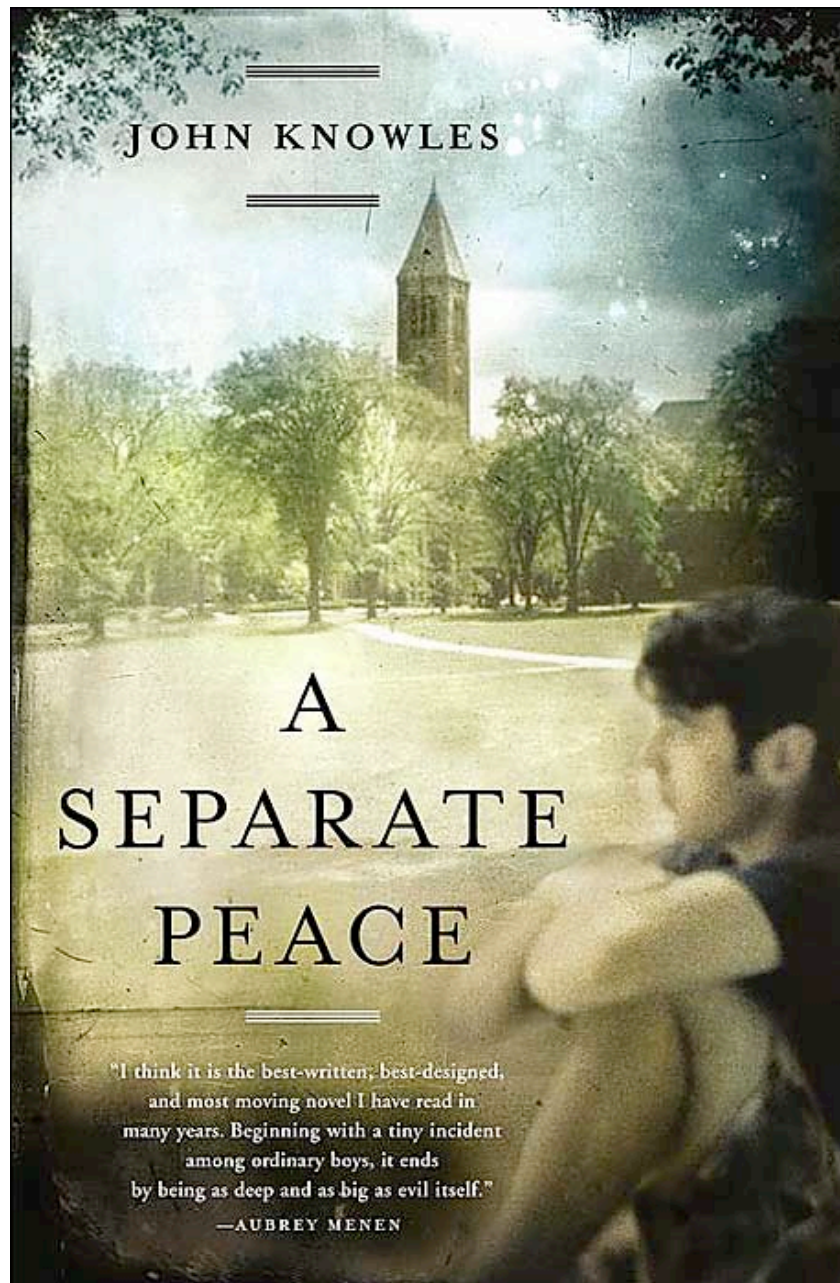

Journal Responses: A Separate Peace

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Journal #1

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Finny's & Gene's Behavior/Relationship (Part 1)

I find Finny's behavior very realistic. His emotions and actions as Gene interprets them remind me of many people I have met. The conflicts that occur between Finny and Gene are also very well described and elucidated. For instance the long drawn out conflict regarding who obtained the upper hand in their friendship. Finny was in complete athletic domination and Gene in academic domination. However in both of their weak areas relative to one another Gene had superior athletic skills compared to Finny's academic abilities. In the story Gene explains that Finny was deliberately trying to lower Gene's academic performance by interrupting his study time with various activities.

I believe this is an example of Finny trying to become overall superior to Gene by hurting him instead of making himself better. This leads to an example of bad competition. Typically when there is a competition between business' it is thought that they make themselves better to win the competition. What I've noticed is that when there is a conflict between people for example politicians, they find it easier to point out the bad of their opponent. Rather than the good in themselves. This is the easier route to take, and I believe that is what most people do. This is an example of bad competition, that hurts both competitors. An example of good competition would be two companies increasing the quality of their products as well as lowering the prices to beat the other.

