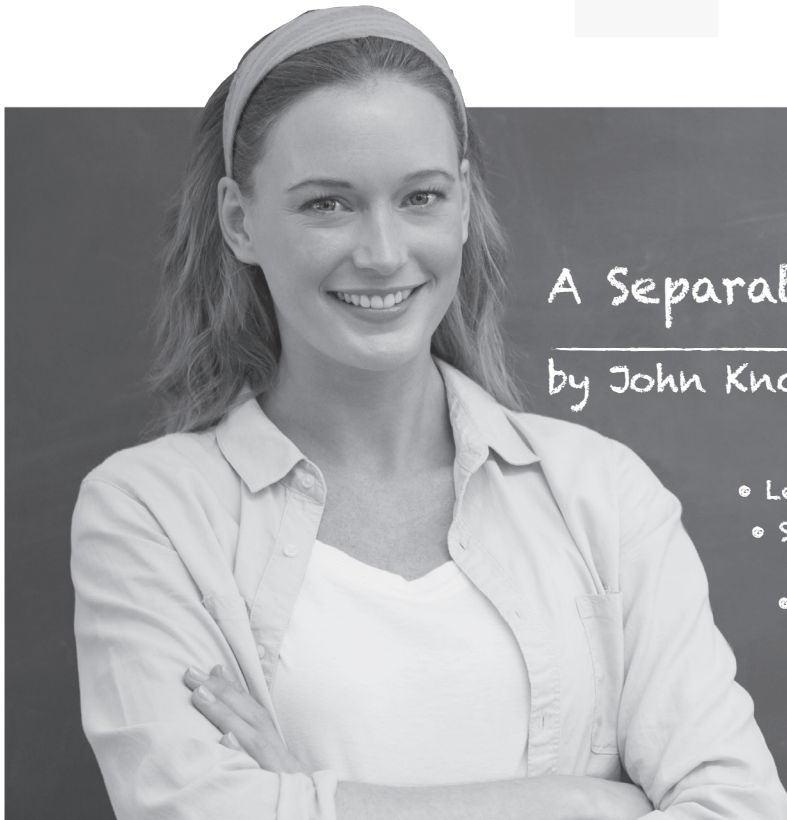
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by John Knowles

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms

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Item No: 300998

A Separate Peace

Note to the Teacher

This novel, published in 1960, has been a popular school classic since it first appeared. Although it is set in the closing years of World War II at a private boys' school, readers can relate to the boys and their problems because the problems transcend time and place. The feelings, fears, and faults of the boys are instantly recognizable by all youths.

Note: All references come from the First Scribner edition of *A Separate Peace*, copyright 2003.

A Separate Peace

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify the following literary elements and relate them to the novel:
 - allusion
 - first-person narration
 - flashback
 - foreshadowing
 - imagery
 - irony
 - metaphor
 - mood
 - paradox
 - personification
 - simile
 - symbolism
 - theme
2. write an essay that states the major theme in the novel as it relates to the title, supported by specific quotes and examples from the story.
3. analyze Gene's complex feelings toward Finny over the course of the novel, and explain how these feelings drive the plot.
4. discuss the impact of World War II on the Devon boys, focusing on how it influences and shapes the following characters in particular: Gene, Finny, Leper, and Brinker.
5. explain Gene's assertion that evil is "something ignorant in the human heart," and discuss how Knowles relates this idea to the war and to Gene's jouncing of the limb.
6. explain how the first-person narrative affects the perspective from which the reader understands the novel.
7. examine the issues of conformity and nonconformity, especially as they relate to Gene, Finny, and Leper.
8. compare and contrast Gene and Finny, focusing on their personalities, philosophies, moral and ethical makeup, feelings toward one another, and attitudes toward the war.

