

A Separate Peace

Chapters 12–13

by John Knowles

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: animosity, assimilate, exhilaration, impervious, indecipherable, marrow, poignant, qualms, reprieve, superficial

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. Years of rivalry bred deep **animosity** between the two families.

- A. deep distrust
- B. bitter jealousy
- C. strong hostility

2. It took the new student weeks to **assimilate** the complex material.

- A. take in and fully understand
- B. memorize word for word
- C. sort and organize

3. Reaching the summit filled the climbers with **exhilaration**.

- A. deep relief
- B. quiet pride
- C. lively, intense excitement

4. She remained **impervious** to the crowd's taunts.

- A. accustomed to
- B. unaffected and not bothered
- C. amused by

5. The spy's note was **indecipherable** to anyone but its author.

- A. impossible to read or understand
- B. of little real importance
- C. written in a secret code

6. The soup was made by slowly boiling **marrow** from beef bones.

- A. gristle around the joints
- B. soft tissue inside bones
- C. fat trimmed from the meat

7. The old photograph stirred a **poignant** memory of her grandmother.

- A. deeply touching, bittersweet
- B. faint and distant
- C. happy and carefree

8. She signed the contract without the slightest **qualms**.

- A. regret or guilt
- B. fear or dread
- C. doubt or hesitation

9. The afternoon shower brought a welcome **reprieve** from the heat wave.

- A. a fresh start
- B. a temporary relief
- C. a permanent end

10. She gave the report only a **superficial** glance before signing it.

- A. shallow and surface-level
- B. bored and uninterested
- C. hurried and impatient

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

pontiff — a bishop or high priest, especially the Pope; here, figuratively, a figure of solemn, elevated dignity

Maginot Lines — France's fixed border fortifications of WWII, famously bypassed by Germany; here, futile defenses against an unseen enemy

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	C
2	A
3	C
4	B
5	A
6	B
7	A
8	C
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 “The old trees surrounding it all were intensely meaningful, with a message that was very pressing and entirely indecipherable.”

As it is used in the passage, the word “indecipherable” most nearly suggests that...

- A. its meaning is a clear warning
- B. its meaning can’t be made out
- C. its meaning is easy to ignore

2 “... a kind of thronging and epic grandeur which my superficial eyes and cluttered mind had been blind to before.”

The narrator’s reference to his “superficial eyes” primarily functions to...

- A. show his sharp powers of observation
- B. explain why his vision had blurred
- C. stress how shallowly he once saw

3 “They unrolled away impervious to me as though I were a roaming ghost ...”

The passage most strongly suggests that the playing fields...

- A. openly threaten him
- B. take no notice of him
- C. have physically changed

4 “My brief burst of animosity, lasting only a second, a part of a second, something which came before I could recognize it and was gone before I knew it had possessed me ...”

It can reasonably be inferred that the narrator regards his animosity as...

- A. a flaw shared by all people
- B. a feeling no one else could have
- C. a justified grudge against Finny

5 “The corridor happened to be empty, and I walked along it in the grip of a kind of fatal exhilaration.”

Which choice best describes the narrator’s mood as he walks the corridor?

- A. thrilled, with a sense of doom
- B. calm and quietly relieved
- C. bitter and full of regret

6 “Phineas had died from the marrow of his bone flowing down his blood stream to his heart.”

According to the text, what reached Phineas’s heart and stopped it?

- A. soft tissue from inside the bone
- B. blood lost from the break
- C. splinters of broken bone

7 “... they reminded me, in a comical and a poignant way, of adolescents.”

Which choice best describes the narrator’s attitude in the excerpt?

- A. anxious and fearful
- B. scornful and hostile
- C. amused but touched

8 “Peace lay on Devon like a blessing, the summer’s peace, the reprieve, New Hampshire’s response to all the cogitation and deadness of winter.”

According to the text, the summer’s peace offered Devon...

- A. a warning of the coming war
- B. a brief escape from winter’s deadness
- C. a permanent end to all hardship

9 “... letting its rocklike facts sift through and be accepted only a little at a time, only as much as he could assimilate without a sense of chaos and loss.”

It can reasonably be inferred that Phineas...

- A. absorbed harsh truths only slowly
- B. broke under them as others did
- C. refused to face harsh truths

10 “I had no qualms at all; in fact I could feel now the gathering, glowing sense of sureness in the face of it.”

Which statement is best supported by the passage?

- A. He still hoped to avoid the war
- B. He dreaded the coming regimentation
- C. He felt no doubt about going to war

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	C	
3	B	
4	A	Theme comprehension. The section's close frames Gene's animosity as the personal form of the 'something ignorant in the human heart' the novel blames for all conflict.
5	A	
6	A	
7	C	
8	B	
9	A	Character comprehension. The section sets Phineas apart as the only one never broken by harsh reality.
10	C	

Teacher Context: Chapters 12–13

Finny, his leg broken a second time, and Gene reach a painful reconciliation before Finny dies during the operation to set the bone. The war finally reaches Devon as Gene enlists and reflects on Finny, the school, and the private war he fought within himself. Section runs to the end of the novel.