
A SEPARATE PEACE

by
John Knowles

Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Novel Units: Rationale

How do you ensure that the needs of individual students are met in a heterogeneous classroom? How do you challenge students of all abilities without losing some to confusion and others to boredom?

With the push toward “untracking” our schools, these are questions that more and more educators need to examine. As any teacher of “gifted” or “remedial” students can attest, even “homogeneous” classrooms contain students with a range of abilities and interests.

Here are some of the strategies research suggests:

- cooperative learning
- differentiated assignments
- questioning strategies that tap several levels of thinking
- flexible grouping within the class
- cross-curriculum integration
- process writing
- portfolio evaluation

Novel Units are designed with these seven facets in mind. Discussion questions and projects are framed to span all of the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. Graphic organizers are provided to enhance critical thinking. Tests have been developed at two levels of difficulty (Level 1=lower; Level 2=higher). While most activities could be completed individually, many are ideal vehicles for collaborative effort. Throughout the guides, there is an emphasis on collaboration: students helping other students to generate ideas, students working together to actualize those ideas, and students sharing their products with other students. Extension activities link literature with other areas of the curriculum—including writing, art, music, science, history, geography, and current events—and provide a basis for portfolio evaluation.

Finally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the guides to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. On the following page are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”: a glossary of some of the terms used above that will facilitate your use of the guides.

Bloom's Taxonomy: a classification system for various levels of thinking. Questions keyed to these levels may be:

- comprehension questions, which ask one to state the meaning of what is written
- application questions, which ask one to extend one's understanding to a new situation
- analysis questions, which ask one to think about relationships between ideas such as cause and effect
- evaluation questions, which ask one to judge the accuracy of ideas
- synthesis questions, which ask one to develop a product by integrating the ideas in the text with ideas of one's own.

Graphic Organizers: visual representations of how ideas are related to each other. These "pictures"—including Venn diagrams, flow charts, attribute webs, etc.—help students collect information, make interpretations, solve problems, devise plans, and become aware of how they think.

Cooperative Learning: learning activities in which groups of two or more students collaborate. There is compelling research evidence that integration of social activities into the learning process. Such activities as small-group discussion, group editing, group art projects, and group research fall into this category, and often lead to richer, more long-lasting learning.

Evaluation Portfolio: literally, a portable case for carrying loose papers and prints. More and more teachers at all levels are utilizing portfolios—product folders—in assessment of student learning. Portfolios are especially useful when working with other educators to evaluate individual students' needs, and at parent-teacher conferences.

Process Writing: a way of teaching writing in which the emphasis is no longer on the product alone. Rather, students work continuously through the steps of prewriting, drafting, and revision—often through collaborative effort—in order to develop a piece for sharing with a real audience.

Plot Summary

An adult narrator ("Gene") visits the boarding school in New England he had attended as a young man 15 years before ("Devon"), and recalls what happened there during the early years of World War II.

Gene's charismatic friend and roommate, Phineas ("Finny") was always full of wild ideas—plans into which the generally rule-abiding Gene was inevitably drawn. During the Summer Session of 1942, for example, Finny decided to jump from a tree limb that hung alarmingly high over the river. Swallowing his fear, Gene followed suit—and was exhilarated by his own success. (However, on a later try, Gene nearly lost his balance, and was well aware that Finny's steadying hand may have saved his life.) So the soon-to-be named "Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session" was formed, with nightly meetings.

To Gene's consternation, Finny managed to talk his way out of all kinds of trouble: When Mr. Patch-Withers, the substitute headmaster, confronted him about wearing the school tie as a belt, Finny calmly explained that it "tied in" Devon with the war effort. And he somehow avoided punishment despite all the meals, classes, and chapel services he cut.

Gene's admiration for Finny was mixed with envy. When Finny came up with a popular new game called "blitzball," Gene felt a twinge of jealousy that his athletic friend had found yet another way to "shine." And when Finny broke a school swimming record, but swore Gene to secrecy—Gene couldn't help wondering if Finny was trying to impress him. One fine day, an incident tipped the balance: Finny convinced Gene to go on a forbidden bicycle ride to the beach. The boys had a glorious time, but the next morning, after sleeping on the beach, Gene flunked his first test—and became convinced that Finny, out of jealousy, was deliberately sabotaging him.

A few weeks later, Gene realized with self-loathing how wrong he had been about Finny, who simply assumed that Gene didn't need to study. Finny suggested that the two make a double jump from the tree, and Gene—overcome by a sudden, dark impulse—jounced the limb. Finny fell, breaking his leg and ending his athletic career.

The Summer Session closed and Gene went home to the South for a month-long vacation while Finny returned to his home in Boston to recuperate. On the train trip back to school in September, Gene stopped off in Boston to visit Finny and tried to confess to his friend, but Finny would hear none of it. Once back at Devon, Gene found that the easy-going summer atmosphere was gone. A senior now, Gene applied for a lowly position as assistant crew team manager, rather than trying out for a sport. When the crew manager,

Quackenbush, sneeringly described Gene as “maimed,” the two struggled and fell into the river.

Brinker Hadley taunted Gene by insinuating that Gene had deliberately “knocked off” his roommate so that he could have his own room. One snowy day, after helping clear the railroad tracks “for the war effort” with his fellow students, Brinker announced that he was going to enlist, and Gene decided to join up, too. When he got back to his room, though, he found that Finny was back, on crutches; Finny made it clear that he needed Gene and Gene changed his mind about enlisting. Finny informed Gene that he would be Finny’s stand-in for the 1944 Olympics, and Gene began a training regimen. Finny also explained to Gene that there really was no war—that the war was an elaborate deception masterminded by the “old men”—a fantasy of peace in which Gene gladly indulged from time to time.

Leper Lepellier, a gentle boy from Vermont who collected snails and enjoyed searching for beaver dams, was the first to enlist. A few weeks later, Gene’s giddy enjoyment of a winter carnival organized by Finny was interrupted by a telegram from Leper, who had deserted the army. That night Gene rode to Vermont to see Leper, and was shocked to find that his friend had suffered a nervous collapse. A transformed, angry Leper described the ghastly hallucinations he suffered, then turned on Gene, attacking him with the all-too-true accusation that he had “crippled” Finny for life. Shaken, Gene returned to Devon.

Not long after, Brinker and some friends hustled Gene and Finny from their room one night without explanation. Their purpose soon became chillingly apparent: a mock inquisition was held to “clear up” the circumstances of Finny’s accident. Leper, who had made a surprise return visit to Devon, testified that he had seen Gene jounce the limb “like a piston.” Distraught, Finny flew from the room and tumbled down the marble steps, breaking his leg again.

Later, when Gene tried to apologize, Finny at first lashed out (“You want to break something else in me”), but then struggled to understand and forgive (“Something just seized you...It wasn’t anything personal...”). Tragically, when Dr. Stanpole attempted to set Finny’s leg, some marrow seeped into the bloodstream, and Finny died instantly.

At the end of senior year, troops came to Devon bearing sewing machines for Parachute Riggers’ School. When Brinker’s father snickered at the sewing machines and advised the boys to join the branch of the military that would enable them to tell the best war stories later, Gene calmly explained that he was joining the Navy because it provided the best chance of avoiding the foxholes. Finny had taken Gene’s anger with him—and as the story closes, Gene realizes that his own war ended at Devon, where he killed his enemies: hatred, fear, and jealousy. Finny was the only person who never hated anyone.

Background on the Novelist

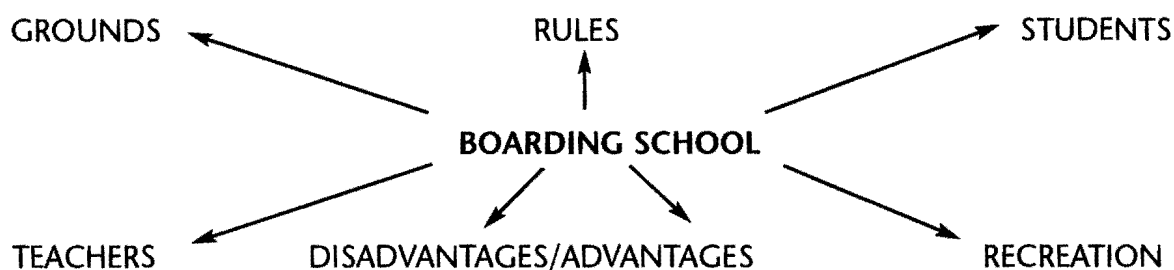
John Knowles—writer of novels, short stories, and magazine and newspaper articles—was born in 1926 in West Virginia. When asked about how he wrote, John Knowles explained that he never wrote with any audience in mind but that he was “delighted that I have found one.” He stated that his novels all began with a sense of place; he let the writing carry him from there. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy (a boarding school in New Hampshire), the setting that inspired *A Separate Peace*. The novel was hailed in The Manchester Guardian, May 1, 1959, as “a novel of altogether exceptional power and distinction...Knowles draws with tenderness and restraint the pure joy of affection between the boys, their laconic, conscientiously fantastic language, and the extra tension of the summer—1942—when they see their youth curtailed by war.” Later Knowles attended Yale University. His novels *The Paragon* and *Indian Summer* resulted from his seven-year stay in Connecticut. *Peace Breaks Out* is a sequel to *A Separate Peace*.

