

A Separate Peace Important Quotes and Phrases

Note: The first parenthetical page reference refers to the paperback edition, while the second refers to the hardback edition.

“Looking back now across fifteen years, I could see with great clarity the fear I had lived in, which must mean that in the interval I had succeeded in a very important undertaking: I must have made my escape from it” (2/10).

“The tree was not only stripped by the cold season, it seemed weary from age, enfeebled, dry. I was thankful, very thankful that I had seen it. So the more things remain the same, the more they change after all.... Changed, I headed back through the mud. I was drenched; anybody could see it was time to come in out of the rain” (6/14).

“I was beginning to see that Phineas could get away with anything. I couldn’t help envying him that a little, which was perfectly normal. There was no harm in envying even your best friend a little” (18/25).

Finny saves Gene from falling out of the tree when he loses his balance (24/31).

“...Finny’s life was ruled by inspiration and anarchy, and so he prized a set of rules. His own, not those imposed on him by other people...” (26/34).

Finny breaks the school record and won’t even share this fact with others (34-37/42-44).

“To keep silent about this amazing happening deepened the shock for me. It made Finny seem too unusual for – not friendship, but too unusual for rivalry” (37/45).

Finny tells Gene he is sorry for dragging him away from school and that Gene is his “best pal” (40/48).

“I should have told him then that he was my best friend also...But something held me back. Perhaps I was stopped by that level of feeling, deeper than thought, which contains the truth” (40/48).

“If I was head of the class and won that prize, then we would be even...” (44/52).

“...up went the hope that there was anyone in this school – in this world – whom I could trust” (45/53).

“Finny had deliberately set out to wreck my studies....We were even after all, even in enmity. The deadly rivalry was on both sides after all” (45-46/53).

Gene deliberately causes Finny to fall from the tree (52/59-60) and later admits it to Finny (62/69-70).

“...it seemed, standing there in Finny’s triumphant shirt, that I would never stumble through the confusions of my own character again” (54).

“You see! Kill me! Now you know what it is! I did it because I felt like that! Now you know yourself!” (62/70).

“Still it had come to an end, in the last long rays of daylight at the tree, when Phineas fell” (65/74).

“We had been idiosyncratic, leaderless band in the summer, undirected except by the eccentric notions of Phineas. Now the official class leasers and politicians could be seen taking charge, assuming as a matter of course their control of these walks and fields which had belonged only to us” (66/74).

“Listen, pal, if I can’t play sports, *you’re* going to play them for me,’ and I lost part of myself to him then, and a soaring sense of freedom revealed that this must have been my purpose from the first: to become part of Phineas” (77/85).

Leper searches for a beaver dam (87/95).

“To enlist. To slam the door impulsively on the past, to shed everything down to my last bit of clothing, to break the pattern of my life...I yearned to take giant military shears to it, snap!” (92/100).

“I owed it to myself to meet this crisis in my life when I chose, and I chose now” (93/102).

Phineas tells Gene that the war is an elaborate fake created by “fat old men” (107/115).

“You didn’t even know anything about yourself”

“I don’t guess I did, in a way” (112/120).

Leper enlists after seeing a war propaganda film of ski troops (116/125).

“I’m almost glad this war came along. It’s like a test, isn’t it, and only the things and the people who’ve been evolving the right way survive” (117/125).

“It wasn’t the cider which made me surpass myself, it was this liberation we had torn from the gray encroachments of 1943, the escape we had concocted, this afternoon of momentary, illusory, special and separate peace” (128/136-137).

“You always were a savage underneath...like that time when you knocked Finny out of the tree” (137/145).

“The army has the perfect word for everything, did you ever think of that?...And the perfect word for me...psycho. I guess I am. I must be. Am I though, or is the army? Because they turned everything inside out” (141/149-150).

“But by now I no longer needed this vivid false identity; now I was acquiring, I felt, a sense for my own real authority and worth, I had had many new experiences and I was growing up” (148/156).

“There was no rush to get into fighting....The thing to be was careful and self-preserving. It was going to be a long war” (151/159).

Gene is put on trial for knocking Finny out of the tree and is forced to face his wrongdoing (156-169/165-177).

Finny breaks his leg a second time by falling down the stairs (169/177).

“You want to break something else in me! Is that why you’re here?” (176/184).

Gene is able to apologize (177/185).

“We members of the Class of 1943 were moving very fast toward the war now, so fast that there were casualties even before we reached it, a mind was clouded and a leg was broken – maybe these should be thought of as minor and inevitable mishaps in the accelerating rush. The air around us was filled with much worse things” (179/187-188).

“I’ll *hate* it *everywhere* if I’m not in this war! Why do you think I kept saying there wasn’t any war all winter?” (182/190).

“No, I don’t know how to show you, how can I show you, Finny? Tell me how to show you. It was just some ignorance inside me, some crazy thing inside me, something blind, that’s all it was” (183/191).

Finny accepts his apology allowing Gene to achieve peace (183/191).

Finny dies because of bone marrow escaping into his blood system and traveling to his heart (185/193).

“I did not cry then or ever about Finny....I could not escape a feeling that this was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case” (186/194).

“It’s your greatest moment, greatest privilege, to serve your country. We’re all proud of you, and we’re all – old guys like me – we’re all darn jealous of you too” (192/200).

“He and his crowd are responsible for it! And *we’re* going to fight it!” (193/201).

“Because it seemed clear that wars were not made by generations and their special stupidities, but wars were made instead by something ignorant in the human heart” (193/201).

“I was ready for the war, now that I no longer had any hatred to contribute to it. My fury was gone, I felt it gone, dried up at the source, withered and lifeless. Phineas had absorbed it and taken it with him, and I was rid of it forever” (195/203).

“I never killed anybody and I never developed an intense level of hatred for the enemy. Because my war ended before I ever put on a uniform; I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there (196/204).

“Only Phineas never was afraid, only Phineas never hated anyone....All of them, all except Phineas, constructed at infinite cost to themselves these Maginot Lines against this enemy they thought they saw across the frontier, this enemy who never attacked that way – if ever attacked at all; if he was indeed the enemy” (196/204).