

II. Reflections of Teen Psychology in *A Separate Peace*

John Knowles's first and best-known work is based on his own experience of childhood at Exeter Academy, a well known New Hampshire boarding school. He shows his passion for his far gone days by using the fictional characters and fictional place. This novel is full of sports and athletic activities from tree climbing that is central to the plot to swimming, skiing, and snowball fights which are the interests of children. Knowles's yearning for games is clear in the novel. His way of living life while he was a teenager is best portrayed in this novel.

The summer session that Knowles describes in the novel was very much similar to the summer session that he attended at Exeter. Knowles in his essay *A Special Time, A Special school*, says, "We really did have a club whose members jumped from the branch of a very high tree into the river as initiation" (2). Knowles has said about his book: "the only elements in *A Separate Peace* which were not in that summer were anger, envy, violence and hatred. There was only friendship, athleticism and loyalty" (2). But the atmosphere at Exeter was similar to the Devon because both of them are as old, ivy, covered campus, with great beautiful trees, and the same New England weather. The summer of Exeter and the fictional Devon were also similar in their carefree atmosphere, their warm, summer beauty, and their enjoyment of different sports in these summers.

Knowles had a special affection for his childhood days that he spent at Exeter. His love for childhood day and sports that he played during those days are well projected through the different fictional character in this novel. In the same essay he describes this pivotal time in this way:

The great trees, the thick clinging ivy, the expanses of playing fields, the winding black-water river, the pure air all began to

sort of intoxicate me. Classroom windows were open; the aroma of flower and shrubbery floated in. We were in short sleeves; the masters were relaxed. Studies now were easy for me. The summer of 1943 at Exeter was as happy a time as I ever had in my life. (1)

Knowles has based Phineas who is also known as Finny, one of the protagonist of the novel, on David Hackett who was actually a student at a different school, Milton Academy. David was at Exeter for the summer session on which the novel is based, and was a founding member of the Super Suicide Society of the summer session, which was a real club and very much like the one described in the novel. Gene and Finny are the roommates in the novel but David and Knowles were not the roommates but they lived across the hall and became very much close to each other during the summer session. It is not sure whether Knowles was jealous to Hackett like that of Gene to Finny. Gene's jealousy with Finny was also based on the relationship on David Hackett and Knowles is unknown. However Knowles has stated in his essay that there was not envy, violence and hatred but there was only friendship, loyalty and athleticism.

Brinker, another character of the novel is based on Gore Vidal who was a good student at Exeter during the time Knowles was a student. Although he and Gore Vidal were not close during their school days, Knowles recalls Gore Vidal who used to contribute to find out truth and reality like Brinker did in the novel. Another character Leper has no real life source according to Knowles but is a combination of certain type of person.

The tragic death of Finny was based on the death of Bob Tait, a student at Exeter who died in the same manner, on the operating table and as a result of bone

marrow escaping into the blood-stream. Knowles was very much sad by the death of Bobby Tait because Tait was a kind and gentle person like Finny is in the novel.

Gene in the novel is the poor athlete but Knowles in the real life was a good athlete. Knowles used to take part mostly in the swimming. Knowles has a special passion for sports that he used to play in his childhood with friends. So that he creates a character like Finny who is an extraordinarily talented athlete. Through the creation of such a character Knowles shows his obsession with childhood life and sports.

Knowles describing swimming in his essay, *A SpecialTime, A Specialschool* writes:

Swimming is not the most thrilling sport in the world, far from it; it's a damn bore most of the time, but it does make you healthy and gives you a good body. I finished first as the anchor man in the final, decisive relay against and over, to become an athletic mini-hero for about fifteen minutes. (2)

The setting for the Devon is a fictionalization of Phillip Exeter. The inspiration and fuel for Knowles's book is his own life experience but we should not understand it merely Knowles' experience that makes up the whole novel. Knowles says:

It is true that I put part of myself into all four main characters in *a Separate Peace*: Phineas, Gene, Leper and Brinker. In addition to using Gore Vidal for Brinker, and myself for Gene, I had to, as most novelists do, draw from myself for everyone in the book. (4)

By this Knowles means to say, there is a little bit of Knowles in all the characters. In this sense, these different characters must be understood as a mixture of different traits and quality according to Knowles.