Initiating Activities

Choose one or more of the following activities to establish an appropriate mind set for the story students are about to read:

1. **Anticipation Guide:** Students discuss their opinions of statements which tap themes they will meet in the story (and reconsider these statements after reading the novel). For example:
 - a) True friends never lie to one another.
 - b) Jealousy is common between good friends.
 - c) Wars are usually fought to defend freedom.
 - d) It's best to confess your mistakes.
2. **Video:** View *A Separate Peace*. (1973, Paramount Pictures, 104 minutes, directed by Larry Peerce with John Hayle and Parker Stevenson.)
3. **Historical Background:** Briefly review the world situation in 1942-43—the time of the story: Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor the year before, resulting in declaration of war by the United States against Japan and Germany (after those countries declared war). In 1942, Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, an 8-point declaration of principles. In the United States, 110,000 American Japanese were moved to internment camps. The Battle of Midway, Japan's first major defeat, occurred in June of 1942. On August 7, the Marines landed on Guadalcanal and began to expel the Japanese. U.S. troops invaded Italy in September of 1943 (shortly after the end of the novel).

-
4. Have students brainstorm associations with the phrase "BOARDING SCHOOL" while a student scribe jots ideas around the central word on a large piece of paper. Help students "cluster" the ideas into categories. A sample framework is shown below:



5. **Role-Play:** Have students role-play the following situation, analogous to what happens in the story.
- A friend is trying to convince you to do something that breaks a school rule; you feel torn between going along with the friend and obeying the rule. What are the results?
6. **Prediction:** Ask: Based on a glance at the title and cover illustration, what do you think the story will be about? What can you tell about the setting? What season/part of the country is depicted? What can you tell about the young man? How does he seem to be feeling? What would you guess about the year, from his clothes? What kind of peace might the story explore? How might peace be "separate"?
7. **Discussion:** Ask the students the questions following each topic. They might work in groups to formulate answers. Alternatively, use the questions as a pre-reading writing assignment.
- On Friendship: What qualities do you look for in a friend? What sorts of errors can you forgive a friend? In what situations wouldn't you forgive your friend?

- On World War II: What do you know about World War II? What was going on during the summer of 1942? What impact do you think world events had on a typical 16-year-old at that time?
- On Coming of Age: What does that phrase mean? Are you experiencing "coming of age" right now? What's hard about it? What are some of the pluses? How do you know when you have finally "come of age"? Have you read other novels about "coming of age"? What do the protagonists in these novels usually have in common?
- On Conformity and Individualism: In what ways do you conform to the expectations of your parents? your teachers? your friends? In what ways do you feel it is important to assert your own individuality? Why?

8. **Dual Entry Journals:**

Have students keep a two-column journal as they read the novel. In the left-hand column, they should briefly summarize each chapter. In the right-hand column, they should give a personal reaction to each chapter. Reactions might begin with phrases such as, "This reminds me of the time...", "I wonder why...", "If I were Gene...", "I predict...".

9. **Evaluation Scales:** Have students set up evaluation scales for the following categories. After each chapter, they should evaluate each question according to the scales.

How much do you like/admire Finny? Gene?

Admire/Like Finny	6	5	4	3	2	1	Don't Admire/Dislike Finny
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Admire/Like Gene	6	5	4	3	2	1	Don't Admire/Dislike Gene
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How "close" does the war seem?

Distant	6	5	4	3	2	1	Close
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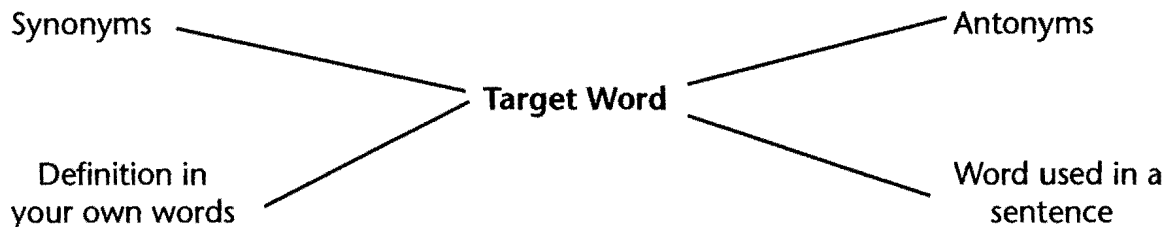
Chapter 1

Pages 1-13

Vocabulary:

tacit (1)	vibrantly (1)	sedate (1)	Northern Lights (2)
capacious (2)	manses (2)	defensive (3)	cupola (3)
convalescence (3)	foyer (3)	specters (3)	contentious (4)
curriculum (4)	salient (4)	forlorn (5)	mire (5)
grandeur (5)	demotion (6)	irate (6)	droll (6)
affirmative (7)	apprehension (7)	prodigious (7)	inveigle (7)
groveling (7)	consternation (7)	rhetorically (8)	insulated (9)
ally (9)	inanimate (9)	seigneurs (10)	matriarchal (10)
expansive (10)	formidable (10)	genially (11)	counterattack (11)
extrasensory (11)	collaborator (11)	conforming (11)	ambled (12)

Vocabulary Activity: Word-mapping is an activity that lends itself to any vocabulary list. For words that have clear antonyms, the following framework would be suitable:



Students might enjoy coming up with variations on this framework. For example, instead of listing antonyms, students could provide line drawings to illustrate the target word.

Cooperative Learning Activity: You may want to have all students examine examples of word maps for all target vocabulary words, even when the list is too lengthy to expect one student to map all words. One way to circumvent the problem is to assign small groups responsibility for several words; each group selects a reporter who describes the group's word maps to the large group, using an overhead projector.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the narrator feel about being back at Devon? (disconcerted by its stale, museum-like quality; a mixture of the fear and joy he had known as a student; anxious to see the tree, then relieved) How much time has passed since he was a student there? (15 years) How old do you think the narrator is now? (about 31) Why do you suppose the author decided to tell the story as a reminiscence, instead of just starting his story in 1942? (The reminiscence captures our interest and lends immediacy—as if the narrator is talking to us.)
2. Why do you suppose the narrator has returned to Devon? (not explicit—might or might not be a formal reunion. Apparently he wants to visit some “fearful sites” as a sort of catharsis.)
3. What images do you recall after reading the first few pages where the narrator’s recent visit to Devon is described? What sights, sounds, smells, etc. are most vivid in your mind? What is Devon like? (cold wet November day in New England; posh old prep school in midst of town with elegant homes; quiet, deserted, sterile, smell of dead, wet leaves, perhaps; wide commons; brick First Academy building with cupola, bell, clock, long white marble flight of stairs; ivy-covered dormitories, large playing fields, fog-enshrouded old tree hanging over the river)
4. Why does the narrator conclude that the stairs must be very hard? How does that fact make him feel? Why? (With all the thought he has given to those stairs, he is surprised that he never realized how hard they must be—since years of wear have only produced minor indentations.)
5. How is the narrator surprised by the tree’s appearance? What does he mean by saying that he remembered it as “high as the beanstalk”? How does it seem now? (In memory, the tree had assumed an almost fairy-tale quality—huge and forbidding as the vine in “Jack and the Beanstalk.” In reality, it was only one of several similar trees—older and smaller than he remembered.) Have you ever experienced anything like this when returning to a place you hadn’t been in a while?
6. “Changed, I headed back through the mud” (page 6). The word “changed” seems a little unusual here. What do you think the narrator means by it? What previous line is he echoing? (In the previous paragraph, he muses on how “the more things remain the same, the more they change after all”; the tree is the same one, but has aged and changed over time; so too, the narrator has changed—shed the fear he had in the days when the tree seemed so awesome, found a degree of “harmony.”)

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7. How was the summer of 1942 at Devon different from what it would have been if there hadn't been a war on? (A Summer Session was established to move Lower Middlers more quickly into Upper Middlers; seniors had courses in first aid, physical hardening, etc., to prepare them for the military; the Headmaster was away in Washington.)
 8. What is Finny like? Begin an attribute web (see pages 13-14). (popular, energetic, athletic, daring, green-eyed, direct, friend of the narrator, rule-breaker)
 9. Why did Finny jump from the tree? How did Gene feel about jumping? What do you think Finny would have done if Gene had refused? Would you jump? (Finny was a thrill-seeker, wanted to do it "for the war effort"; frightened, Gene was resentful, felt pressured—jumped to "save face"; actually, Finny only asked "Who's next?"—and did not tease those who failed to try.)
 10. According to Finny, why was he "good for" Gene? Did Gene agree? Do you agree? (Finny said that Gene needed someone to counteract Gene's tendency to back away from things; Gene agreed, inwardly.)

PREDICTION: Why do you think it was so important for the narrator to revisit the stairs and the tree? What do you think made them "fearful sites"?

