A Seperate Peace- Finny&Gene Essay, Research Paper

A Seperate Peace

The line between friendship and hatred can sometimes be very unclear. Where exactly does one cross over this line? Could it possibly be when one discovers envy within himself for his friend, or is it when he begins to wish he is somewhere other then where he is? In the novel A Separate Peace by John Knowles, the friendship line between Finny and Gene is extremely unclear. What would cause ones best friend to jounce a tree limb in hopes the other would be harmed? To understand the relationship of Finny and Gene you must analyze their backgrounds.

The narrator of the novel, Gene Forrester, is a grown man who returns to the Devon School and recollects his years spent there. During the duration of the novel Gene is around 16 years old, he is thoughtful, intelligent, with a tendency to brood. Gene is extremely competitive with a sarcastic sense of humor. He often shuns overt displays of emotion, much like most students at Devon.

Gene s best friend is Finny(Phineas). Finny is perfect in almost every way. He is honest, handsome, self confident, utterly disarming, extremely likable, as well as the best athlete in the entire school. Finny lives for moments of pure, unrestrained friendship, and his strong sense of loyalty extends to any group of which he is a member. He strives to be rebellious, making even the sternness proponents indulge in anarchical bliss with him.

Now understanding the identity of Gene and Finny you can begin to analyze their friendship. The two characters both have their own strong and week qualities. Gene is smart and an average athlete, while Finny is an excellent athlete but a below average student. In a situation such as this, one may begin to get jealous of the others gifts. In the novel Gene realizes that Finny is extremely envious of his gifts and tries many different ways to ruin Gene. For example Finny drags Gene to the coast, keeping him up all night, causing Gene to get a D on his trigonometry test the following morning. With Finny s increased studying, Gene interprets this as an attempt to even things out. Finny harbors the same pettiness and duplicity as Gene does, and their friendship is shattered abruptly. Not just this particular friendship, but the idea of friendship itself dissolves for Gene, and he feels he can trust no one.

Gene feels Finny is becoming cunning and devious, making his true feelings. Gene attends the Suicide Society meetings because he doesn t want Finny to notice how he is feeling. Gene thinks he must have been utterly wrong in his opinion of Finny and decides Finny is much better then him on the inside. Gene climbs the tree completely stunned by his revelation and feels that nothing matters at all. He jounces the limb while under his own shock and understanding of their relationship. Not knowing what he has fallen into.

When Gene comes to the realization as to what had happened, he is overwhelmed with guilt. Gene wonders what Finny would do in his situation and decides he would confess everything. Gene feels that time is suspended with the close of the Summer Session. He feels detached and uninterested at home. Gene thinks for a moment that Finny s anger at his confession reveals something true about him and helps him know himself better, but Finny disagrees. Finny refuses to believe Gene s confession and his refusal makes Gene start to doubt his story himself.

The theme pervades in this section of the plot, because Finny seems older and more mature when Gene comes to see him at home. Finny also seems to have been changed from his former athletic self to an invalid. The whole novel portrays a theme of transformation. The transformation I explained here is the transformation from friends to enemies, returning to a newfound friendship. And yet still the line of friendship to hatred remains unclear.