

A Separate Peace

Chapters 9–11

by John Knowles

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: accolade, austerity, contemptuous, desolation, foreboding, illusory, incarnate, presaged, tumult, vagaries

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. The young author cherished the **accolade** she received for her first novel.

- A. award or praise
- B. helpful advice
- C. modest payment

2. The new principal ran every meeting with stiff **austerity**.

- A. stern, severe manner
- B. loud, bossy authority
- C. tense, awkward unease

3. She gave the cheater a **contemptuous** glare.

- A. showing open envy
- B. showing scorn or disdain
- C. showing mild surprise

4. After the wildfire, only **desolation** stretched across the hillside.

- A. thick, drifting smoke
- B. an eerie, heavy stillness
- C. bleak, barren emptiness

5. A sense of **foreboding** settled over her as she entered the dark house.

- A. a sense of coming dread
- B. a flush of embarrassment
- C. a spell of deep boredom

6. Their hopes of an easy victory proved **illusory**.

- A. wildly exaggerated
- B. not real or lasting
- C. deeply foolish

7. To the frightened villagers, the cruel tyrant seemed like evil **incarnate**.

- A. beyond all control
- B. in disguised form
- C. in living human form

8. The dark clouds **presaged** a violent storm.

- A. came right after
- B. slowly drifted past
- C. warned of what was to come

9. The **tumult** of the crowd drowned out the speaker's voice.

- A. loud, confused noise
- B. a steady, rolling chant
- C. cheerful, lively chatter

10. The **vagaries** of the spring weather forced us to cancel the trip.

- A. sudden harsh extremes
- B. unpredictable changes
- C. puzzling mysteries

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

his choreography of peace — Finny's joyful dance, expressing his vision of a harmonious world apart from war

ANSWER KEY

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

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 *“His enlistment seemed just another of Leper’s vagaries, such as the time he slept on top of Mount Katahdin in Maine where each morning the sun first strikes United States territory.”*

As it is used in the passage, the word ‘vagaries’ most nearly suggests that Leper’s enlistment was...

- A. another unpredictable impulse
- B. a long-held ambition
- C. a carefully reasoned plan

2 *“... winter itself, an old, corrupt, tired conqueror, loosens its grip on the desolation, recedes a little, grows careless in its watch ...”*

The image of winter loosening its grip on the desolation primarily functions to...

- A. show a land emptied of life
- B. celebrate winter’s icy beauty
- C. predict an early, lush spring

3 *“You had to be rude at least sometimes and edgy often to be credited with “personality,” and without that accolade no one at Devon could be anyone.”*

It can reasonably be inferred that, at Devon, a boy earned that accolade by...

- A. showing quiet good manners
- B. earning the highest grades
- C. earning a name for bold personality

4 *“... the escape we had concocted, this afternoon of momentary, illusory, special and separate peace.”*

Which choice best describes how the carnival’s peace functions in the text as a whole?

- A. a brief escape that cannot last
- B. a lasting truce with the war
- C. proof the war was a hoax

5 *“I reached it in the early morning after this night which presaged my war;”*

The passage most strongly suggests that the night ‘presaged’ the narrator’s war by...

- A. recalling a battle long past
- B. giving an early sign of its grimness
- C. marking the day the war ended

6 *“But if that meant austerity toward strangers it also meant mornings of glory such as this one ...”*

Which choice best describes the narrator’s attitude toward Vermont’s austerity toward strangers?

- A. admiring of it despite its harshness
- B. indifferent to its plain landscape
- C. bitter about its cold unfriendliness

7 *“It was a try toward relieving the foreboding in his manner;”*

In the passage, Leper is characterized as...

- A. relaxed and glad to be home
- B. weighed down by a sense of dread
- C. bitter and openly hostile

8 *“Finny’s voice was full of contemptuous music.”*

Which choice best describes Finny’s attitude toward the inquiry?

- A. eager cooperation with it
- B. scornful dismissal of it
- C. anxious dread of its outcome

9 *“... he’s imagining himself Justice incarnate, balancing the scales.”*

The narrator most likely calls Brinker ‘Justice incarnate’ in order to...

- A. praise his fairness as a judge
- B. show his deep religious faith
- C. mock him for playing justice in person

10 *“Then these separate sounds collided into the general tumult of his body falling clumsily down the white marble stairs.”*

It can reasonably be inferred that the word ‘tumult’ presents Finny’s fall as...

- A. a single faint, distant thud
- B. an oddly silent collapse
- C. a chaotic crash of many sounds

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	C	
4	A	Theme comprehension.
5	B	
6	A	
7	B	Character comprehension.
8	B	Character comprehension.
9	C	Character comprehension. Gene's follow-up about the blindfold underscores the mockery.
10	C	

Teacher Context: Chapters 9–11

Finny builds a private world in which the war is a hoax, culminating in the Winter Carnival he stages for the boys. Leper's troubling telegram sends Gene to visit him, where he finds Leper deranged after deserting the army. Back at Devon, Brinker organizes a night inquiry into the accident at the tree, and the confrontation ends with Finny falling down the marble staircase; the section closes on this second fall.