Writing Activities:

1. Describe the dreams Gene and Finny might have had the night after each first jumped from the tree. Make the dream a running connection of sights, sounds, smells, and other sensory details with no commentary or narrative in between.
2. On page 9, the author writes "...the view was impressive." Describe the view from the tree in detail. Use information the author has provided about Devon School, plus your own imagination.

Literary Analysis: Flashback

Explain that a flashback involves interruption of the action with a scene that occurred earlier. Point out that the narrator interrupts his description of a recent visit to Devon with a description of boyhood memories of the school (page 6, the incident where Finny first jumps from the tree). Ask the students to identify other stories, novels, or plays in which authors use the flashback technique. (One example is *Death of a Salesman*, composed almost entirely of flashbacks.)

Using Character Attribute Webs

Attribute webs are simply a visual representation of a character's traits. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about that particular character. Attribute webs may be used after reading the story or completed gradually as information unfolds—done individually, or finished as a group project.

One type of character web uses these categories:

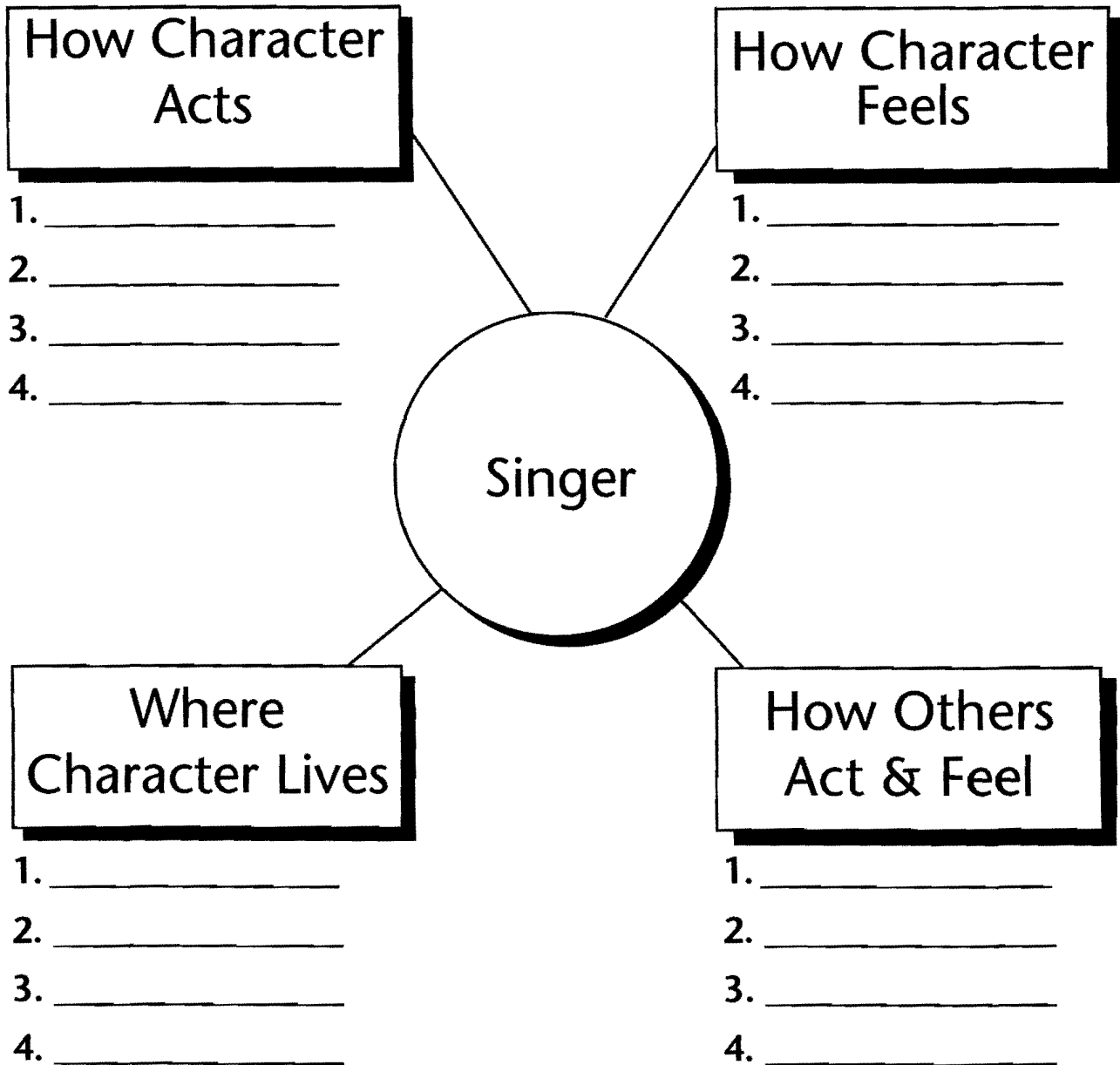
- How a character acts and feels (What do his/her statements reveal about feelings? What does his/her behavior show you about him/her? In a play—what do the character's gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice tell you about his/her emotions?)
- How a character looks (What do clothing and physique tell you about this character?)
- Where a character lives (In what country, state, neighborhood, does this character live? During what time period?)
- How others feel about the character (What do others' statements and actions show about their attitude toward the character?)

In group discussion about the student attribute webs for specific characters, the teacher can ask for supportive evidence from the story.

Attribute webs need not be confined to characters. They can also be used to organize information about a concept, object, or place.

Attribute webs are a kind of semantic mapping. Students can move on from attribute webs to other creative kinds of mapping. They can be encouraged to modify attribute webs—use sub-divisions, add divisions, change connections—in whatever ways are useful to them personally. It is important to emphasize that attribute webs are just a graphic way to record ideas. They provide students with a tool for helping them generate ideas and think about relationships among them.

Attribute Web



Chapter 2

Pages 14-24

Vocabulary:

eloquence (14)	chronic (16)	commendable (16)	preoccupied (17)
emblem (17)	conservatory (18)	barbaric (18)	inane (19)
prow (19)	temperamental (20)	seersucker (20)	tentative (20)
tribute (20)	compelling (21)	conniver (21)	compliance (22)
massive (22)	corridor (23)		

Discussion Questions:

1. What question do YOU think it is important to ask about the story so far?
2. The boys have broken a rule by missing dinner. How does Finny explain to Mr. Prud'homme? What tone of voice do you imagine him to use? What else might he have said? (Finny tells the truth, in elaborate detail—including jumping from the tree to prepare for the war; Finny might have told as little of the truth as possible, or lied.)
3. How does Mr. Prud'homme react to the explanation? How does Gene feel about that? (Mr. Prud'homme seems pleased; Gene is awed—and envious of his friend's ability to "get away" with almost anything.)
4. Finny is "a model boy who was most comfortable in the truant's corner" (page 16). How do you explain this contradiction in terms? How is Finny different from some of the rule-breakers you know? Is he a conniver? (He breaks rules not to be defiant, but because he doesn't see a need for them; he loves the school and wants to be "good.")
5. As an adult looking back, the narrator thinks he understands why the faculty were "looser" with students that summer. Why? (The younger, more carefree boys don't have a sense of war as "real" and remind the adults of what peace was like; also, not knowing quite what to do with Finny—they loosen their grip on all the boys.)
6. How does Finny "get away" with wearing a pink shirt? How does Gene feel about that? (He explains to Mr. Patch-Withers that it is an emblem to celebrate the U.S. bombing of Central Europe; Gene, once again, is a little envious.)
7. How does Finny avoid getting into trouble at the tea? Does he lie? How does Gene feel about that episode? (He muses aloud that using the school tie as a belt parallels

the relationship of the school and the war effort—but admits that he simply used the tie to keep his pants from falling down; Gene is disappointed that Mr. Patch-Withers seems more amused than angry.)

8. Group Discussion/Analysis: How is student life at Devon like/different from life at your school?

Devon:

importance of physical prowess
emphasis on games and sports
competitive spirit
high academic standards
studying Virgil
boarding school
beautiful setting
school uniform

Your School:

9. Why is it that the bombs in Central Europe are completely unreal to Gene and his friends at Devon? Do you think that recent military actions are similarly “unreal” to American teenagers today? (Photographs and newsreels show the bombings, but the boys prefer to accept their pristine world at Devon as their “reality.”)
10. Where do Gene and Finny go after the tea? Why? (Finny steers Gene to the tree to do a double jump.)
11. How does Finny “practically” save Gene’s life? (Gene starts to slip while turning to protest and Finny grabs his arm.)

PREDICTION: Who else will join the Super Suicide Society?

Writing Activities:

- Agree or disagree with Gene’s observation that “sarcasm [is] the protest of people who are weak.” (page 22)
- Draw up a charter, complete with emblem, for the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session. Include the purpose of the society—and how one may join.

