

A separate peace – study guide essay sample

War



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What two locations- which he describes as “fearful”- does the narrator visit? How does he describe each? The narrator describes the marble staircase and the tree as “fearful” sites, he describes the marble staircase as being “unusually hard” and “not very deep” (3), and the tree as having “certain small scars rising along its trunk” and as the tree being “the giants of your childhood” (6). What is suggested by the tone of the opening section of the novel? The opening section of the novel uses diction like “fear”, “lifeless”, “self-pitying”, which conveys a negative tone, which informs the reader that the author (Gene) has a fear and is terrified of the Devon school. What is implied when the narrator considers “how far (his) convalescence had gone”? When the narrator says “how far (his) convalescence had gone”, he’s implying that he’s been injured and is going through the process of his body repairing itself. Consider the narrator’s reflection that, “Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence.” What do all of the clues provided most likely suggest?

When the author said that “not even a death by violence”, he’s suggesting/foreshadowing the death of a character in the story. How do the weather and the time of year emphasize the mood of the opening section? The author describes the time of year as “a raw, nondescript time of year, toward the end of November”, it was “wet”, and “icy”, which emphasize how dull and dark the mood is, reflecting the author’s feelings of “fear”. World War Two is introduced as a factor in the novel, as Devon is preparing them for being drafted into the war at the end of their senior year. The significance of Finny’s name is that it traces back to Phineas from Greek mythology, who is a blind man, and the significance of the meaning is that Finny is too blind

to see that Gene envys him. When Gene and Finny are walking back to the dormitory it illustrates that they were “ best of friends at (the) moment” (10), and that they enjoy each other company. Knowles emphasizes the distance of war from their lives by saying that they use “ illegal radio(s), turned too low to be intelligible”, that was “ brocrastating the news” (12), which demonstrates the isolation that is between Devon and the war, because there quietly listening to the news, when they’re not supposed too, in a way Devon is sheltering and nurturing them from the war. Chapter 2

The primary purpose of the short chapter is to introduce the character of Phineas, by describing him as “ true and sincere” (16), and that he “ could get away with anything” (18), and is a “ charm(ing)” (21) young man. Phineas’ ability to say “ what he happened to be thinking” stunned people, because everything “ he said was true and sincere” (16). Finny wearing a pink shirt indicates that he likes to draw attention, and he’s capable of getting away with anything, since he could’ve been beat up for such a fashion statement. Gene envies Finny because “ Phineas could get away with anything” (18), from wearing a pink shirt, to wearing a tie as a belt, and talking his way out of punishments. The structural and thematic significance of this chapter, is that Finny saved Gene’s life, when Gene is over here complaining about how “ sleek” (19), and “ sharp” (19) he is, when he should be thanking him, but what if it were the opposite situation, would Gene do the same thing, and save his best friend’s life? Finny has a friendly love towards Gene, but Gene doesn’t. Finny and Gene climb up the tree, to jump off the same time, but in a short second, Gene lost his balance and Finny extended his arm and catch him and “ practically saved (his) life” (24), Gene

starts to catch up with his feelings of envy, and starts to regret ever doubting his friendship with Finny. Chapter 3

Gene's sentiment from the previous chapter was grateful, and in the beginning of chapter three Gene said that he " wouldn't have been on that damn limb except for him", he said he " didn't need to feel any tremendous rush of gratitude toward Phineas", almost as if he's taking back ever feeling grateful for him in the first place. The Invention of blitzballs demonstrates that Finny is the dominant leader, and wants to establish rules, and have everyone follow him. Gene is starting to build an inner jealousy towards Phineas, for example, on page 32 he said that " Finny could shine with everyone, he attracted everyone he met" (32), which demonstrates that he envies his look and his ability to appeal and captivate everyone's attention. Finny refuses to let it be acknowledge that he broke the school's swimming record because he just wanted to see if he could do it, he wanted to do it for himself, and he makes it seem as if he's too good for rivalry. Gene's response to Finny calling him his best friend by not returning the compliment, which indicates that he appreciates and acknowledges the approval but he doesn't feel the same way, as if there was something him back. Chapter 4

