

A Separate Peace

by John Knowles

(Published in 1959)

Approved for use in all levels of English II

Summary of the Work:

In New Hampshire during World War II, high school students experience the challenges of growing up. Gene Forrester, who excels in academics, is trying to be accepted by the other students. His conflicting feelings about Phineas, the popular and athletic student, lead to a serious accident. The tragedy that follows this accident haunts Gene throughout his life.

Rationale:

A Separate Peace presents a realistic story of teenage boys trying to balance their feelings of indestructibility with their feelings of insecurity. The rivalries that are so apparent between teenagers and the challenges that teens encounter on their way to maturity are illustrated in the episodes these boys experience at their prep school. Sophomores will be able to use this book as a springboard to discussions about gaining maturity and taking responsibility for their actions.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

"John Knowles," in Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 6: American Novelists Since World War II, Second Series. A Brucoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by James E. Kibler, Jr., University of Georgia. The Gale Group, 1980, pp. 167-168

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Outstanding Books for the College Bound
- William Faulkner Foundation Award, 1960
- Rosenthal Award from National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1960

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 1110
- Readability Level: 8.9

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 1995

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Gene Forrester is 31 years old when he begins to tell this story. The antics and mild violence of teenage behavior cause the death of a main character.

Connection to the Curriculum:

At the sophomore level, students will be able to respond to *A Separate Peace* when they relate it to their own lives. They will be able to analyze the stereotypes and the effect that a character's point of view has on a novel.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

Dead Poets' Society