Knowles based the central character, Gene Forrester on himself. This novel is based on Gene Forrester's flashback of his younger year at Devon High School. Through the novel, we read the feeling and perspective of Gene's year at Devon. World War II was taking place while Gene was attending Devon. Gene had his best friend named Phineas, also known as Finny. Finny was Gene's wish. Gene was academically successful, Finny was better known for his athletic success.

Gene Forrester, the narrator of this story, returns to the Devon School in New Hampshire, fifteen years after being a student there. He remembers his sixteenth year when he was a student at Devon. Returning to Devon Preparatory School after an interval of years of, Gene compares his emotional status with what it was fifteen years ago. The school now looks like a museum to the narrator, but when he was a student there in earlier time, it was vibrantly real. Gene says:

Devon was both scholarly and very athletic, so the playing fields were vast and, except at such a time of year, constantly in use. Now they reached soggily and emptily away from me, forlorn tennis court on the left, enormous football and soccer and lacrosse field in the center, woods on the right and at the far end a small river detectable from this distance by the few bare trees along its banks. It was such a gray and misty day that I could not see the other side of the river where there was a small stadium. (2)

Gene had his roommate Phineas who is a natural-born athlete. He is friendly, outgoing and a great athlete. He shows his athletic abilities in breaking school records in sports. He invents the blitzball game where nobody win or lose. He includes his friends and other students in his game. Finny suggests Gene to jump from

a tree into the river and involves in other activities. He tries to make Gene more daring and athletic. But Gene thinks that Finny is pushing him to make a dangerous jump out of tree into a river. Though he hates to follow the Finny's activities, his own competitive motive and his desire to be equal or better than Finny inspires him to do so.

Finny has his own reality that he creates and exists. Finny who is the very athletic person, begins to create his separate peace with games and sports. He does so because Finny can't face the reality of the real war; these games are a representation of war. Finny makes the rules so that he can exist in these games and be powerful. The first game Finny invents is "The Super Suicide of the Summer Session". This game consists of jumping off the branch of the tree into the Devon River. After the game is invented, they started to jump out of the tree into the tree. The more Gene becomes close to Finny, the more he is away from his reality. Thus, this is the start of Gene's separate peace. One day, Gene was about to fall from the tree but Finny saves him. Gene says:

We were standing on the limb, I little farther out than Finny. I turned to say something else, some stalling remarks, something to delay even a few seconds more, and then I realized that in turning I had begun to lose my balance. There was a moment of total impersonal panic, and then Finny's hand shot out and grabbed my arm, and with my balance restored, the panic immediately disappeared. (24)

Finny saves Gene from falling out of the tree. This can be taken as Finny's attempt of saving Gene from falling out of Finny's world of fantasy into the world of reality. Gene's understanding that he lapses into the Finny's world and he is out of his

reality couldn't prevent him from merging into the Finny's world. In this regard Gene says:

Yes, he had practically saved my life. He had also practically lost it for me. I couldn't have been on that damn limb except for him. I wouldn't have turned around and lost my balance, if he hadn't been there, I didn't need to feel any tremendous rush of gratitude towards Finny. (25)

The game of jumping out of tree continuously takes place among the boys and they create a war like atmosphere. Gene explains how he and Finny signed up trainees on the spot and how they initiated them every night. This is like the basic training and initiating of real soldiers in a war. Finny also creates another game that represents the real war. The name of the game is Blitzball. It is known that this game is related to the war. Finny invented this game after the suggestion listened from Bobby Zane who says "let's make it have something to do with the war. Like a blitzkrieg or something" (29). Finny likes this idea and goes on to make up all kinds of rules. After the rules of games were invented Gene is excited and says:

Blitzball was the surprise the summer. Everybody played it ; I believe a form of it is still popular at Devon. But nobody can be playing it as it was played by Phineas. He had unconsciously invented a game which brought his own athletic gift to their highest pitch. The odds were tremendously against the ball carrier, so that Phineas was driven to exceed himself practically every day when he carried the ball. To escape the wolf of pack which all the players became created reverse and deception and

acts of sheer mass hypnotism which were so extraordinary that they surprised even him. (31)

He invents Blitzball so that he could control Gene and other boys. He associates the game with the war. He makes up his own rules and regulation by escaping the real rules of the world. This is his world of a separate peace. Nobody stops him from escaping the world of reality. He is responsible for him. One example is when Finny wears pink shirt which he explains as an emblem for the bombing of central Europe. Finny explains that because he has no flag to fly for them so that he wears the pink shirt. Finny says, “Well, we’ve got to do something to celebrate. We haven’t got a flag; we can’t float Old Glory proudly out the windows. So I am going to wear this, as an emblem” (18).

