

Gene adult world



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Separate Peace – Gene’s Journey

Gene Forrester’s difficult journey towards maturity and the adult

world is a main focus of the novel, *A Separate Peace*, by John Knowles.

Gene’s journey begins the moment he pushes Phineas from the tree and the process continues until he visits the tree fifteen years later.

Throughout this time, Gene must become self-aware, face reality and the future, confront his problems, as well as forgive and accept the person that he is. With the jouncing of the limb, Gene realizes his problems and the true person he is inside. Fifteen years later, when revisiting the tree, he finally accepts and forgives himself. This journey is a long and painful one. At the end of this long and winding road filled with ditches, difficulties and problems, Gene emerges a mature adult.

Gene jounces the limb and causes Finny’s fall and at that moment becomes aware of his inner-self and learns of his true feelings. This revelation comes to him back in his room before he and Finny leave for the tree. It surrounds him with the shock of his true self until he

finally reacts by jouncing the limb. Up in the tree, before the two friends are about to make their " double-jump", Gene sees Finny in this new light. He realizes that Finny feels no jealousy or hatred towards him and that Finny is indeed perfect in every way. Gene becomes aware that only he is the jealous one. He learns of his animosity and that he really is a " savage underneath". Over a long period of time Gene had been denying his feelings of hatred towards Finny, saying that it was normal for him to feel this way. Now all of the feelings come back to him and he sees how terrible he really is. The realization that these feelings are one-sided causes Gene to to fall dramatically in comparison to Finny (he paints himself black for these feelings and because Finny doesn't share them, he puts a halo around Finny's head), concludes with the neccessity for Finny to be brought down to his level, and results with Gene jouncing the limb.

After the realization of the person he truly is, in his room and up in the tree, Gene must now confront his problems, face reality, and deal with the future. He must learn that communication is very

important in a relationship and that he must express himself instead of keeping his feelings inside, as he had always done with Finny. He must learn to listen to himself rather than to others. These were just a few of the many problems there were in his relationship with Finny. He must face reality and acknowledge the fact that he isn't as great as Finny, that he is his own individual person and that Finny isn't as perfect as he thought. Gene must accept the guilt for Finny's difficulties after his injury and must help Finny as a punishment and act of repentance for his deed. Gene does this by "giving a part of himself to Finny" as we see with the case of sports throughout the rest of the novel - how Gene "becomes" Finny when it comes to sports. Although the above are all of great importance, the greatest hurdle Gene must overcome is learning to live with what he's done. This painful step is the one which will allow him to completely mature. The final stage of Gene's maturation is his self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. He has to accept that he isn't perfect and that he, like any other normal being (even Finny), has faults. Accepting that

his innocence has been lost helps Gene move on into another part of his life and realize that he can never return to the days of his innocent youth again. He can now become a man, enter the war and adult world and leave his youth behind. Forgiving himself is the step which allows Gene to lead a normal life and enter society. He must finally forgive himself completely for his blind act and allow himself to “ come in out of the rain”. By accepting as well as forgiving the person that he is, Gene enables himself to move on and join the adult world.

Gene’s maturation is long, painful. It is a painful and difficult process that reveals a darker side of Gene that he doesn’t necessarily wish to see. However painful, Gene is made a better person during his maturation through his suffering. Through his pain and awful revelations about himself, Gene matures from an insecure child to a self-knowledgable adult.