A Separate Peace – Inflouence Of War Essay, Research Paper

World War II influenced the boys in A Separate Peace, by John Knowles, by making them grow and mature more quickly than they would have had there not been a war. The war made some boys stronger and readier for whatever life would bring, while in others it disabled them to the point that they could not handle simple tasks. These boys are only a small percentage of the casualties brought about by World War II. The maturing influence of the war on Finny was a considerable one, even though it did not seem to the other boys that he was growing up at all. Gene’s jealousy leads him to the point where he has to destroy Finny’s greatest asset, his skill in sports, just so that he does not have to be the “popular guy’s friend. Gene knocks Finny off the tree limb and breaks his leg. Everyone at Devon except for Finny suspects that Gene caused Finny to fall off the branch, not Finny’s loss of balance. Finny’s outlook on the whole situation is very grown up. He did not blame anyone but himself, even though it was not his fault at all. Finny seems as though he will never grow up because he is so immature, with his silly denial of the war’s existence, and his habit of always coming up with strange things to do just for fun. Inside he is suffering with the anger and hurt of being excluded from the one thing that he wants to do most, fight in the war. This is an excellent example of how the war suddenly made the boys grow up into men. They had to face adulthood, and in order to do that, they had to become adults. Another boy in the story who was made to grow up by the war was Leper. When he sees the movies about the ski troops, he thinks that it looks fun, so he surprises everyone by enlisting. Leper did not quite know what he was getting into when he enlisted. He thought that it looked like a fun ski trip; he could serve his country and ski around the world at the same time. Most average teenagers are not faced with the pressure of a war and shortages of everything, and so Leper had to grow in order to handle the pressure of the war. But, in the process of growing, the pressure becomes too great. After a short time in the army, Leper goes crazy, and is labeled as a section eight discharge. But instead of having to go through that dishonorable fate, he escapes. Escaping is not a very good example of how much Leper grew, but it does show that a kid can grow up only so fast. The third, and last, character that shows growing from the war is Gene. At one point, Gene and Brinker decide to enlist together, but Gene backs out of it because he feels that he is not ready. This shows that Gene has begun to mature. Gene feels that he has some debt to pay or some peace to settle, perhaps, before he ever goes to war. He shakes the limb with Finny on it as a search for that peace. He thinks that if he gets rid of Finny, even though Finny is his best friend, that everything will be fine. But it is not. It only makes things worse because soon after Finny is injured, Gene discovers that Finny never meant to overshadow him, or force him into doing anything he did not want to. It takes almost the whole novel for Gene to finally mature enough to go to war and fight for his country. It is not his fault that he does not mature as quickly as some of the boys, but he is not rushing into things. He is finding and fighting for peace within himself before he ever sets foot on a battlefield. These three boys are examples of the way that young, inexperienced boys were forced to grow into a frame of maturity that no young men should ever have to go through. They were boys one day and had to be men the next because of the stupidity of the world. These, and many other boys completely skipped over college, and missed building lives on their own. They were just forced into a situation, and made to cope with their surroundings, without any warning of how bad it would be, and how much courage it would take.