Chapter 3

Pages 25-40

Vocabulary:

abstractedly (25)	venerable (25)	entrenched (25)	catcombed (25)
initiate (25)	inured (25)	anarchy (26)	haphazard (26)
maneuverability (26)	collective (27)	fey (27)	infiltrated (27)
sensually (27)	insidious (27)	calisthenics (27)	improvised (27)
blitzkrieg (29)	expectant (29)	adversaries (29)	perimeter (30)
transitional (33)	resonance (34)	evaded (36)	inebriating (37)
suppleness (37)	mediocre (37)	encroaching (38)	honky-tonks (39)
monologue (40)			

Discussion Questions:

1. Why didn't Gene feel very grateful toward Finny for saving his life? Should he have been more thankful? (He blames Finny for pressuring him to go up into the tree in the first place; some students may feel that Gene could take more responsibility for his own actions—Finny didn't force him to climb.)
2. What rules does Finny keep faithfully? (Have personal integrity—"Never say you are five feet nine when you are five feet eight and a half"; say your prayers; always win at sports.) How do these rules differ from the rules he doesn't obey? (Rules about going to class and dinner and chapel and wearing school uniforms appropriately are contrived by authority figures.)
3. What is the Suicide Society like? What does Gene think of it? What do you think Finny would say if he knew Gene's true feelings about it? Would you join? (meets every night at the tree; Finny and Gene jump first; Gene doesn't want to go, but doesn't want to lose face with Finny.)
4. What is blitzball? Who develops it? Why? (Disgusted with the summer's half-hearted athletic program, Finny comes up with a game with no teams where everyone tries to knock down the ball carrier.)
5. How can you tell that Gene is jealous of Finny's skill at blitzball? (page 31, "...it was clear that no one had ever been better adapted to a sport than Finny was to blitzball... Why not? He had made it up, hadn't he?")

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6. If you were to create a collage (video or magazine cut-out) to show Gene's salient memories of the war, who/what would you show? (FDR, Churchill, Stalin, Mussolini maps of Europe and Japan, rationing)
 7. How does Finny break the swimming record? Why won't his time count? (He does it on a lark, with only Gene present; Gene isn't an official time-keeper.)
 8. Finny tells Gene to keep quiet about his breaking the swimming record. What is Gene's reaction? How does he interpret Finny's motives? How do YOU interpret them? Was he afraid that he couldn't replicate his time? (Gene thinks that Finny might be trying to impress him; Gene probably realizes in his heart that it is quite the opposite—Finny works for intrinsic rewards and doesn't care about impressing people.) Have you ever done something just to see if you could do it?
 9. Why doesn't Gene want to go to the beach with Finny? (To go is to risk expulsion, he won't be able to study for a test, and the biking is laborious.) Why does he go, then? (He doesn't want to lose face with Finny.) Do you ever find yourself in situations like this? How do you usually react?
 10. How does Gene respond when Finny tells him that Gene is his best pal? Why doesn't Gene reciprocate? Is he too embarrassed? Do you think he should have forced himself to say something—even if he didn't quite mean it? Do you think Finny is hurt? (Gene starts to say that Finny is his best friend, but the truth keeps him from doing so; Gene actually harbors a lot of resentment toward Finny.)

PREDICTION: Will Gene ever tell Finny that Finny is his best friend?

Writing Activities:

- As an editor of the Devon Student Handbook, you are responsible for writing a sports page in which you describe the rules and regulations that apply to "blitzball." Be sure that your directions are so simple and precise that even an incoming freshman who has never heard of the game could understand them.
- Page 32: "Everyone has a moment in history which belongs to him...when his emotions achieve their most powerful sway over him..." Describe the moment that "belongs to you."
- Gene will never forget the time he and Finny biked to the beach and slept there. Describe a time when you did something outrageous with a friend (or something you would LIKE to do). Explain why you did or didn't regret it later.

Chapter 4

Pages 41-52

Vocabulary:

spectral (41)	Lazarus (41)	trigonometry (42)	detonation (44)
obliterated (45)	solace (45)	enmity (45)	indiscriminately (46)
treachery (47)	effulgence (47)	paganism (47)	denuded (48)
nondescript (48)	undulation (52)	jounced (52)	

Discussion Questions:

1. What sort of long-lasting impression does dawn on the beach create for Gene? Why does Gene think of Lazarus? (He is struck by the transitions of gray to white created by ever-brighter sunlight; it seems as if Phineas, like the Biblical Lazarus, wakes from the dead.)
2. Is it Finny's fault that Gene flunked the test? How does he feel about flunking? Can you relate to his feelings? (While Gene blames Finny, he could have chosen to stay and study.)
3. What suspicions does Gene develop about Finny? (He suspects that Finny is trying to sabotage his grades so that Finny, super athlete, will come out "on top.") Why do these suspicions make Gene feel better? (Gene is relieved to have found an explanation for a friend who otherwise seems too good to be true—and impossible to beat.)
4. What happens to Gene's grades after he flunks the test? (He pushes himself to excel academically.) Do you think Gene would have become such a "good student" if he hadn't been so angry at Finny? How is Gene like Chet? How is he different? (Chet is a good student—but he gets "carried away" by his special interests while Gene works like a grind. Chet seems to be more interested in actual learning, while Gene's chief interest is in simply getting good grades so he can show up Finny.)
5. Why does Finny tell Gene to stop studying for his French exam? (Leper has announced that he will leap from the tree.)
6. How does Finny react when Gene finally asserts himself and says that he needs to study? Do you think Finny should have realized how angry with him Gene has been all these weeks? (Finny tells him to study, that he really thought Gene could do well without studying; he is so trusting that he would probably try to ignore any signs of

trouble in his friendship with Gene, assuming that if something was really wrong, Gene would tell him.)

7. Is Gene relieved to find out that Finny isn't guilty of treachery—that he really wants Gene to do well? (No, Gene feels more angry and jealous than ever—deflated when he realizes that Finny really has been a true friend. Finny, once again, seems flawless.)
8. Why does Finny want Gene to jump with him? How is that ironic? (Finny probably wants the double jump to be a sign of friendship. This is ironic, because at that moment Gene almost hates him.)
9. Why does Finny fall? (Finny slips when Gene jounces the limb.) Can you explain Gene's actions? (Gene is silently seething from his recent discovery that Finny is not the flawed villain Gene had envisioned—and jealously hoped. Finny's falling from the tree would be an imperfection in his athletic prowess.)
10. Gene says "my knees bent." Why do you suppose he doesn't say "I bent my knees"? (Perhaps to signify that the impulse to jiggle the limb came so quickly that Gene had acted on it almost before he knew it; it almost seemed that his knees acted on their own. Gene separates himself from the action, perhaps to disavow guilt for it.)

PREDICTION: What are some possible results of this "accident"? Will anyone find out that it was not truly an accident?

Writing Activities:

- Create Finny and Gene's most recent report cards. Be sure to include subjects, letter grades, and teacher comments. Include a section on citizenship/behavior.
- The author describes Chet as "weakened by the very genuineness of his interest in learning." Is there a difference between learning for the sake of learning and doing what needs to be done to get top grades? In the long run, which type of student do you think comes closest to meeting the true goals of education?

Chapter 5

Pages 53-63

Vocabulary:

noble (53)	grandee (54)	recessional (54)	denounce (55)
amiably (55)	amputate (55)	diminished (56)	visionary (56)
formulating (58)	decatalogue (58)	delirious (58)	erratic (59)
irresolutely (59)	reverie (59)	nave (59)	

Discussion Questions:

1. What effect does Finny's injury have on Gene? on the other students? on the teachers? (Gene stays in his room a lot; it seems that no one talks of anything else; the teachers take this disaster harder than usual.)
2. Why does Gene put on Finny's clothes? How does he feel in them? Have you ever experienced anything like that? (grand, at first—then, as if he were Finny; relieved, able to face what he has done to his friend)
3. How bad is Finny's injury? (It's a "messy break." He won't play sports again.) How does Finny take the news? (Finny isn't wallowing in self-pity, and in fact doesn't seem to believe the doctor. As usual, the "rules" will not apply.)
4. Finny hasn't told anyone about Gene's role in the accident. What is Gene's guess as to why not? What do you think is the reason? (Gene thinks Finny is too sick or too noble; Finny doesn't want to believe what he suspects about Gene.)
5. Finny asks to see Gene. What is Gene's guess as to why? What is the actual reason? (Gene guiltily assumes that Finny wants to accuse him face to face; Finny simply wants to see his best friend.)
6. Why does Finny apologize to Gene? (He apologizes for suspecting his friend of jouncing the limb.) Do you agree with Finny's new "commandment"—Never accuse a friend of a crime if you only have a feeling he did it—?
7. Why do you think Gene decides to tell Finny the truth? Do you think that is the right decision? Why doesn't he follow through, on the first visit in the infirmary? How do you think Finny would have reacted if he had? (Gene wants to ease his conscience,

and thinks that Finny would tell the truth in a similar situation; the doctor comes in before he can confess.)

8. What can you tell about Finny's family background from his home? (He lives in a proper home on an elegant street; Finny's is probably an "old" Boston family.)
9. How does Finny react when Gene admits that he caused the accident? (Finny doesn't want to hear it, gets angry.) Is Gene being virtuous—or selfish—by telling the truth? (Gene confesses after the pressure of guilt has built up over the summer; his motivation for confession is mostly to assuage this guilt. His confession does not really help Finny, and in fact makes him feel worse.) Why doesn't he "take it back" when he sees Finny's reaction? (He can't turn it around so fast; instead, he makes some comments about his fatigue from the long trip and his inability to make much sense. This gives Finny an "out," a way to make excuses for Gene's confession, which he doesn't believe.)
10. As Gene hurries to get to the station, Finny says, "You aren't going to start living by the rules, are you?" Gene says no, but "that was the biggest lie of them all." What does that mean to you? (Gene will start living more "safely" again by conforming to the standards set by authorities.)