Gene fails his first test and starts to realize that if he " was the head of class and won that prize, then"(44), he would be even with Finny, since he has his sports and Gene will have his academics. Finny reacts to Gene failing his test by saying that he works " too hard" (43) and that he knows that Gene " want(s) to be head of class, valedictorian, so (he) can make a speech on Graduation Day" (43), this contributes to Gene's inner turmoil by considering <https://assignbuster.com/a-separate-peace-study-guide-essay-sample/>

that if he were “ head of class”, then they “ would be even” (44) with Finny, which makes him realize that maybe Finny is trying to sabotage his grades with “ the nightly meeting of the Super Suicide Society” (45). The culmination of Gene’s growing hatred comes to end when Finny and him climb the tree “ together” (51), and Gene “ bent” his “ knees”, and “ jounced the limb”, and caused Finny to fall “ and hit the bank’ (52). Chapter 5

Gene puts on Finny clothes because he misses him, and wearing his clothes comforts him in the aspect that he’s gone and is trying to forget what happened “ and even who (he is)” (54), wearing his clothes gives him an “ intense relief”, and he become a different person (Finny). Knowles leaves the issue of Gene’s intent in causing the fall ambiguous because he wants the reader to choose a side, and make the novel even more mysterious, by believing or not that Gene caused Finny’s fall. A revelation that Gene has in the hospital room is that he burst out crying mostly “ because of kindness”(56), he didn’t expect or want to have hurt Finny or taken away the ability for him to play sports. Also, Finny doesn’t remember what happened at time of his fall, which deliberately saves Gene from telling him from what really happened, but Finny said he “ did have (an) idea”, and sad that he was “ sorry about that feeling (he) had” (58). The significance of Gene’s admission at the end of chapter 5 is that he lies to Finny by saying that he’s not going to follow the rules, when in reality he is, he said “ that was the most false thing, the biggest lie of all”(63). Chapter 6

Chapter 6 introduces the second half of the novel by beginning the season of “ Fall”, and saying that “ peace has deserted Devon”, because the fun and games of the summer session are gone, and particularly because Finny is <https://assignbuster.com/a-separate-peace-study-guide-essay-sample/>

absent from the story because he's home in Boston. On page 64, the author said, "fall had barely touched the full splendor of the trees" (64), initiating the start of school and season of Fall. The thematic significance of the hymn they sing at the Winter Session's first chapel service is that "the same hymns were played, the same sermon given, the same announcements (were) made" (65), in which the "continuity" is stressed, which demonstrates that now that the summer session is over the students need to reinforce the rules in their lives. The hymns sung were "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind Forgive Our Foolish Ways", which connects with Gene's actions of causing Finny to shatter his leg and all the wrong doings of the summer session. A new feature that Gene introduces in chapter six is that the "maids have disappeared" (65), and Devon's physical relationship with the "maids" are that they were considered a luxury and now they are gone, "for the Duration". The Devon River is beautiful and clean, and the Naguamsett River is ugly, gross, and dirty.

The thematic purpose is that Devon isolates (separates) the boys from the bad things in the world particularly the war. Gene signed on as assistant crew manager because they needed help, on page 69, Quackenbush said that he's got "to have some real help around here", since the "crew is going to win the New England scholastics", so with that said, Gene took up his "duties as assistant senior crew manager" (69). The significance of the fight between Gene and Quackenbush, is that Gene stepped up and "set in the role" to be "Finny's defender", but later said that he "had done it for himself" (72). Gene's and Quackenbush's plunge into the river was a result of fighting and arguing with one another, and earlier plunge into the Devon

river was because they were looking for an adventure and a fun time.

