



Nothing endures,
not a tree,
not love,
not even
a death,
by violence.

A Separate Peace

by John Knowles

Mrs. Douglas
10th Grade Honors/ Gifted English

John Knowles

September 16, 1926 - November 29, 2001



- Applied for Exeter one day because he found a catalog lying around the house
- After the entrance exams, he was held back a year; but he was admitted.
- Graduated in 1945
- Attended school during WWII; had to help with the war effort

Devon School

- Phillips Exeter Academy is called Devon School in the novel
- Knowles attended for two years, consecutive summers 1943 and 1944
- There really was a secret club in which members jumped from a tree branch into the river



Characters

- Knowles put a little of himself in all of the characters
- He used classmates as models for the characters too
- Some situations in the novel are similar to events he experienced, but the novel is NOT autobiographical
- The only elements of *A Separate Peace* that were NOT present at Exeter were “anger, envy, [and] violence. There was only friendship, athleticism, and loyalty” while Knowles attended the school.

Characters

- Gene Forrester
- Phineas (Finny)
- Elwin Lepellier (Leper)
- Brinker Hadley
- Mr. Hadley
- Mr. Prud'homme
- Mr. Lundsbury
- Dr. Stanpole
- Phil Latham

World War II

- WWII is the historical backdrop for the novel
- During this time it was universally accepted that all men join the service when they turned 18, were taller than 5', and weighed more than 105 pounds
- Most men were drafted into the war. These young men saw the worst of the war.
- The boys of Devon school (with educated, comfortable, respectable families) enlisted and served in more prestigious (safer) programs.

Basic Training

- Drafted and enlisted men both endured basic training
- Individual differences were discarded to make way for group goals and a group identity
- This transition from small prep school to military service was a HUGE adjustment for some young men

1950s Literature

- During this post war period, fictional adolescents became the ultimate individuals
- They constantly tested rules or were desperate to live without them
- *Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger and *The Lord of the Flies* by William Golding combined anarchy, tyranny, and structure to create new identities for young men

- “I never killed anybody and I never developed an intense level of hatred for the enemy. Because my war ended before I ever put on a uniform; I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there.”

- Gene Forrester

A Separate Peace

Works Cited

- http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/3496.John_Knowles
- http://www.exeter.edu/libraries/4513_4621.aspx
- http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/separate_peace.pdf