PREDICTION: Will Finny finally believe and blame Gene? How fully will Finny recover?

Writing Activity:

- Suppose Gene had decided to write to Finny from home, during summer vacation. You are Gene. Write a letter to Finny describing how your vacation is going—and mention some of your thoughts about the accident.
- Imagine that you are Finny. You write a letter to Gene after his visit and confession.

Literary Analysis: Setting

Explain that setting refers not only to the time and place of a story, but to the social milieu. Have students reread the description of Finny's home (pages 59-61) and look for clues to the social climate in which Finny must have grown up (old money, WASP family). What expectations do Finny's parents probably have for him? Some students may find it surprising that Finny's ebullience somehow arose during a childhood in this sterile showcase of a home.

Chapter 6

Pages 64-77

Vocabulary:

sultriness (64)	apse (64)	continuity (65)	wayward (65)
exhorted (65)	idiosyncratic (66)	emissaries (66)	vindicated (66)
transfigured (67)	compensations (67)	infinitesimal (67)	sinecure (69)
nonentity (69)	assertiveness (70)	automaton (70)	egotism (70)
catapulted (71)	dispensations (73)	stupefaction (76)	incoherent (77)

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the narrator mean by stating that "Peace had deserted Devon"? (page 64) (The quiet of summer session is over; regimentation/tradition are back; masters have returned.)
2. Why doesn't Gene want to go into Brinker's room? How is Brinker different from Leper? (The room used to be gentle Leper's—full of signs of his interest in nature; now it is assigned to Brinker—a "dominant student"—and Gene prefers to remember things as they were that summer.)
3. What does Gene remember whenever he looks at the river? Does the image make you think of anything else? Is the memory a happy one? (Gene remembers Finny in happier days—balancing on one foot in the canoe—but the image ends, as the last tree climb did, with Finny tumbling after his support moves slightly.)
4. Why does Gene go to the Crew House? How does this show that he has changed since the accident? (He has decided to take the lowly but thankfully automatic job of assistant crew manager rather than go out for a sport, which he would probably have done ordinarily—but which takes energy and decision-making power; Gene wants nothing to do with sports, since Finny can no longer play.)
5. What causes the disagreement between Gene and Cliff Quackenbush? (Quackenbush presses Gene about deciding not to go out for a sport and calls Gene "maimed.") Why is Quackenbush's choice of words especially unfortunate? (Finny actually is "maimed," and the word incites Gene to hit Quackenbush.)

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6. How can you tell that Gene has a lot of insight into why Quackenbush is so nasty? If Gene understands Quackenbush's problem, why does he rise to the bait? Is it accurate to say that the argument arises from deeper resentments? Is that true of most arguments? (Gene realizes that Quackenbush is insecure, and that he picks on Gene because he has finally found someone to whom he feels superior; Quackenbush unknowingly "pushes Gene's button" when he—who knows nothing of the freedom of the past summer session, nothing of Gene's inner world—dares to judge him, using the one word that might be applied to Finny.)
 7. Why does Mr. Ludbury stop Gene? Do you think Gene should be more truthful in his replies? (Mr. Ludbury wants to know why Gene—who fell into the river while fighting Quackenbush—is wet; Gene omits the fight from his explanation, pretends ignorance when Mr. Ludbury mentions the summer gambling, the icebox; acts respectful while wishing he had taken more advantage of the summer.)
 8. Who telephones Gene? Why? (Finny calls to make sure that Gene hasn't gotten another roommate.)
 9. Who takes the initiative in the phone conversation? What does Gene discuss on the phone? What else could he have brought up? (Finny asks all the questions; Gene mentions that he had gone out for assistant crew manager.)
 10. Why does Finny tell Gene that Gene has to play sports? Does he have the right to say that? How does Gene feel about this expectation Finny has for him? (Finny says that Gene must play since Finny cannot; Gene loses part of himself to Finny, but realizes with a "soaring sense of freedom" that this is what he, Gene, has always wanted.)

PREDICTION: Will Gene become more of an athlete? Has Finny accepted his own limitations?

Writing Activities:

- Reread the explanation of what it is about Quackenbush that makes Gene so mad (page 71). Then write an angry poem that Gene might write.
- Mr. Ludbury stops Gene and rails at him. Write an interior monologue for Gene which shows how he responds silently to each of the adult's remarks.

Chapter 7

Pages 78-94

Vocabulary:

baptism (78)	gabardine (78)	buttocks (79)	dungeon (80)
mutilated (80)	insinuating (80)	fratricide (81)	rankest (81)
galvanized (81)	judiciously (81)	contretemps (82)	conspiratorial (82)
solicited (85)	differentiate (85)	tentative (86)	burlesque (86)
puttee (86)	locomotion (87)	aviation (89)	futility (89)
mystification (91)	expansive (91)	tributaries (91)	naturalist (92)
dexterity (92)	virtuoso (92)	misbegotten (92)	zestfully (94)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is Brinker like? Would he be a friend of yours? (tall, organizer, into school politics, hub of the class, self-important.)
2. How does Brinker goad Gene? Why? Does he suspect the truth about the accident, or do you think he is a "lucky guesser"? (Brinker snickers about how Finny "fixed it" so that he would have no roommate.)
3. What does it mean that at Devon the students had "many public faces"? (page 80) (scholarly in class, extroverted on the playing fields, like criminals in the smoking room) At your school do students have different public faces?
4. How does Brinker stage a "mock arrest" of Gene? How can you tell that Gene doesn't think it is funny? Why doesn't he just leave the group? Have you ever been in a situation like that? Is Brinker carrying things too far—or is it that Gene can't take a joke? (In the "Butt Room" Brinker tells the others that he is arresting Gene for doing away with his roommate; Gene goes along with the joke because he knows that he will lose control of himself otherwise.)
5. How much of the truth does Gene admit—under the guise of a joke—in the Butt Room? Do you think that the others suspect that he is telling the truth? (He incorporates "a contretemps at the tree" into his fanciful tale about robbing Finny, making love to his sister, etc.)

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6. What does Brinker's "war poem" reveal about his attitudes toward the war? (He is bored by it; it doesn't seem real yet.)
 7. How does the war affect student life in the fall? (Students pick apples because the harvesters have gone to war, and they help clear the railroad tracks of snow.)
 8. How is the snowfall like the impact of war on the students? (page 84) (starts almost humorously, but gradually takes a complete foothold) What other analogy might the narrator have used to compare nature and war?
 9. Why doesn't Leper help the others shovel snow from the tracks? How do the others treat Leper? How would Leper get along with your classmates? (He is looking for a beaver dam; some, like Brinker, scoff at him; Gene accepts his friend Leper as he is.)
 10. How does Gene respond to Brinker's declaration that he will enlist the next day? (Gene suddenly decides enlistment is a wonderful idea, and decides he will join Brinker.)

PREDICTION: How will Gene's life be different now? How will Finny "cope" with his problem leg?

Writing Activities:

- Write a news article about the participation of Devon students in a recent war effort to clear the railroad tracks.
- The faculty at Devon adopted an "Emergency Usefulness Policy" (page 85). Write a statement of the policy—its intent and specifics as to how that intent will be realized.

Literary Analysis: Surprise Ending

Explain that the surprise ending technique used by some short story writers is also an effective way to grab reader attention at the end of an episode or chapter in a longer work. Ask students to identify the unexpected "twist" at the end of this chapter. (Phineas has returned to Devon.) Then have them look at the chapter endings of Chapters 1-6. How does each one make the reader want to continue reading?

Chapter 8

Pages 95 -114

Vocabulary:

clodhoppers (95)	ambiguously (96)	sanctity (97)	reasserted (97)
bequest (102)	opulent (102)	sobriety (102)	reticent (102)
sentinel (102)	adornment (102)	Pompadour (102)	treacherous (102)
tremors (104)	aphorisms (105)	refuting (106)	momentum (108)
sustenance (109)	gulls (110)	self-deprivation (110)	telescope (112)
sententiousness (113)	gullible (114)		

Discussion Questions:

1. Finny teases Gene about his clothes, saying “the rest of your outfit was just gilding that lily of a sweatshirt.” What does he mean? How does Gene take the jibing? (“Gilding the lily” means putting on a coating to give a pleasing appearance—the implication being that what is underneath is precious in itself; Finny is making an ironic reference to the loveliness of the stained sweatshirt under the outer clothes; Gene takes part in the banter.)
2. Why is there no longer maid service? (because of the war) What is the contrast in Finny’s and Gene’s reactions to that? (Gene disapproves of Finny’s complaining.)
3. Why does Gene start praying again? (because Finny, who believes in praying in case there is a God, is back) What is one thing he includes in his prayers? (gratitude that Finny accepts his help with things like making the bed) What do you think some of the other things might be? What do you think Finny includes in his prayers?
4. Once Finny is back, mornings have a new significance (page 97). What is that? (He used to think of morning as the start of a new day, with the previous days failures erased; now he has matured, and realizes that Finny’s injury cannot be undone.) When you wake up, do you greet the day as Gene used to—or as he does now?
5. Why does Gene change his mind about enlisting? Does this show that he was full of hot air the night before? (Gene really did intend to enlist, but realizes now that Finny needs him.) How does Brinker take it? (Brinker seems relieved that he has an excuse to back out, too.)

