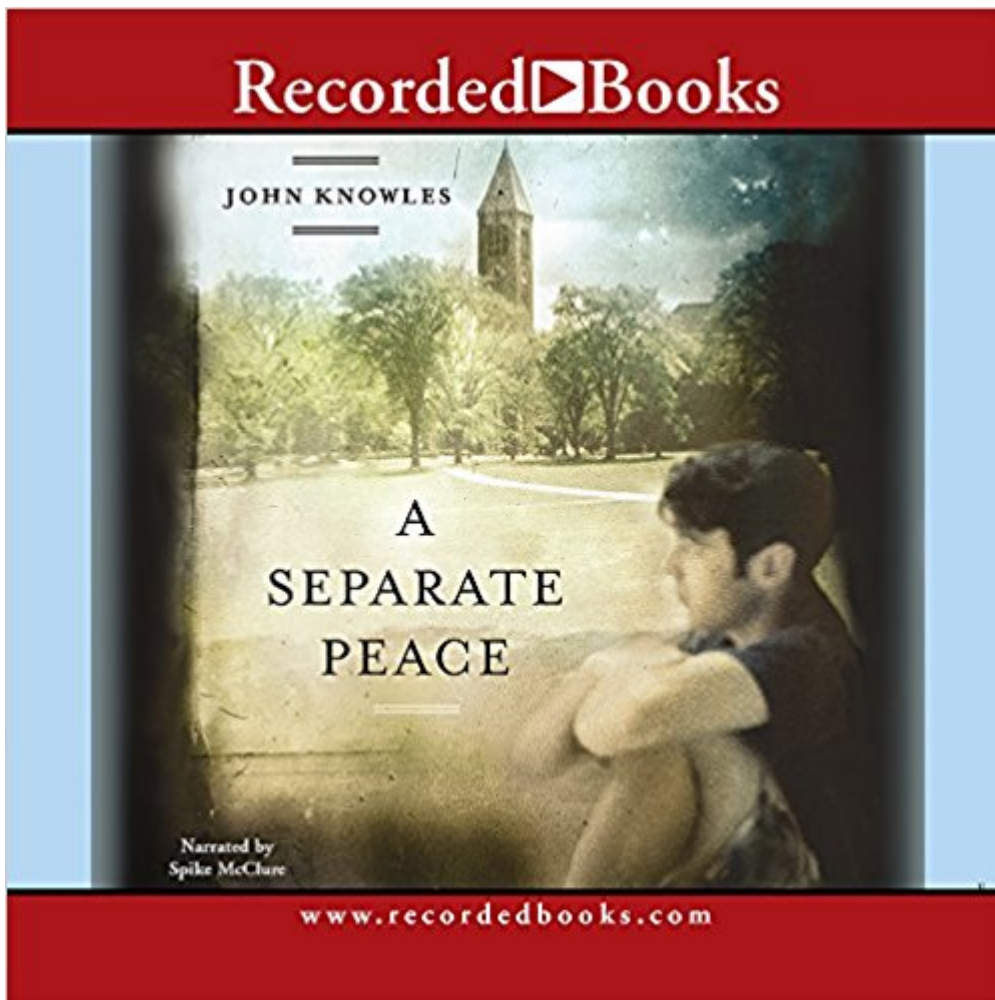


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# Separate Peace



## Synopsis

An American classic and great bestseller for over thirty years, *A Separate Peace* is timeless in its description of adolescence during a period when the entire country was losing its innocence to the second world war. Set at a boys' boarding school in New England during the early years of World War II, *A Separate Peace* is a harrowing and luminous parable of the dark side of adolescence. Gene is a lonely, introverted intellectual. Phineas is a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. What happens between the two friends one summer, like the war itself, banishes the innocence of these boys and their world. A bestseller for more than thirty years, *A Separate Peace* is John Knowles's crowning achievement and an undisputed American classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 & Up--The volatile world of male adolescence provides the backdrop for John Knowles' engrossing tale of love, hate, war, and peace. Sharing a room at Devon, an exclusive New England prep school, in the summer prior to World War II, Gene and Phineas form a complex bond of friendship that draws out both the best and worst characteristics of each boy and leads ultimately to violence, a confession, and the betrayal of trust. Narrator Scott Snively's ability to switch seamlessly from the perspective of a teenager tormented by feelings he doesn't want to understand to the reflective musing of a man looking back at the formative experience of his youth provide both the story and the setting with an immediacy that quickly engages listeners. Not only does Snively give a distinctive voice to each of the main characters, he also delineates the mannerisms and personalities of the other boys and the teachers surrounding them. Intense, mesmerizing, and

compelling, this rendition of a classic coming-of-age tale belongs in all public library collections, and will be especially helpful to high school students as an accompaniment to the written text. Cindy Lombardo, Orrville Public Library, OH Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"I think it is the best-written, best-designed and most moving novel I have read in many years. Beginning with a tiny incident among ordinary boys, it ends by being as deep and as big as evil itself." -- Aubrey Menen. "A quietly vital and cleanly written novel that moves, page by page, towards a most interesting target." -- Truman Capote.

