

A separate peace narrative essay

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



"A Separate Peace" is a novel written by John Knowles at the backdrop of the Second World War. The harsh realities of the time laid down the concept of the title of the novel, as according to Neil Baldwin, "The pressure of this environment at such a dire and impressionable time laid the foundation for A Separate Peace..." (Baldwin, p. 1).

The novel was subsequently published in 1959 in England and in the United States in 1960.

The title of the novel according to J. Knosldx and Liz Gershel refers both to the political and personal context of the novel. According to them, the political context of the novel refers to President's Roosevelt's warning that peace is indivisible and that war in one part of the world will endanger all other parts: "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries anywhere is in danger" (p. 2). The personal context of the novel refers to Finny's inner joy and vision for peace in which Gene draws strength and comforts.

The novel begins with Gene Forester's return to the old high school in New Hampshire to reflect on some of the memories particularly on the incidents during the summer season between his junior and senior years. Gene referring to the old huge tree on the river bank says, "This was the tree, and it seemed to me standing there to resemble those men, the giants of your childhood, whom you encounter years later and find that they are not merely smaller in relation to your growth, but that they are.... the old giants have become pigmies the other way" (Knowles, p. 6).

As he walks around the empty campus of the Devon School, Gene recalls an incident where along with his friend Phineas or Finny, they attended a tea, in which Gene point out his dislike of Finny's behavior towards the school authority.

Finny deliberately defy the etiquette of the occasion by wearing the school's tie as a belt, and dresses in a pink shirt. Gene commented that Finny is the single person who could " get away" with such manner of dressing. While he was resting at the foot of a huge tree overhanging a riverbank, a scene during his junior and senior years flashed back in his mind where his best friend named Phineas challenges " the other boys to make a leap from the fateful tree on the river bank into the cold waters" (Baldwin, p. 5).

Baldwin noted that Gene recalled Finny's aggressive and adventurous character all through the book.

The political context of the novel is seen in Gene's thinking wherein he said, " Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even violence. Changed, I headed back through the mud. I was drenched; anybody could see it was time to come in out of the rain" (Knowles, p. 6). Here, Gene seemed to be talking of the ruthlessness of war.

Nothing can endure it, not even a tree. Perhaps this refers to the re-introduction of the conscription for all young men age seventeen to render military service. Al though they have three options, but all boils down to one, serving in the armed forces and face the imminent danger of being killed in action.

According to Knowles and Gershel, President Truman's authorization of the dropping of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9 1945 not only ended the war, but it also spared the lives of many Americans.

Knowles and Gershel stated, " Gene acknowledges that his life and the lives of many of his classmates were spared this way" (p. 2). Thus, it appears that the author (Knowles) conveys his views of the impact of the war wherein he seemed hopeless whether everything will finally be over or the destructions and violence of war will continue until no one can endure it, not even love, not even a tree.