

*A Separate Peace* (John Knowles)  
Study Questions

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Ch. 1

1. How has the narrator's concept of Devon changed since he was there as a student?
2. What two places does the narrator especially seek out to visit?
3. In what year does the story occur? What time of the year?
4. Why are Phineas and the narrator not involved in the war?
5. What sensation does the narrator have as he jumps from the tree?
6. Why does Finny claim he is "good" for the narrator?
7. What is Finny's concept of "authority"?

Ch. 2

1. How does Gene feel when he realizes that Finny "could get away with anything"?
2. What does Gene realize about Finny at the end of this chapter?

Ch. 3

1. Why does Gene renounce any gratitude toward Phineas for saving his life?
2. Gene says that jumping from the tree is "acting against every intuition of my nature." Why, then, does he do it repeatedly?
3. Why doesn't Gene tell Finny that Finny is his best friend?

Ch. 4

1. Note the repetition of one specific word at the beginning of this chapter. What is it? What do you make of it?
2. Why did Gene "jounce the limb," causing Finny to fall?
3. Why do you think Gene now jumps from the limb without any fear at all?

Ch. 5

1. Why does Gene dress in Finny's clothes? What discovery does he make?
2. What is Finny's reaction when Gene finally confesses that he deliberately jounced the limb?

#### Ch. 6

1. What is the meaning of the first line of this chapter?
2. What contrast does Gene notice between the Summer Session and the Winter Session?

#### Ch. 7

1. What is the difference between the Devon River and the Naguamsett River? When does Gene swim in each? Why is this significant?
2. Briefly describe the incident in the "Butt Room." How do you know that Gene momentarily "lost his cool"?
3. What appears to be the function of Leper Lepellier in the novel? (Clue: his name)

#### Ch. 8

1. Why has "peace come back to Devon" for Gene?
2. Explain the meaning of the paragraph beginning with the line, "So the war swept over like a wave..." (pg. 101)
3. What weakness does Finny reveal in this chapter?

#### Ch. 9

1. Summarize the first paragraph of this chapter in your own words.
2. How is winter described?
3. Why is the setting for the Winter Carnival the Naguamsett River?
4. What initial action begins the games?
5. What interrupts the games?
6. What is the meaning of the title A Separate Peace? How does Winter Carnival, interrupted by the telegram, epitomize the title?

#### Ch. 10

1. How is the sun described at the beginning of this chapter?
2. Why does Gene kick Leper? What does this reveal about Gene?
3. Why is Gene unable to bear Leper's narration of his terrible experience? Why does he say, "I don't give a damn"? What is he trying to escape?

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Ch. 11

1. Why does Gene want to be with Phineas only? What does Finny represent to Gene now?
2. What finally convinces Finny that the war is real?
3. Why is the testimony conclusive evidence to Finny, though not conclusive to the others?

Ch. 12

1. What does Gene mean when he says, "But I could not hear, and that was because I did not exist." How does this relate to his remark to Finney the next day, "I felt I belonged here."
2. Why is Gene correct when he says to Finny, "You wouldn't be any good in the war, even if nothing had happened to your leg"?
3. Is Finny's death necessary, or has the author merely "killed him off"?
4. Why did Gene never cry about Finny?

Ch. 13

1. According to Gene, what causes wars?
2. Gene says, "I killed my enemy here (at school)." Who was Gene's enemy?