Finny also explains his thought about the bombing of central Europe. While doing so he puts forward a question to other, “I think we ought to bomb the daylight out of them, as long as we don’t hit any women or children or old people, don’t you?” He continues “or hospitals... And naturally no schools or churches” (19). Finny doesn’t understand the impact of war on people; he doesn’t understand that war is so much destructive. It is harmful both physically as well as mentally. He doesn’t understand that it affects everyone that has a close relationship with it. It affects women, children, old people, hospital, churches and schools. Finny has created a false reality and believes that “the school is involved in everything that happens in the war, it’s all the same war and the same world and I think Devon ought to be included” (20).

Finny has created an illusion at Devon that he substitutes games for the real war. Unlike Finny, Gene may not have understood the true nature of war and its destruction but he has understood the war more than Finny because whose separate

peace lacks the real characteristics of the real war. This idea is clear in Gene's narration of the story:

Everyone has a moment in history which belongs particularly to him. It is the moment when his emotion achieve their most powerful sway over him, and afterward when you say to this person "the world today" or "life" or "reality" he will assume that you mean this moment, even if it is fifty years past. The world, through his unleashed emotion, imprinted itself upon him and carries the stamp of that passing moment forever. (32)

Gene believes that the war exists in this world. It is reality for him. Gene creates his own war in Devon because of the same belief. Gene appears to understand the reality of war and how it affects people. Slowly and gradually the consciousness of war increases on him. At the end of the summer, Gene consciously or unconsciously causes Finny to fall out of tree and break his leg. This fall destroys his athletic career. Gene visits Finny later and confesses that he caused Finny's fall. To his surprise, Finny refuses to believe him and says, "Of course you didn't do it. You damn fool. Sit down you damn fool" (39). In this sense, Finny lacks ability to see other as his enemy. He is so innocent.

Over the course of the novel, the war appears closer and closer to the students because they are nearing graduation. As they are nearing their graduation, they have to face the draft of the war very soon. At the beginning they seem distance from it as Finny talks about only bombing the men and not the women and children. Gene and Finny try to avoid the harsh part of the war. At first Gene considers enlisting in the army as a means of escaping his guilt over Finny's shattered leg. When Finny comes back from his recovery, Gene realizes that he can't simply escape his problem by

going into the war. He thinks Finny needs him; running away from Finny makes him feel guiltier than earlier.

In the novel *A Separate Peace*, taking place during the World War II, two friends Gene and Finny create a fantasy world to fight a harsh reality of war after a tragic accident of Finny. Their illusionary world had a simple beginning with a game of jumping from a tree. This humble sport turns into an accident because of Gene's jealousy. Gene feels extremely guilt for causing the accident of his best friend. Gene wants to escape from this guilt. At the same time world war looms over them. Both of them want to escape these problems and create a world where none of these exist. Finny who is the creator of this fictional place wants to fulfill his athletic spirit through Gene coaching him for Olympics in 1944. Finny tells Gene "don't be sap because there isn't any war" (115). Finny says so because he doesn't want the war to exist, being crippled himself. Gene goes along with it because he doesn't want to face his true feeling about Finny and what happened at the tree. They continue to live like this promising to compete in the 1944 Olympics that would never happens because of war. When Finny proposes this, Gene denies and says, "there isn't going to be any Olympics in 1944" but Finny rejects and says, "Leave your fantasy life out of this. We are grooming you for the Olympics, pal, in 1944". (115) Finny denies the real war because he can't face it with his broken leg. Gene goes along with Finny because he can't admit Finny's fall caused by him. As a result they continue to live in this fantasy for a long time by escaping something much greater than their own problem.

This novel also can be understood through the Freudian concept of id, ego and super-ego. We can apply the three mindset of Freudian Psychology to explain the behavior of the characters in the novel. Freudian Psychology helps to understand the psychology of the characters like Finny, Gene and Leper.