A question I am still pondering is what are they trying to achieve through this competition? The easy answer would be superiority, but I believe it goes much deeper than that. Do they get some sort of satisfaction in seeing the other in vein? Could that be why Gene purposefully caused Finny to fall off the tree? I think that it is impossible to understand what transpired between them because the entire story is told through Gene. Having a character in the book explaining the conflict doesn't open us up to all perspectives of the story. Which is a disadvantage that may leave readers unsatisfied. The interpretation of events and conflicts may require personal reflection for comprehension.

Journal #3

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Finny's Character

Finny is a complex character that will remain in the story, hopefully throughout the entire book. In the chapter where Finny is not present, I found the story a lot less exciting and each event not as significant and imperative. I think that the premise this book is based on, the entire meaning of the book, is the relationship between Gene and Finny. Gene felt as though time was suspended after Finny had "deserted" him. One main point to make about Finny is that he has a habit of not exactly monitoring what he is saying to other people, and how it will affect them.

I think that the ability to say what he wants and get away with it gives him the upper hand in most of the personal relationships he's in. If he insults someone and expresses no emotion of anger or regret, then the person he insulted is going to feel as though Finny is better than them and has the right to beat down on them. This is obviously not a good tactic that Finny is consciously or unconsciously using. As Gene acted on at the end of chapter 4, it grows a secret hostility toward Finny and caused Gene to hurt him physically.

Another key factor about Finny is that he is very unpredictable. He has his reasons for the things he does and says, but before it all happens it's very hard to know what is going on in his mind. After Finny broke the school swimming record I immediately thought that he would prance around the school yelling it every which way. Only a few pages later I realized that the reason he didn't want Gene to tell anyone was because he didn't know if he could pull it off again, which was the requirement for him to be engraved into the plaque.

Journal #4

Type of Journal: Well Developed Letter

Subject: Gene's Experiences

Dear Family,

My experience at Devon has so far been nothing but delightful. As always my grades are exceptionally high. I'm really enjoying the freedom that Devon offers, I can do a large variety of things in my spare time. I've made many friends, including my roommate Finny. We engage in many sports and clubs together. Earlier today we went to a tree by the nearby river, and jumped in for a relaxing swim. I've been safe like you all told me to be. Although the thought of being drafted has been on my mind as well as many others.

I think it has really affected the moral of Devon. Hardly any of us have enlisted, I certainly don't plan to. Later this evening we are watching a movie presented by the military. I hope that it will encourage some people to change their choice of enlisting. Finny opposes the war very strongly. In fact, he denies its existence. Maybe he has such strong feelings of resentment towards the entire concept of war that disregarding it completely is the only way he can feel better.

I suppose that is the only explanation I can come up with. Anyway, I don't think that what he thinks is very important. It certainly doesn't have any effect on me. How are things back home? I'm really enjoying Devon, but I still miss my home. Has anything changed around the neighborhood?

I miss you,

Love Gene.

Journal #5

Type of Journal: Poetic Reflection

Subject: The Tree

It is the only one who knows the truth,
The only holder of my secret.
I glare at her in utter resentment,
Her lifeless body remains still in the breeze.
Neither her nor I can undo what is done,
The only option is to conceal this horrible action.

Journal #6

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Lepers Sanity

I found the response Leper had to war very surprising. Up until the moment Gene met with Leper he had a very small role in the story. The entire book had consisted of mentally stable characters until Leper had explained his story. Which is why I found the true mentality of Leper surprising and unpredictable. He believed that in place of men and mens faces he saw women. He also believed that the legs and arms of chairs were sawed off limbs of people. Gene was just as surprised at Lepers true stability as any character in the book or reader.

Which is why after Leper was reaching the end of his story Gene cut him off and left him alone on the street. He was unsure about how to handle the situation. Another key point secret uncovered in Chapter ten was the jealousy Leper felt towards Gene and Finnys friendship. Which is hinted to by first signing the telegram he sent to Gene with "Your best friend, Leper." And later confirmed by Leper referencing the incident on the tree when they were engaged in a fight. This doesn't have a direct connection to his sanity, however it was a fact not directly revealed to the reader.

Leper unintentionally revealing his poor mental state to the other students at Devon, demonstrates to them the unknown of the outside world. At Devon all is or seems safe, to the students and faculty. When Leper returns abandoning his duties in war, he brings back a little piece of war, and a little piece of danger. His explanations show Gene that life is very unpredictable, no matter how well you think you have things under control. I think that this is an event that tremendously prepared Gene for Finny's surprising death.