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6. What nickname does Brinker earn? (Yellow Peril) How does he get it? What does it mean? (Finny tells Brinker that Gene wouldn't enlist with him if he were Chiang Kai-shek, who was then president of the Republic of China. "The Yellow Peril" was a term used in the '40s in reference to the alleged peril of a predominance of the yellow race, with its enormous numbers, over the white race and Western Civilization.) What would be a similar name boys at Devon might brand him with today?
 7. What obstacles does Finny have to overcome? (He gets tired easily, but manages to hide it, and appears to "float" along on his crutches.) What modifications do you suppose have been made today at Devon for those who are physically handicapped? What does Gene mean by telling Finny that the winter doesn't "like you"? (Gene is worried that Finny will slip on the ice.) What does Finny reply? (Finny says that "when you really love something, then it loves you back in whatever way it has to love.") (page 103) Do you agree?
 8. What is the first place Finny wants to visit, rather than going back to class on the first day back? Are you surprised? (the gym—not because he wants to reminisce about past achievements, but to get Gene started on his physical training regimen)
 9. What is Finny's strange explanation for the war? Do you think he believes what he says? (He says there is no war; fat old men who don't want younger people crowding them out of their jobs made it all up.) Why would Finny deny the war? Have you ever denied anything that everyone else around you accepted?

PREDICTION: How will the war eventually affect the boys? Will Finny admit that there is a war? Who will enlist first?

Writing Activities:

- Describe a time when you "found your rhythm."
- Reread page 103. Then observe students walking around a particular area of your school. Using the passage on page 103 as a model, describe the types of walking styles you note.

Chapter 9

Pages 115-129

Vocabulary:

vagaries (115)	vulnerable (116)	Bolsheviks (116)	Tuscany (116)
queried (117)	declaimed (117)	liaison (118)	recessional (120)
slalom (121)	multifariously (121)	garrison (122)	disillusioned (122)
Duration (122)	browbeaten (123)	dowager (123)	proviso (124)
benevolent (124)	cacophony (124)	accolade (124)	cache (124)
milling (125)	invulnerability (125)	mesmerized (125)	dole (126)
violated (127)	rebukingly (127)	universally (127)	latent (127)
choreography (128)	decathalon (128)	illusory (128)	gradations (129)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is Finny's "vision of peace"? (page 115) What does Gene think of that vision? (Finny finds peace by denying the war. Gene allows himself to enjoy lapsing into that fantasy once in a while.)
2. Why does Leper enlist? Are you surprised that he is the first? Do you think he is a victim of propaganda? Are recruiting ads shown on TV today more realistic than the ones that Leper sees? (Leper, who enjoys skiing and nature, is inspired by a movie that shows ski troops.)
3. According to the adult Gene, why might it have been better if Brinker had been first? (If Brinker had been first, his departure would have been more dramatic and the war more real.)
4. How do the other students react to Leper's enlistment? (It makes the war seem more unreal than ever; they joke about his exploits, putting him into every battle they hear about on the news.)
5. Who comes up with the idea for the Winter Carnival? (Finny)
6. What activities are organized? Is this like any winter carnivals you have ever attended or heard of? (ski jump, slalom, snow statues, drinking)

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7. What are some of the prizes given out at the Winter Carnival? How are they “dated”? Which would you want? (cheesecake photos of Betty Grable; translated *Iliad*—a timesaver for boys at Devon, who inevitably studied Latin; icebox—a rarity for a student, in those days)
 8. How does Brinker change after the morning Gene decides not to enlist? How do you explain these changes? (He withdraws from many activities, such as presidency of the debating society; if he couldn’t enlist, he’ll at least stop being such a perfect civilian.)
 9. What orders does Gene take from Finny at the “decathlon”? How does he feel about it? (He is exhilarated as he runs, balances on his head, walks on his hands; it is a welcome diversion from the realities of the war.)
 10. How does the tone change at the end of the chapter? (The bubble bursts.) To whom is the telegram addressed? What is in it? (Leper has sent Gene a telegram saying that he has “escaped” and needs help.)

PREDICTION: From what/whom did Leper “escape”? Do you think he is away without leave? What kind of help might he need from Gene?

Writing/Art/Speech Activities:

- Design a poster for the Winter Carnival. Be sure to include the time, place, and a list of events.
- Summarize the events of the Winter Carnival in “sports caster” style in an oral presentation.

Literary Analysis: Theme

Point out that sometimes the author states his theme, or message, directly—putting all or part of it in the “mouth” of the narrator. The title and the lessons learned by the characters are often clues to theme as well. For example, the title phrase appears on page 128: “the escape we had concocted...this special and separate peace.” Knowles describes throughout the story how the special, protected world in which the boys lived insulated them from the war—for a time—and in describing how he took the telegram from Finny’s hand, Gene tells of “facing in advance whatever the destruction was. That was what I learned to do that winter.” (page 129) Lost innocence is a central theme of the story.

Chapter 10

Pages 130-143

Vocabulary:

passivity (130)	ricochet (130)	culminate (130)	holocaust (131)
execute (131)	havens (131)	presaged (131)	desolate (131)
decipher (131)	draughty (131)	austerity (132)	aesthete (132)
preliminaries (133)	foreboding (133)	functional (133)	fervently (134)
superficial (134)	furlough (134)	querulous (135)	captivity (135)
scornful (136)	reconciled (138)	modulated (138)	rejoinder (139)
imperceptibly (141)			

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Gene decide to do when he gets the telegram? (He immediately takes a train to see Leper.) What does this show you about him? What else could he have done?
2. In a reversal of the "flashback" technique, the narrator "fast forwards" with a few images of what his war experience turned out to be. How does Gene's experience in the army turn out to be similar to his trip to see Leper? (Both involve monotonous travel from one unfamiliar spot to another; Gene entered the war as enemies were receding and the bomb was dropped in Japan before Gene ever left the U.S., just as Leper left the army before seeing any combat.)
3. How is Leper's house different from Finny's? (Instead of elegant Boston streets, Gene finds isolated farmland and Leper's "brittle-looking" Vermont farmhouse.)
4. How has Leper changed? (No longer polite, he is angry and accusatory, and has an involuntary tic. He acts deranged.)
5. What is a "Section Eight discharge"? (a discharge for emotional and/or mental incompetence) Why didn't Leper want it? (He was afraid it would keep him from getting a decent job.)
6. What sort of emotional problems did Leper have in the service? Why do you think he did? Was it battle shock? Would he have had these problems at Devon? (He never saw combat, but the hallucinations probably were caused by the anxiety of realizing that he might face battle. Had he remained at Devon, he probably would have gone on as before, slightly eccentric but relatively happy.)

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7. Why does Gene hit Leper? Do you blame him? (Leper accuses Gene of crippling Finny.)
 8. What is Leper's mother like? How does she get along with Gene? (Protective of Leper, she is upset to find him knocked down, but accepts Gene once Gene starts eating her cooking.)
 9. What terms are Leper and Gene on when Gene leaves? (Gene runs away, telling Leper he doesn't care, doesn't want to hear the details.)
 10. Why do you think Gene is so upset and angry? If Finny had come, how do you think he would have responded to Leper's problems? (Gene is shocked by the truth of Leper's accusations; he probably feels badly for his friend Leper—and vulnerable, himself—and finds that it is easier to express anger and denial than sorrow or fear.)

PREDICTION: How will the others react to the news about Leper? Will Leper recover and go back to school?

Writing Activities:

- As Leper's drill sergeant, write the official report on Leper, describing his period of service and the reason for his discharge.
- You are Leper's mother. Write a letter to your sister about your son. Explain some of your worries about him and mention the visit by one of your son's friends.

Literary Analysis: Irony

Explain that irony is a device involving a contrast between what a situation appears to be and what it actually is. Ask what is ironic about the fact that a gold star hung behind one window while Leper stood behind another. (The star indicates that a son of the house is serving the country; Leper has left the service with no "gold stars" on his record.)