Finny, one of the protagonists of the novel is highly guided by the pleasure principle. He behaves in such a way he doesn't care what other think about him. Finny behaves in a carefree manner. He does so because his state of mind is in the id. Finny always tries to live outside the rules and regulation. He doesn't take his study very seriously rather loves bunking the classes and go for sports. Finny loves the freedom and hates the rules as unnecessary things. Being a student of a strict boarding school, he misses nine meals in the two weeks because of his outgoing behavior. Finny is capable enough in giving pleasure to other friends by inventing different games and involving his friends in these games. He also encourages other to break the rules. Finny regards sports as "purely good." When the Devon Masters warns Finny of missing classes and dinners, he confidently replies focusing on the sports, "We had been swimming in the river; there had been a wrestling match, then, there was a sunset that anybody would want to watch, then there had been several friends we has to see on business" (9).

Finny rejects war because he rejects democracy. He associates war with sports. Like in the war, there are opposite parties in sports, too. But war can cause violence and bloodshed but sports grow friendship. He creates make-believe in the Devon that there really is no war. Though the time has come to be drafted in the army, he still refuses to believe in the existence of the war. Instead he ignores the war and move to play. He prefers to play because he wants to substitute the war with play. Finny rejects the entire war is a fake and says the war was invented by old men who want to stop young people from enjoying themselves. He explains in this way:

Well what happened was they didn't like that, the preacher and old ladies and all the stuffed shirts. So they tried to prohibition and everybody just got drunker, so they really desperate and

arranged the depression. That kept the people who were young in the thirties in their place. But they couldn't use that trick forever, so for us in the forties they've cooked up this war fake. (68)

Gene, on the other hand is a follower of rules and regulation. While Finny was best at sports, Gene was the best student at Devon. Gene is in favor of justice, order and laws. In this sense he is guided by the morality principle. His mind is in the state of super-ego. He is a bookworm who spends his most of the time with books. His sole aim is to achieve the best grade in the class. He is very much afraid of going beyond the rules and regulation of the school. As soon as he accompanies Finny, his moral self begins to get degenerated. He is influenced by his dare devil friend. When Finny proposes to go to beach, Gene being conscious to his study and rules of school thinks:

The beach was hours away by bicycle, forbidden, completely out of all bounds. Going there risked expulsion, destroyed the study I was going to do for an important test the next morning, blasted the reasonable amount of order I wanted to maintain in my life and it also involved the kind of long labored bicycle ride I hated. (23)

Though Gene takes his study seriously, he can't stop himself from merging into Finny's world of fantasy where war doesn't exist. He is highly influenced by Finny's personality which is unique. At the same time, he has also realized that his growing friendship with Finny has deteriorated his study. Gene takes part in Finny's activities because denying it he doesn't want to feel inferior. So he doesn't reject any idea of Finny. In this regard Gene says

But examinations were at hand. I wasn't ready for them as I wanted to be. The suicide society continued to meet every evening and I continued to attend because I didn't want Finny to understand me as I understood him. (30)

Gene is motivated by an unconscious impulse as he says and causes Finny's fall which is the climax of the novel. The real war is approaching closer day by day. At the same, time, there increases rivalry between them. Finny regards war as a conspiracy and doesn't take it very seriously but for Gene war is the reality and truth. He knows that world is full of violence, bloodshed and hatred. Unlike Gene, Finny thinks that this world is completely a peaceful and a friendly place to live. After his fall from the tree he goes crippled and unable to play sports. Still he decides to continue his fantasy of war through different sports.

Though Gene knows the war is certain to come, he can't come out of Finny's world of fantasy because he was the cause of Finny's fall and he doesn't want to show his bitterness towards Finny. Gene thinks running away from Finny can increase his guilt. This makes Gene weak in developing the actual notion of war. In this sense, he becomes far away from the reality of the war. In other words, Gene who caused Finny's fall from tree doesn't want to be morally decadent in front of other by showing his real self. His real self is the narrow self that caused Finny's fall because of his jealousy towards Finny's personality. So that Gene, too, survives in the Finny's world of a separate peace for a long time.

