



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Separate Peace

John Knowles

SAMPLE

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Separate Peace

John Knowles

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website.

Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Novel Units: Rationale

How do you ensure that the needs of individual students are met in a heterogeneous classroom? How do you challenge students of all abilities without losing some to confusion and others to boredom?

With the push toward “untracking” our schools, these are questions that more and more educators need to examine. As any teacher of “gifted” or “remedial” students can attest, even “homogeneous” classrooms contain students with a range of abilities and interests.

Here are some of the strategies research suggests:

- cooperative learning
- differentiated assignments
- questioning strategies that tap several levels of thinking
- flexible grouping within the class
- cross-curriculum integration
- process writing
- portfolio evaluation

Novel Units are designed with these seven facets in mind. Discussion questions and projects are framed to span all of the levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Graphic organizers are provided to enhance critical thinking. Tests have been developed at two levels of difficulty (Level 1=lower; Level 2=higher). While most activities could be completed individually, many are ideal vehicles for collaborative effort. Throughout the guides, there is an emphasis on collaboration: students helping other students to generate ideas, students working together to actualize those ideas, and students sharing their products with other students. Extension activities link literature with other areas of the curriculum—including writing, art, music, science, history, geography, and current events—and provide a basis for portfolio evaluation.

Finally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the guides to meet the needs of individual classes and students. You know your students best; we are offering you some tools for working with them. On the following page are some of the “nuts and bolts” for using these “tools”: a glossary of some of the terms used above that will facilitate your use of the guides.

Chapter 1

Pages 1-13

Vocabulary:

tacit (1)	vibrantly (1)	sedate (1)	Northern Lights (2)
capacious (2)	manses (2)	defensive (3)	cupola (3)
convalescence (3)	foyer (3)	specters (3)	contentious (4)
curriculum (4)	salient (4)	forlorn (5)	mire (5)
grandeur (5)	demotion (6)	irate (6)	droll (6)
affirmative (7)	apprehension (7)	prodigious (7)	inveigle (7)
groveling (7)	consternation (7)	rhetorically (8)	insulated (9)
ally (9)	inanimate (9)	seigneurs (10)	matriarchal (10)
expansive (10)	formidable (10)	genially (11)	counterattack (11)
extrasensory (11)	collaborator (11)	conforming (11)	ambled (12)

Vocabulary Activity: Word-mapping is an activity that lends itself to any vocabulary list. For words that have clear antonyms, the following framework would be suitable:



Students might enjoy coming up with variations on this framework. For example, instead of listing antonyms, students could provide line drawings to illustrate the target word.

Cooperative Learning Activity: You may want to have all students examine examples of word maps for all target vocabulary words, even when the list is too lengthy to expect one student to map all words. One way to circumvent the problem is to assign small groups responsibility for several words; each group selects a reporter who describes the group's word maps to the large group, using an overhead projector.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the narrator feel about being back at Devon? (disconcerted by its stale, museum-like quality; a mixture of the fear and joy he had known as a student; anxious to see the tree, then relieved) How much time has passed since he was a student there? (15 years) How old do you think the narrator is now? (about 31) Why do you suppose the author decided to tell the story as a reminiscence, instead of just starting his story in 1942? (The reminiscence captures our interest and lends immediacy—as if the narrator is talking to us.)
2. Why do you suppose the narrator has returned to Devon? (not explicit—might or might not be a formal reunion. Apparently he wants to visit some “fearful sites” as a sort of catharsis.)
3. What images do you recall after reading the first few pages where the narrator’s recent visit to Devon is described? What sights, sounds, smells, etc. are most vivid in your mind? What is Devon like? (cold wet November day in New England; posh old prep school in midst of town with elegant homes; quiet, deserted, sterile, smell of dead, wet leaves, perhaps; wide commons; brick First Academy building with cupola, bell, clock, long white marble flight of stairs; ivy-covered dormitories, large playing fields, fog-enshrouded old tree hanging over the river)
4. Why does the narrator conclude that the stairs must be very hard? How does that fact make him feel? Why? (With all the thought he has given to those stairs, he is surprised that he never realized how hard they must be—since years of wear have only produced minor indentations.)
5. How is the narrator surprised by the tree’s appearance? What does he mean by saying that he remembered it as “high as the beanstalk”? How does it seem now? (In memory, the tree had assumed an almost fairy-tale quality—huge and forbidding as the vine in “Jack and the Beanstalk.” In reality, it was only one of several similar trees—older and smaller than he remembered.) Have you ever experienced anything like this when returning to a place you hadn’t been in a while?
6. “Changed, I headed back through the mud.” (p.6). The word “changed” seems a little unusual here. What do you think the narrator means by it? What previous line is he echoing? (In the previous paragraph, he muses on how “the more things remain the same, the more they change after all;” the tree is the same one, but has aged and changed over time; so too, the narrator has changed—shed the fear he had in the days when the tree seemed so awesome, found a degree of “harmony.”)