Quackenbush reflects Gene's inner feelings because he's "ignorant" and "indignant" (70), which represents Gene's inner feelings because he didn't process or didn't put in mind how hurting Finny would effect his life. Chapter 7

In a Separate Peace Brinker is a foil for Leper because he represents the positive sense of responsibility, where as Leper is a human naturalist and a lone wolf. Brinker is a foil to Finny because he wields a power comparable but opposite to Finny's, and Finny is spontaneous, mischievous, and vibrant, where Brinker is solid, politically inclined, and is conservative. Basically Brinker starts joking about how Gene orchestrated the entire situation to have the whole room to himself. Gene jokingly plays along, and suggests going to the "Butt Room", where this whole trial begins against Gene's involvement in Finny's accident. Everyone starts playing along and accuses Gene of pushing Finny out of the tree; Gene of course feeling uncomfortable about everything starts playing and said, "Sure, yeah, I did it", and afterwards left. The boys in the "Butt room" reacted in the case that one of the boys "uncoiled tensely from the couch", and they believed in every single word Brinker said, because of his dominant influence. Gene said the reason he had to play along and make up a story about his attempt to murder Finny is because he didn't want anyone to suspect that he was being "sincere" about a joke, he had to take part in it, or he would loose control.

The purpose of the episode in the "Butt Room" is to demonstrate to the reader that the characters and boys in Devon are noticing how Gene being and personality is changing which makes them infer and suspect that he had

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something to do with Finny incident. The new conflict that is introduced is how Gene is going to have to erase his marking from the crime scene (aka Finny fall), so no one else would ever suspect of him again. When an early snow comes to Devon, the boys volunteer to help out the war effort by digging out train tracks, which escalates the presence of war. The significance of these tasks makes Gene realize that they are merely “children playing among heroic men” (89), when he observes troops not much older than he and his friends pass by. Knowles uses diction and imagery to describe the soldiers as being “not much older”, were “recruits”, “clean and energetic”, “new and good”, which emphasizes that they are not far away from the war, and makes them realize that the drafting is closer than it might seem.

Enlisting is such an appealing option for Gene now since Finny is gone there is really nothing to focus his attention on, and he contemplates the matter further, like why bother to get an education when the war is “slowly chipping away” at the peace of Devon. On page 92, Gene said that there’s “always something deadly lurking in anything he wanted”, so maybe war is what he’s been looking for all along. A significant reversal that occurs at the end of chapter seven, is that when Gene returns back to his dormitory from digging snow off the train tracks, he finds Phineas in his room. This will affect the plot in the aspect that Gene will redraw from enlisting into the war, since Finny is back. Chapter 8

Gene’s and Finny’s relationship in the opening of chapter eight is forgiving, they’re both just trying to move along and forget about the whole incident, basically they’re accepting everything and just continuing with their lives.

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Finny convinces Gene to give up his idea of enlisting because Finny really needs him and is depending on him to help him move around and settle into Devon once again. The significance of the wave imagery used on page 101, informs that reader that the war is growing and getting more powerful, and it foreshadows that something terrible is going to arrive at Devon when Gene said that “ another even larger and more powerful”, “ tide is coming in”(101). Finny is bothered with the absence of maids, because he essentially doesn't believe in the war, and losing such a “ luxury’ upsets him. Knowles uses words such as “ dull green”, “ brown and gray”, “ lost hope and triumph”, “ smell of the human body after it had been used to the limit” and “ exhaustion”, which creates a poignant tone because it's describing how depressed and morose Finny is feeling because of his absence to play sports ever again.

Two psychological events that take place in the gym, is that Finny reveals to Gene that he believes that there is no war taking place, that a bunch of “ fat old men” (107) have been plotting the whole thing, and the other psychological event that takes place is that Finny mentions that he has “ suffered” (108), which creates a very awkward atmosphere because both of them know what caused him to be there in the first place, and it just reminds them of the odd situations they've had in the past, so once Finny said that, they try to forget it ever happened. What Finny means when he said that he has “ suffered”, he basically trying to say that he's been punished by the world (Gene) and that because he has suffered he has the right to know the truth about the war and the rest of world can “ be in the dark” (108), mainly because Gene has taken away his life, his ability to play sports, the only

thing he lived for and was exceptionally wonderful at. Gene and Finny establish a partnership to train Gene for the 1944 Olympics because Finny was currently training for them before the incident, he decides that since he won't be able to participate because of his disability, perhaps Gene can step up and represent that part of him.