Chapter 11

Pages 144-169

Vocabulary:

primevally (144)	terminus (144)	austere (144)	preposterous (145)
inveigled (145)	aura (146)	eunuch (146)	infantile (148)
ironic (150)	civilian (150)	fortitude (151)	insulated (151)
convoy (151)	incredulously (155)	ruefully (155)	cohorts (156)
culminating (156)	tether (157)	balustrade (157)	torpidly (158)
surmise (158)	casualty (159)	constricted (159)	timbre (160)
assent (160)	incarnate (160)	compromise (163)	self-indictment (166)
brusquely (166)	guileful (168)	implicate (168)	acoustics (169)

Discussion Questions:

1. What would the doctor say to Finny about snowball fights? (Finny shouldn't participate in them as he might break his leg again.) If you were Finny's friend, would you remind him?
2. How is the snowball fight like blitzball? (Both were organized by Finny; in both, Finny breaks down traditional team allegiances; no one wins or loses.)
3. How does Brinker take the news of Leper's departure from the army? (He is unsympathetic and critical.)
4. What makes Finny give up his denial of the war? (Brinker makes a blunt comment about Finny and Leper being "sidelined" from the war.)
5. How did students choose between various branches of the military? (fairly arbitrarily—Some wanted to fly; some had fathers who could get them appointments to Annapolis or West Point.)
6. According to Brinker, why is it important to mention Finny's leg to Finny and even to joke about it? (Brinker says it is healthier for Finny to accept the fact that he is "crippled.") Do you agree with Brinker? Can you think of a similar situation in your own experience?

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7. Why do Brinker and his friends take Gene and Finny to the First Building? Do you think this is an act of cruelty? (They stage a mock inquiry into Finny's injury.)
 8. Do you think Gene is right in thinking that if he had only said, "Go to Hell" when Brinker suggested "Let us pray"—everything might have been saved? Why do you suppose he let the masquerade continue? (The others probably wouldn't have let him leave anyway.)
 9. Explain what the adult Gene means when he says that Brinker forgot that "Justice incarnate is not only balancing the scales but also blindfolded." (page 160) (Brinker is biased in this case, and does not understand everything behind it; his judgment is not just.)
 10. Why does Finny leave the building crying and fall on the stairway? (He does not want to hear any more about his best friend deliberately causing his fall from the tree.) Would this second accident have happened if Leper had not returned to campus? Would Gene have admitted the truth at the inquiry? (Leper confirms that Gene caused Finny's fall; up to that point, Gene had lied, saying he was at the base of the tree watching Finny climb. Without Leper's testimony, there was really no way to prove Gene was lying.)

PREDICTION: How badly injured is Finny? What will his first words to Gene be?

Writing Activities:

- Write the journal entries that Gene, Finny, and Brinker might have made the night after the "inquisition."
- Gene has suffered a great deal of guilt since he caused Finny to fall from the tree. Who is to blame for this second accident? Was Brinker overstepping boundaries he should not have crossed? Was Leper?

Literary Analysis: Cliffhanger/Climax

Explain that a **cliffhanger** is a device whereby the reader is left "hanging" at the end of a section (here, a chapter), eager to read on and find out how the situation is resolved. Tension peaks at the point where Finny falls down the marble stairs; this is the **climax** of the story.

Chapter 12

Pages 170-186

Vocabulary:

pontiff (171)	desolating (171)	incongruity (171)	irreconcilably (172)
differentiated (174)	expulsion (174)	laboriously (175)	indecipherable (177)
innately (177)	impervious (178)	undulations (178)	bespoke (178)
superficial (178)	epic (178)	parody (180)	languid (180)
precariously (180)	enlightened (181)	alluded (184)	

Discussion Questions:

1. As Gene watches Finny being carried by the others, he realizes why Finny had always accepted help only from Gene. Why is that? Why doesn't Gene aid Finny this time? (Finny had thought of Gene as an extension of himself; Gene isn't sure Finny would want his help now, since Finny is upset about Leper's revelation that Gene caused the accident.)
2. What does the adult Gene remember about what happened that night after Finny fell down the stairs? Why do you think his mind was full of so many witty remarks at such a tragic time? (Gene creeps in the dark to the window of the room where Finny is being tended, then opens the window after the adults leave; the wit is probably a form of suppressed hysteria or shock.)
3. What do Gene and Finny say to each other? (Finny nearly falls out of bed, yelling, "You want to break something else in me." Gene says that he is sorry—that he wants to fix Finny's leg.) Do you think there is anything else either one of them should have said?
4. Where does Gene go after apologizing to Finny? Why do you think Gene doesn't return to his room that night? How is he feeling? Does this remind you of Leper's experience in the army, in any way? (Gene walks around in the dark, where familiar objects suddenly seem unfamiliar—much like Leper's description of how familiar people assumed fantastic shapes; Gene is probably in shock—as if in a dream; eventually he falls asleep under the stadium.)
5. Why does Gene go to see Finny the next day? How is Gene feeling on his way to the infirmary? (Dr. Stanpole has left Gene a note to bring Finny's things in a suitcase; Gene feels a sense of "déjà vu;" he tries to calm himself by thinking of worse things—the atrocities of war.)

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6. Gene comforts himself with the thought, "My brief burst of animosity...something which came before I could recognize it...what was that in the midst of this holocaust?"—(page 180). What does he mean? Do you think Gene is responsible for what happened to Finny? (Gene tells himself that everything happened so fast that he had no control over it—and that the large-scale death and destruction of war is much worse than what happened to two youngsters in a tree.)
 7. Think about the last talk Gene and Finny have. What does Gene learn about Finny that he hadn't known? (Finny has known the war is real—and he has been trying to enlist.)
 8. Gene tells Finny that he wouldn't have been any good in war. Why not? Do you think Gene was cruel to say this? How do you think Finny felt when Gene said this? (Finny was probably reassured by the accuracy of Gene's assessment—that Finny was too good, noble, fair-minded, and egalitarian to promote war, which demands authoritarianism.)
 9. Does Finny forgive Gene? How would the lives of both have been different if they had never had that last talk? How would your feelings about the story be different? (Finny tells Gene that he believes him—that he knows what a blind impulse is like; Finny is probably relieved to have found an explanation and to be able to tell his friend that he understands; Gene would probably have had a much harder time dealing with his loss if Finny had not forgiven him.)
 10. Why do you think Gene remembers so many specific details about the day on which Finny dies? (Somehow our memories often record trivial details that surround peak moments in our lives.) What caused Finny's death? (Marrow seeped into Finny's bloodstream and stopped his heart while Dr. Stanpole was setting his leg.) How can you tell that Dr. Stanpole feels terrible about it, and is trying not to blame himself? (Dr. Stanpole says, "It was such a simple, clean break. Anyone could have set it. Of course I didn't send him to Boston. Why should I?"—page 185) Why doesn't Gene cry? (Gene is numb with shock and grief, and feels that it is a part of himself that has died.)

PREDICTION: Will the others blame Gene for Finny's death?

Writing Activities:

- Create a program for Finny's funeral service—including the eulogy Gene and the headmaster give as well as the music that is played.
- Write an obituary for Finny. Provide appropriate details such as birthdate, school and athletic career, surviving family, and where donations might be sent.

Chapter 13

Pages 187-196

Vocabulary:

predecessors (187)	scholasticism (187)	gyration (188)	poignant (188)
bellicose (188)	cogitation (189)	portliness (190)	doughboys (190)
amphibious (191)	morale (193)	assimilate (194)	regimentation (195)
Maginot Lines (196)			

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the Devon campus change after Finny's death? (Several buildings are converted for military use; troops from Parachute Riggers' School take over the Common.)
2. Why do you suppose no one accuses Gene of being responsible for what happened to Finny? (Gene is probably right: it is either because they cannot believe it or they cannot understand it.)
3. Gene's memories of Devon begin in what season? In what season does the story end? Why do you suppose the author chose this time frame? (Summer to summer; as in many stories, the passage of a complete cycle of time—a year—gives the sense of completion, of moving from beginning to end with the narrator.)
4. What is Brinker's father like? Are you surprised? Would you have liked to know more about the families of the boys? (Pro-military, he advises the boys to enter the branch of the service that will involve them most actively in the war—give them the "best stories" to tell later.)
5. Do you agree that "part of friendship consists in accepting a friend's shortcomings, which sometimes includes his parents" (page 192)? How can you tell that Gene considers Brinker a friend? (Gene doesn't argue with Brinker's father, although he disagrees, and wants to stay as far from combat as possible.) Are you surprised that they are still friends after what happened to Finny?
6. Which branches of the military have Brinker and Gene chosen? Why? (Gene has chosen the Navy in hopes that there will be a lot of training but no combat; Brinker has chosen the Coast Guard—which reduces his chances of doing battle, too.)

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7. Why is Brinker angry with his father? Whom does Brinker blame for the war? What does Gene think of this? Have you ever heard that argument? What do you think of it? (Brinker says that the older generation starts the war and leaves the younger generation to fight and die; Gene disagrees, inwardly, believing that wars are made not by "generations and their special stupidities, but...by something ignorant in the human heart."—page 193)
 8. Why can't Gene say anything about Finny or listen to anything about him? Have you experienced this after the loss of a relative or friend? (Finny is still alive in Gene's heart; it makes no sense to him to talk of Finny in the past tense.)
 9. Gene muses about how Finny was different from others. In what way? (Unlike Leper and others, Finny was able to accept a little at a time, without a sense of internal chaos; Finny had the self confidence and capacity for affection which preserved him—until Gene broke his natural unity.) Whom do you think of when Gene talks about how people may "break" and find that they are "not the same again" when they see the overwhelming hostility around them?
 10. What does the final passage of the story mean to you? How do most people construct "Maginot Lines" against the enemy? Do you? What do you suppose it was that made Finny so different from everyone else? (The Maginot Line was a zone of French fortifications erected along the French-German border in the years before WWII; wars arise when fear and hatred cloud our understanding of others—and ourselves; somehow Finny grew up without ever hating anyone.)