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7. How was the summer of 1942 at Devon different from what it would have been if there hadn't been a war on? (A Summer Session was established to move Lower Middlers more quickly into Upper Middlers; seniors had courses in first aid, physical hardening, etc., to prepare them for the military; the Headmaster was away in Washington.)
 8. What is Finny like? Begin an attribute web (see pages 11-12). (popular, energetic, athletic, daring, green-eyed, direct, friend of the narrator, rule-breaker)
 9. Why did Finny jump from the tree? How did Gene feel about jumping? What do you think Finny would have done if Gene had refused? Would you jump? (Finny was a thrill-seeker, wanted to do it "for the war effort;" frightened, Gene was resentful, felt pressured—jumped to "save face;" actually, Finny only asked "Who's next?"—and did not tease those who failed to try.)
 10. According to Finny, why was he "good for" Gene? Did Gene agree? Do you agree? (Finny said that Gene needed someone to counteract Gene's tendency to back away from things; Gene agreed, inwardly.)

PREDICTION: Why do you think it was so important for the narrator to revisit the stairs and the tree? What do you think made them "fearful sites"?

Writing Activities:

1. Describe the dreams Gene and Finny might have had the night after each first jumped from the tree. Make the dream a running connection of sights, sounds, smells, and other sensory details with no commentary or narrative in between.
2. On page 9, the author writes "...the view was impressive." Describe the view from the tree in detail. Use information the author has provided about Devon School, plus your own imagination.

Literary Analysis: Flashback

Explain that a flashback involves interruption of the action with a scene that occurred earlier. Point out that the narrator interrupts his description of a recent visit to Devon with a description of boyhood memories of the school (p.6, the incident where Finny first jumps from the tree.) Ask the students to identify other stories, novels, or plays in which authors use the flashback technique. (One example is *Death of a Salesman*, composed almost entirely of flashbacks.)

Using Character Attribute Webs—in the Novel Unit Approach

Attribute webs are simply a visual representation of a character's traits. They provide a systematic way for students to organize and recap the information they have about that particular character. Attribute webs may be used after reading the story or completed gradually as information unfolds—done individually, or finished as a group project.

One type of character web uses these categories:

- How a character acts and feels (What do his/her statements reveal about feelings? What does his/her behavior show you about him/her? In a play—what do the character's gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice tell you about his/her emotions?)
- How a character looks (What do clothing and physique tell you about this character?)
- Where a character lives (In what country, state, neighborhood, does this character live? During what time period?)
- How others feel about the character (What do others' statements and actions show about their attitude toward the character?)

In group discussion about the student attribute webs for specific characters, the teacher can ask for supportive evidence from the story.

Attribute webs need not be confined to characters. They can also be used to organize information about a concept, object, or place.

Attribute webs are a kind of semantic mapping. Students can move on from attribute webs to other creative kinds of mapping. They can be encouraged to modify attribute webs—use sub-divisions, add divisions, change connections—in whatever ways are useful to them personally. It is important to emphasize that attribute webs are just a graphic way to record ideas. They provide students with a tool for helping them generate ideas and think about relationships among them.

Attribute Web