A Separate Peace

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss Gene's jouncing of the limb and Finny's subsequent fall. Do you think the shaking of the limb was an intentional act, an accident, or an unconscious impulse? Cite evidence from the story to support your answer.
2. Explain the circumstances around Finny's second fall. Compare and contrast the second fall with the first. Who, if anyone, is to blame for Finny's second fall?
3. Discuss Finny's death. What causes it? How does Gene feel about it? Can Gene be held responsible for it in any way? Give reasons to support your answer.
4. Identify the following minor characters as individuals and types (flat or round): Leper, Brinker, Quackenbush, Mr. Ludsbury, Brinker's father.
5. Analyze the point of view in the novel, noting in particular that the events actually take place fifteen years before the novel opens. How does the use of flashback enhance the narrative?
6. Discuss human nature and instinct as they relate to the characters in the novel. Specifically, how does instinct play a role in Gene's actions and motivations?
7. Discuss the following events in relation to the novel's major concepts and themes:
 - the Winter Carnival
 - the mock trial
 - Finny's fall from the tree
 - Finny's fall down the stairs
 - Finny's death
 - the war
8. Some critics compare Devon in the summer of 1942 to the Garden of Eden. Discuss this analogy, explaining the symbolic significance of the tree on the riverbank as it relates to the tree in the Garden of Eden. Compare the boys to Adam and Eve, discussing the concepts of innocence and the knowledge of good and evil.
9. In what sense is *A Separate Peace* a novel about good and evil? How does Knowles seem to define evil in the novel? How does it relate to Gene's jouncing of the limb, as well as to the war? Explain whether you agree or disagree with Knowles's concept of evil.
10. Discuss *A Separate Peace* as a psychological novel. How does the action of the story stem from Gene's inner motivations? How does first-person narration help to take the reader inside Gene's mind and illuminate his private thoughts?

transit – a passage or journey
unhinged – mad, crazy
vibrantly – vividly; intensely

1. A number of times in this chapter, the narrator mentions that “fear” had been a major part of his school life. In what ways could his school life have been filled with fear? What other key emotion does he recall experiencing during his time at school?

2. What is implied when the narrator speaks of “how far [his] convalescence had gone”?

3. What two specific places does the narrator seek out to revisit? What is disturbing and/or foreboding about each of these sites?

4. What is the contrast in the following statement, and what is implied? “Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence.” What literary term is employed?

5. What mood is conveyed in the first several pages, and how is this mood reinforced by the description of the day?

Chapter 7

Vocabulary

burlesque – relating to a parody or caricature
commandeered – seized or taken for military use
conspiratorial – relating to a scheme or plot
contemptuously – scornfully, hatefully
contretemps – [*French*] an awkward situation; an embarrassing mishap
dexterity – skill; agility
dispiritedly – sadly, miserably
emphatically – strongly, forcefully
encumbrance – a burden or nuisance
extroverts – outgoing and sociable people
fratricide – the act of killing one’s brother
funereal – of or relating to a funeral; mournful
galvanized – stimulated; spurred into action
immobilized – stopped; prevented from moving
impinge – to intrude or encroach
implausibility – unlikelihood, improbability
insinuating – sly, devious
interned – imprisoned; detained
judiciously – with good judgment; sensibly
leadenly – heavily, oppressively
misbegotten – badly planned; ill-conceived
quadrangle – a square or rectangular courtyard
receding – moving back; withdrawing
sabotage – to deliberately destroy or damage something
salient – prominent; significant
virtuoso – an expert; a person with outstanding ability
zestfully – with passion and enthusiasm

1. Why does Gene feel threatened by Brinker Hadley?

2. What difficult situation does Gene confront in the Butt Room? How does he deal with it?

3. What is Gene's emotional state as he crouches under the infirmary window?

4. Gene jokes to himself that Finny is probably answering Phil Latham with a Latin phrase: "Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres." The quote, loosely translated as, "All Gaul is divided into three parts," is attributed to Julius Caesar. What literary term is demonstrated by this brief historical reference?

5. What happens when Gene shoves open the window to Finny's room at the infirmary? How does Finny react? What does Gene say to him?

6. As Gene wanders the campus after his confrontation with Finny, everything seems strange and surreal to him. Cite at least three examples of the surreal quality of the evening.

7. At one point during his nighttime wanderings, Gene convinces himself that he does not exist: "I could not hear [what the stadium was saying] because I did not exist." What does Gene mean? Why does he feel this way about himself at this point in the story?