Writing Activities:

- Write the letter that Gene might send to Finny's mother.
- Write yearbook entries for the key characters in the story. Include a memorial page for Finny.

Post-reading Discussion Questions

1. What does Gene learn about the “dark” side of his nature? Compare him to other literary characters who have confronted their primal natures—such as the boys in *Lord of the Flies*.
2. How much impact did the war have on the boys? How well were they insulated from it?
3. In the beginning, the adult Gene says that he can now see the great fear that he lived in while at Devon. What does he mean? What was the “convalescence” to which he referred in the beginning (page 3)?
4. How do you think Gene spent the 15 years between “then” and “now”?
5. Would Gene and Finny have been friends of yours? What about Leper? Brinker? What groups might you sort the characters into? Which ones are victims? Which ones are “predators”? Which ones are popular? Which ones are unpopular?
6. With which character do you identify most closely?
7. This is a story about a rather elite boarding school, set during the 1940s—not the typical experience of a teenager today. Do you find that you can “relate” to the story, anyway? If so, to what aspects? If not, do you think the novel should be explored in today’s classrooms?
8. If you were to “update” the story, what would you change? How? Suppose the story were set at your school, today. How is being a teenager today different from being a teen in 1942? How would the plot differ? How could the theme remain the same?
9. There were no major female characters in this story. Do you think girls can appreciate the story, or is it written primarily for boys?
10. Trace references to “peace” throughout the story. What kinds of “peace” do the boys experience? What do you know about how the boys coped with war, after the end of the story? What do you imagine about the war experiences of others, not mentioned—e.g., how do you suppose Quackenbush participated in the war?

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11. Why do you think John Knowles chose this title? What multiple meanings does it have? What else could it have been called?
 12. One critic (Donald Bar, 1986 *New York Times Book Review*) maintains that *A Separate Peace* is developmentally inappropriate for adolescents and morally damaging because it provides “half-seductive images of alienation.” Because *A Separate Peace* pictures the ambiguity of friendship it “invites young people to contemplate the dark forces brooding over the tortured world of adolescence.” Do you agree with these criticisms? What do you think? Should this novel be taught in middle school/high school classes?
 13. How are the experiences of Gene/Finny and Lorraine/John in *The Pigman* similar? (Both are about the loss of innocence as a price of entering the world of adults.) For those who have read *Dead Poets Society* (Tom Schulman)—or seen the movie with Robin Williams: How are the experiences of Gene/Finny like those of the boys in *Dead Poets Society*? (In both cases, what happened to the nonconformists? How did the nonconformists change the lives of those around them? How did they, themselves, suffer?)
 14. For those who have read Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*: Lt. Henry finds “a separate peace” after barely escaping execution for (false) charges of desertion from the Italian army; he no longer feels committed to the war effort. How is that like Gene’s experience? Why is Gene finally “ready for war, now that I no longer had any hatred to contribute to it” (page 195)?
 15. How would you characterize John Knowles’ writing style? What sorts of words does he use? Are his sentences simple, complex—a combination of both? Is his tone formal or informal? Is his style effective in making this a memorable story? Why or why not?
 16. Knowles manages to inject humor into a tragic story. How? Why? Do you find this effective or disconcerting?
 17. How do you feel at the end of this story? How would you describe the tone at the end? Is the narrator optimistic? pessimistic?

Post-reading Extension Activities

Suggested Further Reading/Viewing:

1. View the video (see prereading activities). For comparison with another "recollection" story about the same era, view *Summer of '42*.
2. Read the long-awaited sequel to *A Separate Peace*, *Peace Breaks Out*, also by John Knowles. Compare/contrast the themes and characters of the two novels.
3. Compare this novel with others about "coming of age":
 - Bridge to Terabithia* (Katherine Paterson)
 - The Catcher in the Rye* (J.D. Salinger)
 - A Day No Pigs Would Die* (Robert Newton Peck)
 - Edisto* (Padgett Powell)
 - A House Like a Lotus* (Madeline L'Engle)
 - Is That You, Miss Blue?* (M.E. Kerr)
 - Jacob Have I Loved* (Katherine Paterson)
 - One-Eyed Cat* (Paula Fox)
 - A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* (James Joyce)
 - A Solitary Blue* (Cynthia Voigt)

Drama/Music:

1. Imagine that Gene's son is old enough to apply to Devon. Write the conversation the two have about the school, and dramatize it with a friend.
2. Act out a scene that did not appear in the story, such as the scene between Finny and his mother on his first day home after the accident.
3. Find recordings of some of the songs mentioned in the story, and use them as background music for dramatic readings of scenes in the novel.

Art:

1. Research some of the styles of architecture mentioned throughout the story. Photocopy some examples and prepare a poster and a short oral presentation.
2. Create a collage that conveys your impression of Finny—his appearance, the things he enjoyed, the energy he exuded.

History:

1. Create a timeline to serve as a backdrop for the events in the story. Include historic events as well as key events in the entertainment and sports worlds.

Writing:

1. Assume that you are producing a "Preview of Coming Attractions" video for the film *A Separate Peace*. Your preview should entice people to see the movie. Which scenes will be represented, and what images will viewers see on the screen? Write an outline for your preview presentation, and then write a paragraph summarizing the outline.
2. Write an essay defending or refuting one of the following statements. Provide supportive evidence from the story as well as from your own experience.
 - The more things remain the same, the more they change after all.
 - Wars are made by something ignorant in the human heart.
 - The closest friendships often involve intense rivalry.
 - Part of friendship consists of accepting a friend's shortcomings.
 - Sarcasm is the protest of people who are weak.
 - When you really love something, it loves you back in whatever way it has to love.
3. Write an interior monologue for Phineas describing his thoughts as he struggles to forgive Gene following the second fall.
4. Assume the persona of Finny and write about the night he and Gene spent at the beach.
5. Describe what Finny would have done with his life if he had lived.
6. Write an essay comparing Finny and Gene.
7. Write an additional chapter for the novel—perhaps one in which Gene reports for basic training and realizes how Devon compares to a "real world" military base in wartime.
8. Learn more about post-traumatic stress syndrome. What causes it, and how can it be treated? Do you think this is what Leper has?
9. Learn more about the problem that caused Finny's death. How common is it? Is there any way to insure that it won't happen?
10. Knowles uses a great deal of figurative language. Choose five examples you find particularly effective, and explain each of your choices.

Evaluation: Rubric for Essay-Writing

The following is a suggested set of criteria for grading student essays. It can be altered in any way that fits the specific needs of a class. We encourage you to share the evaluation criteria with your students before they write their essays. You may even want to use this form as a self-grading or partner-grading exercise.

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Maximum # Points</u>
1. Focus: Student writes a clear thesis and includes it in the opening paragraph.	10
2. Organization: The final draft reflects the assigned outline; transition words are used to link ideas.	15
3. Support: Sufficient details are cited to support the thesis; extraneous details are omitted.	15
4. Detail: Each quote or reference is explained (as if the teacher had not read the book); ideas are not redundant.	15
5. Mechanics: Spelling, capitalization, usage are correct.	15
6. Sentence Structure: The student avoids run-ons and fragments. There is an interesting variety of sentences.	10
7. Verbs: All verbs are in the correct tense; sections in which plot is summarized are in the present tense.	10
8. Total Effect of the Essay: Clarity, coherence, overall effectiveness.	10

TOTAL_____

Comments:

Assessment for *A Separate Peace*

Assessment is an ongoing process, more than a quiz at the end of the book. Points may be added to show the level of achievement. When an item is completed, the teacher and the student check it.

Name _____ Date _____

Student

Teacher

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| _____ | _____ | 1. Keep a dual entry journal. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Make an attribute web for Finny. |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Draw up a charter, complete with emblem, for the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session. Include the purpose of the society, and how one may join. |
| _____ | _____ | 4. As an editor of the Devon Student Handbook, you are responsible for writing a sports page in which you describe the rules and regulations that apply to "blitzball." Be sure that your directions are so simple and precise that even an incoming freshman who has never heard of the game could understand them. |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Write an angry poem that Gene might write after Quackenbush made him so angry. |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Write yearbook entries for the key characters in the story. Include a memorial page for Finny. |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Create a timeline to serve as a backdrop for the events in the story. Include historic events as well as key events in the entertainment and sports worlds. |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Design a poster for the Winter Carnival. Be sure to include the time, place, and a list of events. |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Create a collage that conveys your impression of Finny—his appearance, the things he enjoyed, and the energy he exuded. |
| _____ | _____ | 10. This is a story about a rather elite boarding school set during the 1940s—not the typical experience of a teenager today. Do you think this novel should be explored in today's classrooms? Write a paper arguing for/or against teaching <i>A Separate Peace</i> in high schools today. |