In high school, we read "A Separate Peace". Lo, these many years later, it called to me to re-read it. The characters are so beautifully fleshed out. The storyline is perfection. The words flow like the water in the Colorado River. It truly is a novel worth reading and re-reading. It has haunted me these many years because it is profound in message.

After reading this book, I found the characters very interesting and complex. Two friends experience an intense "rivalry," which would later define who they are as people. Jealousy becomes the main character in this novel and it creates an interesting dynamic between the friends. The mind of a sixteen year old boy can be both confusing and simple at the same time and this book revels in both its complexity and simplicity. It was a very enjoyable read and I would highly recommend it if you're interested in childhood development or something along those lines. The characters in this book really bring it to life and the time period, being World War II, really enhances the ups and downs of the novel. A great read!

This is a very well-written book. This book is a story about a teen age boy becoming a man during a period of time in our history when the world was at war. The story is told through the young man's eyes and mind. His assessment of the people in his life and what is going on in the world, known and unknown, shapes him and provides the unspoken insight that one develops while becoming an adult. But even when the story is finished the reader is still pondering the character assessment of the other story members as given by the young man. Is he totally accurate in his description? What did he learn? This is an excellent book for a high school classroom discussion or bookclub review. It provides the reader with lots of opportunities to consider the ways of the world and how we respond to it and develop ourselves in that response. Personally, I think that this should be required reading

in high schools. Not only does it describe a period of time in history that our children will never know but it

I first read the book when I was 16 and, frankly, quite a bit went over my head. It didn't help that I was learning English at the time and that the language of Shakespeare is not my native tongue. My second reading was last week. I'm in my forties now and got a lot more out of the book. There are things said and unsaid, motives known and motives inferred, that deliver the full power of meaning to this masterpiece. It is rare that a writer shows such respect for the reader as to trust that one will be able to read between the lines. I don't much recommend this book for young readers, who typically lack the experience and perspective necessary to appreciate this book. While the story had a powerful impact on me when I was 16, I could not quite make out why the story had made such an impact. Fast forward to two days ago, when I finished my second reading. The effect of the novel differed by an order of magnitude. This is truly a masterpiece. Having an adult's mind and experience this time allowed me to glean much meaning. I found it especially interesting that I could infer Finny's thoughts and motivations with great clarity. This is a remarkable accomplishment by the author when one considers that the novel is told entirely from the first-person perspective of Gene, the protagonist. The story is as powerful as ever and its message is universal. Perhaps the historical setting and the cultural conventions of the time leave the modern reader at some loss, but then again the very point of fiction is for us to live in another's skin, if only for a while. Just because the novel involves teenagers does not mean that this should be the intended audience.

*A Separate Peace* belongs to that small group of books that I first read as an adolescent/teenager, that made a deep impact on me, and which have remained favorites that I re-read every few years. I discovered this book totally on my own -- it was never required reading in any of my school classes - and so thankfully I never noticed a Cain/Abel parallel or any homoerotic themes. In fact, I never knew of such assertions of this book until reading some of the reviews here. Such themes would have completely spoiled the book for me. Instead, I read it -- and still read it - as simply a story about a young man struggling with the love/hate, loyalty/jealousy facets of his relationship with his best friend. Although *A Separate Peace* is anything but simple. It is a short but scintillating book, flawlessly written. Every word is perfectly placed, nothing superfluous. Every time I read it (or hear it, as nowadays I listen to an audio version) I am amazed anew at Knowles' ability to craft such a powerful story. I become Gene, and I squirm as my ugliest human traits are revealed. Listening to (or reading) *A Separate Peace* is like having a scab brutally ripped off, revealing the bloody wound

beneath. This is a truly unforgettable story that has a power few books achieve.

What a great book! I 'had' to read this in high school (mid-seventies), and I did not appreciate it, although I knew it was a well-written book and I enjoyed it, to the extent was capable at that age. (if it wasn't about baseball or girls, I was not liable to be interested). Re-reading it just last month, I found that I fell in love with the book; I found myself in the characters; I found my friends in the characters; the writer spoke to me like he was a friend. Wow - what a great book! I couldn't put it down. I can't believe it took me 40 yrs to read it for enjoyment, rather than as an assignment. Honestly, I know I'll re-re-read it again in a couple years. Enjoy it!

Incredible use of writing skills.. First read it as a teen, now revisited it again 45 years later.. great pre-WW2 story of teenage boys growing up..

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