

A Separate Peace

Chapters 1–4

by John Knowles

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: consternation, contentious, enmity, inured, jounced, latent, prodigious, solace, tacit, treachery

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 • Chapters 1–4 • Gene's summer at Devon School

Section 2 • Chapters 5–8 • The aftermath of Finny's accident

Section 3 • Chapters 9–11 • Winter session at Devon

Section 4 • Chapters 12–13 • After Finny's second accident

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. She stared at the cracked phone screen with **consternation**.

- A. dismay or alarm
- B. puzzled confusion
- C. quiet sadness

2. The committee meeting grew **contentious** as the deadline neared.

- A. long and drawn out
- B. serious and important
- C. full of conflict

3. The old **enmity** between the neighbors flared up again at the meeting.

- A. bitter jealousy
- B. deep hostility
- C. noisy quarreling

4. The nurse seemed **inured** to the sight of blood.

- A. used to it and unbothered
- B. well trained for it
- C. curious about it

5. The old truck **jounced** down the rocky dirt road.

- A. crawled along slowly
- B. jolted with bumps
- C. swerved side to side

6. The coach spotted the **latent** talent in the young runner.

- A. present but not yet visible
- B. rare and unusual
- C. natural and instinctive

7. The weightlifter made a **prodigious** effort to raise the loaded bar.

- A. smooth and skillful
- B. slow and careful
- C. remarkably great

8. After the loss, she found **solace** in her old friends.

- A. honest advice
- B. comfort in distress
- C. renewed courage

9. By a **tacit** agreement, the teammates always let her shoot first.

- A. understood without being said
- B. put down in writing
- C. reached after heated debate

10. The general was executed for his **treachery** against the king.

- A. reckless cruelty
- B. open defiance
- C. betrayal of trust

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

droll — amusing in an odd or whimsical way

reverberant — echoing or resounding; deep and lingering in sound

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	A
2	C
3	B
4	A
5	B
6	A
7	C
8	B
9	A
10	C

Vocabulary in Context

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Chapters 1–4

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 *"In the deep, tacit way in which feeling becomes stronger than thought, I had always felt that the Devon School came into existence the day I entered it, was vibrantly real while I was a student there, and then blinked out like a candle the day I left."*

As it is used in the passage, the word "tacit" most nearly suggests that the narrator's feeling about the school was

- A. understood but never spoken
- B. carefully reasoned out
- C. openly declared to others

2 *"It is the beauty of small areas of order—a large yard, a group of trees, three similar dormitories, a circle of old houses—living together in contentious harmony."*

The author most likely describes the grounds as living in "contentious harmony" in order to

- A. contrast the school and town
- B. convey tension beneath the order
- C. stress how peaceful it feels

3 *"Standing on this limb, you could by a prodigious effort jump far enough out into the river for safety."*

According to the passage, jumping from the limb out to safety in the river required

- A. an enormous effort
- B. perfect timing
- C. a running start

4 *"We stood looking up at it, four looks of consternation, one of excitement."*

Which choice best describes the four boys' attitude toward jumping from the tree?

- A. bored indifference
- B. anxious dismay
- C. eager anticipation

5 *"I never got inured to the jumping. At every meeting the limb seemed higher, thinner, the deeper water harder to reach."*

It can reasonably be inferred that, over the summer's many jumps, the narrator

- A. came to enjoy the thrill
- B. never stopped dreading them
- C. grew calm and practiced

6 *"... just rely on a little, some solace, something surviving in the ruins."*

The passage most strongly suggests that, amid his shattered trust, the narrator was searching for

- A. a small comfort to cling to
- B. proof of Finny's guilt
- C. a way to take revenge

7 *"We were even after all, even in enmity."*

It can reasonably be inferred that the narrator feels relief because he has decided that he and Finny

- A. have made their peace
- B. are evenly matched athletes
- C. hate each other equally

8 *"Sometimes I found it hard to remember his treachery, sometimes I discovered myself thoughtlessly slipping back into affection for him again."*

Which choice best describes the narrator's attitude toward Finny in this excerpt?

- A. torn between resentment and warmth
- B. open, declared hostility
- C. steady, untroubled warmth

9 *"There was a latent freshness in the air, as though spring were returning in the middle of the summer."*

The author most likely calls the freshness in the air "latent" to suggest that the renewal was

- A. fading from the air
- B. imagined, not real
- C. present but not yet visible

10 *"Holding firmly to the trunk, I took a step toward him, and then my knees bent and I jounced the limb."*

As it is used in the passage, the word "jounced" most nearly suggests that on the limb the narrator

- A. clung to it tightly
- B. edged out along it
- C. jolted it with a sudden bounce

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	B	
3	A	
4	B	
5	B	
6	A	Event comprehension. The 'ruins' are the narrator's trust, shattered after he convinces himself Finny is his enemy.
7	C	Theme comprehension.
8	A	Character comprehension.
9	C	
10	C	This is the novel's pivotal action -- the narrator deliberately shakes the limb, and Finny falls.

Teacher Context: Chapters 1–4

The adult Gene returns to the Devon School and recalls the summer of 1942, when he and his charismatic, athletic roommate Phineas (Finny) ruled the relaxed summer session. Finny pulls Gene into reckless adventures, jumping from the tree by the river and founding the Super Suicide Society, while Gene's admiration curdles into resentment and rivalry. The section ends with the accident at the tree that shatters Finny's leg; four chapters are grouped here to carry the reader through that central turning point.