Journal #8

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Finny & Genes Relationship (Part 2)

Our first impression of Gene's view of Finny is the utmost sincere form of envy. Gene feels like the smaller of the two in their relationship. A feeling most everyone feels in their life at one point, certainly less satisfying and more noticeable than being the dominant role of a relationship. However, after Finny's fall it appears that Gene had a secretive form of resentment towards his best friend. After Finny's first accident Gene dresses himself in Finny's clothes in an act of merging their identities.

Gene finds this creepily (to me) comforting. It seems then that Gene aspires to be more like Finny in virtually every way. Much further into the book, after Finny's essential recovery, allowing him to return to school. Finny persuades Gene to let him train Gene for the Olympics. Obviously a dream not easily reached, and I found would be a ridiculous direction for the story to turn. The actual reason why Finny asked this from Gene was to allow him to live his life through Genes.

This was probably not something Gene realized, especially because he agreed with no intense argument. And because he was responsible for putting Finny in the state that required Finny to have obligation to ask Gene originally. This puts their relationship into a codependent state. Each of them requiring the other to remain satisfied. As I believe dependency on anyone or anything (unless perfectly stable) is a weakness (it increases the likelihood of a chain reaction), this was an example of a bad dependency. I think that afterwards Gene would be prone to depression as an adult from the loss of Finny.

Journal #9

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Genes Mind

Gene has very developed way of putting two or more events together (which in actuality may have no relation) and come to a conclusion that satisfies him. For example in the “competition” between Gene and Finny, Gene believed that Finny was purposefully sabotaging Genes study time with meetings and activities that had no relevance or importance. Such as the nightly S.S.S.S club meetings. In Gene’s mind their was an unrecognized competition where Gene’s academic abilities matched Finny’s athletic abilities. He believed that Finny was aware of this and attempted to reduce Genes academic performance.

I think that everybody attempts to interpret somebody’s action and understand what they are thinking to some extent. However, Genes consistency with this tactic can be destructive and beneficial. For instance creating this competition certainly spiked Genes academic results. It could have had a negative effect on his moral. On a separate note I think that Gene’s ability to deal with change is very poor. For instance after Finny had left from his injury, Gene was very affected by his absence. It takes him a long time to acclimate to changes. I also think that his ability to accept change is very poor as well. When he discovered that Finny had died, he showed no emotion and didn’t start the grieving process which is not healthy.

On a new subject, unlike most other readers I have talked to I did not have any particular disliking of Gene. I saw him as any other adolescent and was being controlled by his radical emotions. As a reader it was nearly impossible to conflict with Gene’s interpretation of events because anything we read had already passed through his perspective filter. All of his actions seemed to be validated by one or more logical reasons. Therefore I don’t exactly see why people do not like him as a character. I’d like to find out what readers have against Gene, possibly he has expresses emotions they themselves are not comfortable with. However, I think that if they look deep into the situation Gene is in they should be able to understand.

Journal #10

Type of Journal: Reflective Response

Subject: Finny

On occasion when I read a fiction book I try to relate a character in the book to a person I know in real life. I will sometimes do the same thing when I meet somebody new. Immediately after Gene had described Finny I had that one person in mind. As the book continued this comparison began to weaken. Finny was not entirely uncovered in the book, there was plenty neither the reader nor Gene really understood about Finny. I think that Finny was never exactly a thinker, he wasn't like Gene in that way. He didn't always try to find the reason behind everything. It seemed to me that he just had a tendency to move forward. He obviously had trouble staying in one place because Gene would hardly ever find him studying. Finny was certainly a leader, he always had ideas popping into his head.

It seemed to me that he was very serious and mature about things he was passionate about such as sports. One of the reasons he liked and enjoyed sports so much was because he only liked to have fun. It didn't matter if what he was doing didn't benefit him in the long run, he was all about enjoying himself. Which is why he dismissed things that he didn't enjoy, such as school. It seemed to me that Gene was more about doing things that would benefit him, that he would be grateful for looking back. Which is why he wanted to do exceptionally well in school. This might be a reason why they were such good friends, they had the potential to learn from each other. Gene was able to enjoy himself more when playing sports. It didn't seem that any of this made an impression on Finny though.

A characteristic of Finny that may explain Gene's secretive hatred towards him is his self-absorbed attitude. It seems as though Finny insists that he and Gene do whatever he would like to do. At no point does he ask for Gene's input. An example of Finny's self-centered nature is when he explains the rules of Blitzball. The game he invented that does not label the players as winner or losers. He continuously uses the word naturally, as if people should be thinking the same thing as him. As if the rules should just come to them through his idea of logic. He is probably doing this unconsciously, however it is still an example of his inability to understand the difference between himself and others.