Leper Lepellier, another boy of Devon school was highly fascinated to join the army after watching a video about mountain commandos who travel on skis. Inspired by these videos, he enlists in the military service. Soon after his enlistment, one day Gene receives a letter from Leper. Leper has mentioned in his letter that has escaped

the military and he needs his help. When Gene visits Leper, Gene finds Leper has become “Psycho.” Gene is shocked to see Leper and afraid of it and says:

Fear seized my stomach like a cramp. I didn't care what I said to him now; it was myself I was worried about. For if Leper was psycho it was the army which has done it to him, and I and all o us were on the brink of army. You make me sick, you and your damn army words. (86)

Gene comes to know that Leper has deserted the army when he suffered from hallucination. Leper has been transformed from the simple boy to a psycho. Leper finds the military field completely opposite from what he has thought earlier. It caused his mental breakdown. Leper explains his experience at military to Gene in this way:

Because they turned everything inside out. I couldn't sleep in bed, I had to sleep everywhere else. I couldn't eat in Mess Hall, I had to eat everywhere else. Everything began to be inside out. And the man next to me at night, coughing himself inside out. That was when thing began to change. One day I couldn't make out what was happening to the corporal face. It kept changing into face. I knew from somewhere else and then I began to think he looked like me and then he changed into a woman, I was looking at him as close as I'm looking at you and his face turned into a woman face and I started to yell for everybody. (90)

After seeing such a horrific situation of Leper caused by war, Gene realizes that the war is real and that everything taught by Finny is just a dreamlike escape from

the reality. When Gene is asked by other boys about Leper, being aware of the reality of war, Gene answers was this, "As a matter of fact Leper is 'Absent without leave,' he just took off himself" (94).

After hearing such answer about Leper, Finny becomes very much upset. It is because Finny's world consists of no war and violence. When Finny happens to see his own friend's madness caused by the war, his world of fantasy begins to crumble down. He is forced to accept that the fact and reality is the war not the fantasy and sports. Accepting the reality of war, Finny says:

And you told me about Leper, that he's gone crazy. That's the word, we might as well admit it. Leper's gone crazy. When I heard that about Leper, then I knew that the war was real, this war and all the war. If a war can drive somebody crazy, then it's all right. (96)

Leper in this sense performs the task of ego by bringing Finny and Gene in the state of accepting the reality who are opposite by nature. Leper represents truth and reality. The reality of war is made clear by Leper's madness. The war is completely different from what the boys of Devon had thought before.

Finny who is able to remain innocent, see the world as a good, beneficent place and never imagine an enemy dies towards the end of the novel. The question is likely to arise here; was Finny's death necessary? John Knowles has said that these characters are the part of his experience. In this sense, Gene and Finny, both of them represent his personality. Among them, Finny represents childhood, innocence and naivety of Knowles' life. Earlier Finny and Gene became the part of each other by fulfilling each other's wish. But as a man grows up, he can't remain a child playing games because of the restriction of the society. In that sense one has to leave

childhood life somewhere and get ready for the initiation into the world of maturity. In this transitional phase one has to fight a war against oneself.

By giving the death to Finny, Knowles shows his own end of childhood. Knowles didn't kill Finny intentionally but he felt the necessity of growing up. To be mature enough, it is necessary to give up the pleasure of childhood. Finny's death in the novel represents Gene's as well as author's end of childhood. Gene destroys the thing that he loves the most. That is to say, he leads Finny to death because this world doesn't consist of only peace and friendliness which Finny represents but war and violence, too, are the part of human world. Gene achieves a higher insight after being disillusioned from Finny's world.

Finny creates a separate peace by explaining that war is a fake. Knowles message is that this is impossible. He means to say that one has to accept the change and reality as an inevitable process. Towards the end of the novel Gene achieves the insight that has allowed him to understand the war deeply. Gene, after escaping the Finny's world, regarding the war says, "Because it seemed clear that wars were not made by generation and their special stupidities, but that wars were made instead by something ignorant in the human heart" (124). It was possible only after the escape from Finny's world of fantasy.

