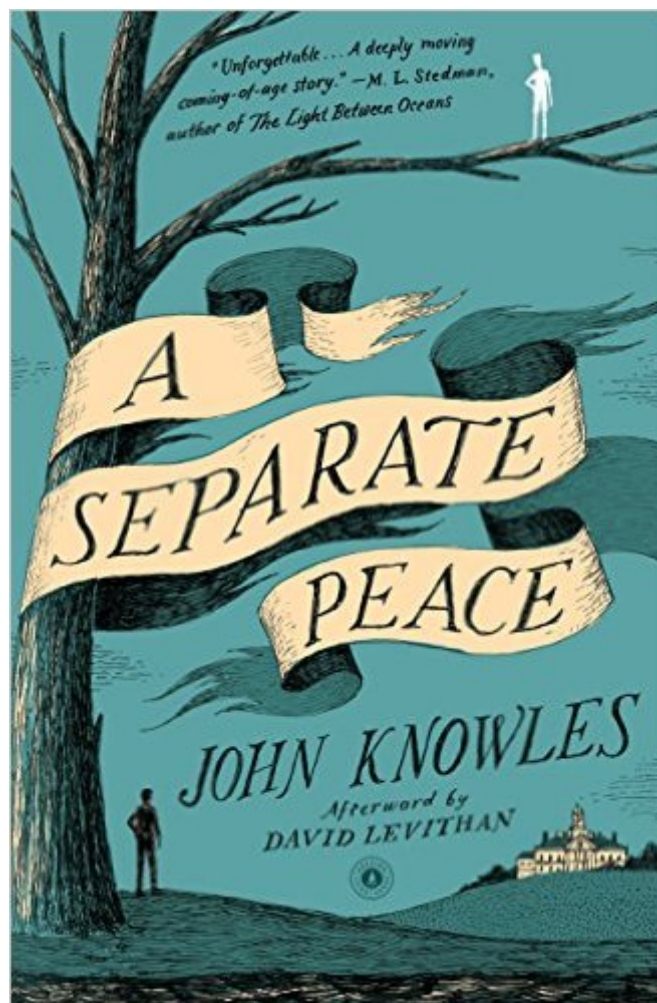


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A Separate Peace



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 World War II. 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.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (1,130 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #781 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics #62 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Coming of Age #228 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary

Customer Reviews

In this darkly beautiful novel, John Knowles takes the reader on a journey, and it is no ordinary journey. 'A Separate Peace' plumbs the remote depths of the human heart--and it will take courage to face what is there. This is, first and foremost, a character story. Gene and Finny are central to the plot, and to this end the author develops the characters with piercing clarity. Finny's genuineness sets him apart from his peers, Gene included, who tend to act more in accordance with the way they think would be acceptable to others, instead of what is acceptable to themselves. Finny follows his heart in all his ways, and his achievements are a reflection of his love for life. In contrast, Gene is repressed, his achievements based on what others believe to be important. As a result, they are of no importance to him, because he sees himself to be lacking that unique, genuine quality. The friendship which develops between Gene and Finny is beautifully drawn, woven with skill into the mundanity of everyday existence. The tragic turn it takes sends the rest of the plot, though

outwardly innocuous, hurtling toward disaster and a darkness beyond imagining. 'A Separate Peace' explores the evil in the human heart, using this tale of betrayal as a parallel to the war raging in the world at the same time. While this may invite comparison with 'Lord of the Flies', they are in fact extremely different. 'Lord of the Flies' contends that humans are evil by nature. In 'A Separate Peace', humanity is shown to have a dark side, the cause of tremendous horror and suffering. And yet, there is hope offered in this book for humanity. Evil is not the be-all and end-all of our existence.

It has been said that A Separate Peace is the quintessential coming of age novel. That may quite be so. I certainly could not argue against that statement. That being said, I will say that this is one fine bit of smooth, restrained writing. The sentence structure, syntax and flow is some of the best to be found. If for no other reason, it should be studied for that reason alone. I note that there are quite a few critical and negative reviews on this one, for the most part, from kids who have been forced to read it in class. I, myself, probably would not assign this work to a general class in High School. I can remember from my school day, that anything that had the word "classic" attached, made my eyes roll to the back of my head before I even opened the cover of the book. An honors class, perhaps. This, at first glance, is a very simple book, but it is so much more. There are so many levels found in this work that it is actually rather difficult to track all of them with just one reading. I also feel that many of our young folks today would have problems relating to the setting and the situation addressed in this work. The subjects studied by the school boys of that day alone and at the level they studied them, would be difficult to find in any of our schools today. After all, it was published fifty years ago and times they have been changing. On the other hand, the emotions addressed in this work have been with us since the beginning of time and always will be. To the argument that it is a coming of age book written by another old white guy. This is true. Authors should write about what they know. The author was an old white guy, ergo, a coming of age book about a rich white kid.

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