Chapter 9

Gene informs the reader of Leper's enlistment by saying that it was his "turning point in life" (116). Leper also said that he was "almost glad that this war came along" because "it's like a test" and "the only things and people who've been evolving the right way survive" (117). Leper is excited with a recruiter from the ski troops arrive at Devon because he's attracted to skiing and everything doing with nature and the outdoors, so he's immediately taken in. Leper's impact that he left on the life at Devon for the first few days were "unimaginable" and they didn't mention it at all until Brinker was reading this magazine from Hitler's life, and started making jokes about how everything going on in the war all directly involved Leper, which was a fun activity of course for the boys at Devon. Imagery used to emphasize the world the boys inhabit is how "the sky is an empty hopeless gray and gives the impression that this is its eternal shade" and how the winter "grows careless in its watch", which emphasizes how dull and boring the winter session really is.

The winter carnival is the highlight of the season because there's never anything to do, so when Finny suggest that the boys plan it everyone agrees to go along. The "separate peace" the boy's achieve is different from the summer sessions "separate peace" because in the summer session they

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had no rules and Finny got hurt, and now in the winter session the rules have been established and to have fun in a way that they won't get caught. The reversal end that is revealed at the end of chapter nine is that Leper has "escaped" the war and is currently hiding out "at Christmas Location", and this dispels the festive mood because now Gene has to worry about he's going to reach Leper without revealing his secret. Chapter 10

Knowles maintains suspense about Leper in this chapter by making him act like a crazy, psychotic person, with jumpy and unpredictable actions. Before Leper enlisted he was a lone wolf, human naturalist, and easy going person, but after the war he stated to have psychotic visions and ultimately turned crazy because that's what happened when innocence is suddenly overwhelmed by experience of reality, and Leper was choose to be the object of this lesson because of how untouched and peaceable he was before he left. Knowles is suggesting that the war changes you; it roughens you up, and essentially turns you to a more mature and different person. Leper said that he always knew that he was "a savage underneath" (127), which suggests that he knew all along, and that he knows him better than anyone else in the book.

Gene of course doesn't want to hear what Leper has to say, so he reacts by pushing Leper violently towards the ground, which suggest that he still has the capacity to lash out at people for nothing, like he did with Finny (he has no self control). Leper considers himself to be pretty close to Gene, for him to be the first person he contacted to help him when he escaped the war. Gene reacts that way he does because he' unstable and unpredictable when faced with the truth, this introduces the theme of appearance vs. reality

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because Gene is constantly refusing to understand his own nature.

Thematically, Leper stands for what happens to innocence when its suddenly overwhelmed by experience of reality (war). Leper and Gene are similar because Leper's present personality (insane) represents Gene's inner self.

Chapter 11

Knowles connects this chapter with the trial chapter, when Brinker was investigating Gene's part in Finny's incident in the " Butt Room". The brief conversation between Finny and Gene foreshadows Finny breaking his leg again, because on page 147, Gene complains to Finny to be careful and not " break" his leg again, and Finny responds by saying that " isn't the bone supposed to be stronger when it grows together over a place where its been broken once?" which informs the reader that later in the story there's going to be an altercation that results in him breaking his leg again. The significance of Finny saying that " Sure. There isn't any war", informs the reader that Finny's fantasies are over, and that he now believes that there really is a war going since " If a war can drive somebody crazy, then it's real all right". On page 147, the foreshadowing of Finny breaking his leg is showed, when Finny said that " isn't the bone supposed to be stronger when it grows together over a place where it's been broken once" (147), which intensifies the wave scene fro, chapter eight.

