

A SEPARATE PEACE BOOK

A Separate Peace is a coming-of-age novel by John Knowles, published in 1959. Based on his own experiences, the book was challenged in the Vernon-Verona-Sherill, NY School District as a "filthy, trashy sex novel" despite having no explicit sexual content.

I would know more about that when I had seen the second place I had come to see. I had rarely seen anyone go into one of them, or anyone playing on a lawn, or even an open window. Now here it was after all, preserved by some considerate hand with varnish and wax. He always sees the best in others, seeks internal fulfillment free of accolades, and shapes the world around himself to fit his desires. At least the seventeen-year-old bunch could do it; but they had a crucial year's advantage over us. The two forgive each other. World War II soon occupies the schoolboys' time, with student Brinker Hadley rallying the boys to help the war effort and Gene's quiet friend Leper Lepellier joining the Ski Troops and becoming severely traumatized by what he sees. This rivalry climaxes and is ended when, as Finny and Gene are about to jump off the tree, Gene impulsively jounces the branch they are standing on, causing Finny to fall and shatter his leg, permanently crippling him. Finny tells Gene that he must become an athlete for both of them and proposes to train him for the Olympics. What happens between the two friends one summer, like the war itself, banishes the innocence of these boys and their world. Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even a death by violence. Moving through the soaked, coarse grass I began to examine each one closely, and finally identified the tree I was looking for by means of certain small scars rising along its trunk, and by a limb extending over the river, and another thinner limb growing near it. In that time and place, my characters would have behaved totally differently. The wind was blowing more steadily here, and I was beginning to feel cold. They become straw versions of themselves, so shattered and shaken that they can barely remember joys experienced mere months before. A lifetime friendship is reduced to a fraction of its intended span. The main antagonist, Brinker wants to get to the bottom of Finny's accident, but it is unclear if he intended for the investigation to be a practical joke. Plot summary[edit] Gene Forrester, the protagonist, returns to his old prep school, Devon a thinly veiled portrayal of Knowles's alma mater, Phillips Exeter Academy 15 years after he graduated, to visit two places he regards as "fearful sites": a flight of marble stairs and a big tree by the river from which he caused his friend, Phineas, to fall. Why is this? He and I passed the gym and came on toward the first group of dormitories, which were dark and silent. I felt fear's echo, and along with that I felt the unhinged, uncontrollable joy which had been its accompaniment and opposite face, joy which had broken out sometimes in those days like Northern Lights across black sky. The toll sailed over the expansive tops of all the elms, the great slanting roofs and formidable chimneys of the dormitories, the narrow and brittle old housetops, across the open New Hampshire sky to us coming back from the river. The houses were as handsome and as unusual as I remembered. Gene accepts the news without crying, because he feels as if he has died, too. There were only two hundred of us at Devon in the summer, not enough to fill most of the school. I turned away and went back outside. Gene insists that he acted without hatred "blindly" and Finny accepts the explanation with relief. So I didn't argue. See full terms and conditions and this month's choices. In this double demotion the old giants have become pigmies while you were looking the other way. For such an extraordinary athlete -- even as a Lower Middler Phineas had been the best athlete in the school -- he was not spectacularly built. At first Finny does not believe him and afterward feels extremely hurt. I went along beside him across the enormous playing fields toward the gym. A little fog hung over the river so that as I neared it I felt myself becoming isolated from everything except the river and the few trees beside it.