

A look at the aftermath of conflict as portrayed in John Knowles' book, a separat...

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War and Peace: The Effect of War in A Separate Peace

1939 to 1945. In just six years, in just a span of a senator's term, 2.3 billions lives have went off the map. A generation of teenagers is forced to grow up too fast, forced to throw their futures away because the world is drunk on greed and warfare; only to wake up everyday, surround with images of tragedies and gruesome relivings. The horror of World War II cannot be described, cannot be fully comprehended unless one actually observed it. However, writers around the world are always try to offer the audience a glimpse of World War II through their works. In A Separate Peace, John Knowles chooses an alternative route to deliver the impression of the war; he describes the generation that is about to enter the reality of the war, their views of the world, their dreams and aspirations and how they find moments to be teenagers and to escape the impending war. In A Separate Peace, John Knowles paints a tranquil picture of how the boys achieve a separate peace through the Winter Carnival, yet their actions and the settings are tinged with war-like images.

The war presents itself through the boys' actions in the Winter Carnival. The Winter Carnival is similar to any carnival. However, the undertone of military in the preparation of the Winter Carnival is felt through "Brinker[']s supervision of] the transfer, rattling up and down the stairwell and giving orders". This manner of actions sparks a comparison among the readers between Brinker and a general preparing for a paramount battle. The connection reflects the amount of influences the boys receive from the war. Their actions, even though it is just as simple as talking to a classmate or

climbing the stairs, are all being infused with the flavor of the armed forces. This fusion is also emulated by the “[station of Brinker’s] roommate, Brownie Perkins, to guard [the cider] with his life”. No friend would have stationed their friend; the specific reference to the word alluded to the mannerism of the boys’ actions, particularly Brinker’s. An instance of heavily war influenced action is found when “ Phineas sat behind the table in a heavily carved black walnut chair; the arms ended in two lions’ heads, and the legs ended in paws gripping wheels...”. This portrait of Finny emits a sense of power and arrogance that mirrors the leaders in a strategy room, planning for a battle. Additionally, the distinct sketch of the chair injects the majestic and superior feeling into the mood and minds of the audience. The injection is heightened by “ Chet Douglass, [who] stood next to [Finny] holding his trumpet”. Trumpets and other musical instruments are used in many military events, especially those with a prominent militaristic sonance. The very companionship of the trumpet boosted the grandiose of the Carnival as a whole. The raw effect of World War II is observed by the readers after Finny announced open fire on Brinker. “ Gene got one of the jugs, elbowed off the counterattack... then went through with [his] original plan by stopping Brinker’s mouth with [the cider]”. This savageness is carried out with a more friendly and harmless intention; in spite of that, the stunt still conveys a vicious and brutal tone that is quite related to the tone of battles in wars. The use of unique and unambiguous word choices to describe the boys’ actions by Knowles forges a connection in the readers about the war to the boys.

In addition to actions, the settings and prizes of the Winter Carnival also shows how much of an effect war has on the school and the boys. The “ battleship gray [sky]” and how it is “ an empty hopeless gray and gives the impression that this is its eternal shade”; the color grey and its shades are associated with emptiness, void and sadness. The word “ battleship” also very precisely points in the direction of the war and military. The relation makes the audience realizes that all detrimental destructions of World War II that are seen by the boys in the newspaper, even though are flicked off as nothing, still very silently and subtly grasps the boys tightly with its poisonous vines. The punishing spell of the war reveals itself more when “ winter’s occupation seems to have conquered, overrun and destroyed everything...”. The allusion of the winter’s weather and sky to a tired and collapsed human being with specific uses of words like “ conquered”, “ overrun” and “ destroyed” seemed to relate to a war to not mentioned. The settings of weather and sky are not the only allure of the war; prizes Finny set out for the winners also reflects that: “...Betty Garble photographs, a lock of hair cut under duress from the head of Hazel Brewster...”. All of these prizes can be classified in one word for any soldier: memorabilias of home. These prizes are widely popular among soldiers because it reminds them of what are waiting for them back home and the normality they would experience when they are finished with their duties. With the allures and subtle images, Knowles delivers a final straightforward blow to the readers, reminding them about the impending war that still hang on the heads of the Devon boys. This blow is executed through the mention of “ a forged draft registration card” as one of the prize. This forged draft card is a grow-up gift

because at the age of 18, the boys will be forced to sign up to be drafted. This represents the forced maturity the boys experience because they are living in the time of war. The card is definitely the most prominent reminder of warfare after all the cheerful and mischievous activities in the Winter Carnival. Through settings and prizes, Knowles emphasizes on the war's influence over the boys at Devon School.

John Knowles successfully delivers a message that in or out of a war, the images would continue to live on in one's head. The message was conveyed through the boys at Devon School's actions and the settings of their Winter Carnival in the novel *A Separate Peace*. Through his writing, John Knowles makes the statement that in every war, when it comes to a conclusion, there is always a winner and a loser. Winner and loser refers to the damages each sides received. However, if the readers or anyone are to look over that physical damages, one would realizes that is anyone really a winner when resources were depleted and lives were lost. This idea of no winner and all loser is depicted in the novel by how the massacre and killing in World War II starts to closing the boys' innocent eyes with its deadly touch and starts to kill them softly and subtly with its stream of evil; only to leave them waking up in foreign territory surrounded by landmines that are the result of being forcefully matured.