Everything at Devon is being taken over by the war; training programs are rising along the campus, which informs the reader that the students are spending more and more time thinking about their military futures. The trial at the assembly room precipitates the climax, and we know that this is going to be the climax because Finny is finally going to know the truth about
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Gene's partake in his incident. Leper gives the testimony that condemns Gene, he said, " the one holding on to the trunk sank for a second, up and down like a piston, and then the other one sank and fell." (168). This chapter end by Finny falling down the stairs, because he was upset of the whole situation because in reality he doesn't care in Gene did it because he loves him, this event was foreshadowed by the opening section of the novel when Gene revisited the marble staircase and describes them as being " unusually hard" (3). Chapter 12

Gene's initial role in Finny's first aid is to go to infirmary because he's an extension from Finny's own being. When Gene goes to the infirmary to see Finny, he's pretty upset, he said, " You want to break something else in me!" and doesn't want to hear anything he has to say, so Gene left and fell asleep against the stadium wall. Gene tries to console himself by helping Finny by bringing him some clothes to infirmary, and visits Finny. Gene doesn't cry at the infirmary because he said that it was his " own funeral, and you do not cry in that case" (186), also because Gene was basically a part of Finny, and when he died, that part of him left with him. Chapter 13

The war was literally moved onto the campus because Devon gives the use of the Far Common to the war effort. Gene watches the troops and jeeps unload the equipment being brought in, for a Parachute Rigger's School being established there. When Gene said that he " would not talk about Phineas in any other way" (189), than his death he means that he's not ready to open up with other people about the whole situation, when Finny died, a part of him died too, and he's trying to keep it private and personal, for that's what Finny wanted. Gene says he has already killed his own
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enemy, and therefore has gotten rid of his hate and his fear. Gene's enemy must have been himself, or at least the part of himself that was so quick to lash out and hurt other people. He believes that he has buried his darker side, and from what the reader can tell, maybe he has. Brinker's father reaction to his decision to join the Coast Guard is very disappointing, he expected more from him, he even said " You have to do what you think is the right thing, but just make sure it's the right thing in the long run, and not just for the moment" (191), he wants him to go to the battlefield and die for a real cause, and not just be a wimp and sign up for the " Coast guard" to have fun and avoid death.

Gene plans to serve by joining the " Navy", he's made the decision he has because if he waited to be drafted they would have put him in the " infantry", which is the " worst branch of all", and to avoid death he decided to enlist in the navy. When considering Gene's and Brinker decisions about war, it suggests that the graduating class of Devon, were aware of the effects the war can have on someone's life, for example, Leper is psychotic, and they've noticed how cruel and lonely the war is, so they all enlisted in things that were fun and safe, to avoid all the other risks. Mr. Hadley's attitude towards the war is very patriotic, he believes that the " greatest privilege, (is) to serve your country" (192), and he constantly pushing Brinker to do " a lot more". Brinker's reaction suggest that he's tired of being told to be better, that he's already " enlisting", but that will never be good enough for his father. The realization that Gene is suggesting when he said " wars are made.... by something ignorant in the human heart" (193), is that he finally realizes that his jealousy and envy began inside of him where he

was too ignorant to observe that Finny was pure and really loved him, but jealousy can make someone blind and that's what happened to Gene.

The significance of Gene's reflection that "All others at some point found something in themselves pitted violently against something in the world around them.... When they began to feel that there was this overwhelmingly hostile thing in the world with them, then the simplicity and unity of their characters broke and they were not the same again", signifies that he realizes and understands that there was a point in his life where he didn't feel like he belonged and started "pitting" himself violently against something in the world around them" like Finny and from that point on he was "not the same again". The Maginot line was a defensive line along the German border prior to the 2nd World War; it was an impenetrable maze of bunkers, trenches and natural terrain. The metaphorical significance of this reference is that people when they see they have an enemy they tend to build a wall that separates the two, but Finny didn't. Finny was different in the aspect that he never "hated" anyone, or was "afraid", the final paragraph suggests that the enemy is within oneself, not between.