

A Separate Peace

Chapters 5–8

by John Knowles

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: egotism, encumbrance, exaltation, exhorted, galvanized, idiosyncratic, insinuated, opulent, reticent, salient

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. His **egotism** showed when he claimed the whole project was his idea.

- A. fierce pride
- B. raw ambition
- C. self-importance

2. The huge suitcase was an **encumbrance** on the crowded train.

- A. a heavy burden
- B. an annoying delay
- C. a foolish luxury

3. She jumped and cheered in **exaltation** when her name was called.

- A. extreme joy
- B. nervous relief
- C. sudden surprise

4. The coach **exhorted** the team to fight to the final whistle.

- A. gently reminded
- B. calmly advised
- C. strongly urged

5. The alarming news **galvanized** the sleepy volunteers.

- A. thrown into confusion
- B. filled with dread
- C. spurred into action

6. Her **idiosyncratic** style of dress made her easy to spot in a crowd.

- A. elegant and refined
- B. peculiar and unique
- C. bold and colorful

7. She **insinuated** that her rival had cheated to win.

- A. casually mentioned
- B. slyly hinted
- C. loudly insisted

8. The **opulent** mansion impressed every guest who visited.

- A. lavish and luxurious
- B. old and historic
- C. vast and sprawling

9. She was **reticent** whenever reporters asked about her past.

- A. nervous and tense
- B. reserved and quiet
- C. polite and patient

10. The most **salient** detail in her report was the sharp drop in sales.

- A. most noticeable
- B. most puzzling
- C. most recent

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

turbid — (of water) cloudy, muddy, or thick with stirred-up sediment

go to seed — to decline or deteriorate from neglect; fall into a run-down state

contretemps — an unexpected, awkward mishap or minor dispute (French)

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

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

1 "... we had never thought of 'What We Owed Devon', as the sermon this opening day exhorted us to do."

As it is used in the passage, the word "exhorted" most nearly suggests that the sermon

- A. gently reminded them
- B. pressed them to act
- C. formally thanked them

2 "We had been an idiosyncratic, leaderless band in the summer, undirected except by the eccentric notions of Phineas."

In the passage, the summer group is characterized as

- A. cheerful and carefree
- B. peculiar and individual
- C. lazy and aimless

3 "... Phineas in exaltation, balancing on one foot on the prow of a canoe like a river god ..."

The description of Phineas on the canoe primarily functions to convey his

- A. rapturous, soaring joy
- B. calm, steady control
- C. fierce competitive focus

4 "I even sympathized with his trembling, goaded egotism he could no longer contain, the furious arrogance which sprang out ..."

In the passage, Quackenbush is characterized as

- A. indifferent to others
- B. humbled by his failures
- C. consumed by self-importance

5 "... that I recall as Brinker's salient characteristic, those healthy, determined, not over-exaggerated but definite and substantial buttocks."

Which statement about Brinker is best supported by the passage?

- A. One feature is most prominent
- B. He looks like everyone else
- C. His features go unnoticed

6 "... my voice ringing in the abrupt, releasing hush galvanized them all."

The passage most strongly suggests that Gene's outburst

- A. jolted them into renewed attack
- B. made them drop the joke
- C. left them unmoved

7 "No one showed any interest in tracking me, no one pried, no one insinuated."

It can reasonably be inferred that, in saying no one "insinuated," Gene means the others

- A. openly charged him with it
- B. forgave him outright
- C. made no sly hint of his guilt

8 "... bending down to adjust the gross encumbrance of his leg ..."

The phrase "gross encumbrance" primarily functions to convey that Finny's leg is

- A. a heavy, awkward burden
- B. nearly fully healed
- C. a source of mild pride

9 "This opulent sobriety betrayed the divided nature of the school ..."

The author most likely calls the school's style "opulent" in order to stress its

- A. plain, severe restraint
- B. shabby, crumbling decay
- C. rich, lavish extravagance

10 "... the buildings were reticent, severe straight lines of red brick or white clapboard ..."

In context, the word "reticent" emphasizes that the buildings

- A. are brightly decorated
- B. reveal little of themselves
- C. tower over the campus

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	B	
3	A	
4	C	Character comprehension.
5	A	
6	A	Event comprehension.
7	C	Event comprehension.
8	A	
9	C	
10	B	Reticent usually describes a reserved person; here it is applied figuratively to the plain building fronts, which 'disclose little.'

Teacher Context: Chapters 5–8

In the aftermath of the accident Gene wrestles with his guilt, visits the injured Finny, and tries unsuccessfully to confess. The fall term begins: Gene meets the officious Brinker Hadley, takes a job as crew manager, and the war presses closer as Leper enlists. The section ends as Finny returns to Devon and insists Gene train for the 1944 Olympics, re-binding the two friends; these four chapters are grouped as the stretch between the two falls.