However, Knowles' love for his adolescent life can be seen in this novel. The days Knowles spent during his teenaged at Exeter encourage him to write this novel. Knowles without giving direct expression to show his love for childhood life he has used fictional place as well as characters. Knowles heavily drew on Exeter life because Exeter is a place where he spent his childhood life. He regards this as more crucial in his life which forced him to learn to study and few years later inspired him to write. He admires Exeter in this way in his essay:

The novel has one peculiarity for a school novel: It never attacks the place; it isn't an expose; it doesn't show sadistic master or deprived students, or use any of the other school-novel sensationalistic clichés. That's because I didn't experience things like that there. I found there a gorgeous world prepared to shape me up, and I tried to present and dramatize that. (2-3)

Knowles as a grown up man can't play like a child. In other words, he is ashamed of playing like a child as a grown up man. The desire to play and to experience the pleasure of playing must have remained suppressed in his psyche. The pleasure of playing must have haunted the writer in present. Thus, this novel, *A Separate Peace* can be taken as his translation of fantasy and dream into a literary text. For the sake of his satisfaction, he gave birth to this novel. It is an expression of his suppressed desire. His suppressed desire is Finny who is too innocent and stands for childhood plays and sports. The death of Finny represents his own emergence into the world of adulthood leaving the childhood life of fantasy and dream.

Though the novel is set against the background of World War II, only few specific details are given about it. In it what goes in war is not so important but there is a war going on to disturb the peace of teenagers is significant. That is to say it is about the struggle of adolescents. It is capable enough to depict the physical and emotional turmoil of teenagers. In that sense it would be wrong to call *A Separate Peace* a novel about war because the story doesn't take place in the battlefield but at New England boys' school named Devon where the most of the teenagers attend to study. This novel is a story of these teenagers who experience the conflict which is so real and true to life. They represent the inner struggles that everyone experiences.

It examines closely at the relationship between two teenagers. Gene and Finny represent the opposing forces where there exists the conflict between them. Through their relationship, Knowles establishes the reality of human life. There is a reality known by Gene and Finny has his own reality that he creates and exists in it. Here Gene's reality is truth where as Finny's reality is fake. This kind of different attitude among the characters which is internal as well as external leads novel to the climax.

Certain aspects of growing up are universal in human life. The more we grow the more we understand the world and its complexities. At the same time we are surrounded by the problems. We have to overcome the war that goes inside ourselves. Slowly and gradually, we move closer to the real world from the narrow world. We should be able to acknowledge our transformation as universal phenomena. If we fail to accept the changes, growth and development in the course of time as an inherent aspect of life, we are doomed to face the tragedy in our life.

It is true that a teenager wants to be defined by his peers; he is highly dependent on his fellows to tell him who he is rather than his teachers and parents. He doesn't try to measure himself against virtue but against what he thinks will make people like him. There is a kind of hero worship in teenagers. They are highly focused on how to be popular such as being an athlete hero, developing sense of humor etc. To achieve this purpose, they satisfy themselves by breaking the rules and regulation, using slangs. They become responsible for themselves to be socially deviated persons. In this regard L. Joseph stone and Joseph Church in their book *childhood and Adolescence* write: "The actual pattern of teenage association is very intricate, based as it is on the personal likes and dislikes, arbitrary class lines and keen attention to the overall hierarchy of popularity" (285).

S/he develops own idealism which obstructs from growing up psychologically. S/he wants to enjoy his total freedom without any touch of practical demand of life. It prevents him to be close to the reality of the world. Teenagers can be violent on the people who try to harm their ideal world. They fight all the harder to preserve it and they want to keep their dream of paradise unharmed. Such craze increases in large amount on the teenagers.

The pressures occurred in the adolescents' world from adult world may result in conflict. It is because to the adult world the idealism of teenagers may appear too childish. Adults try to bring teenagers in the existing pattern of the society. As a result, they have to deal with the complexities of the problem when they try to leave their early experience of life. Repression of adolescents' desires and demands by adults may result in stress and hostility.

The more the adolescents are repressed the more they become rebellious. In childhood, they are repressed by others but easily bear it but in teenage they can't tolerate injustice. If they are treated without understanding properly, there occur different problems. Teenagers in such environment lack trust and they can be pessimistic. They can be hostile to others. They are not rule-bound and are found to be immoral who are disliked by the society. When they are unacceptable in the society, they see ambivalence, uncertainties and insecurities in themselves. Hurlock in his book *Child Development* writes: "The more unrealistic his aspiration, the more angry, hurt and disappointed he will be when he feels that other have let him down or has not lived up to the goals he sets for himself" (175).

The teenagers who experience the psychologically closed, hierarchical and rigid relationship with the adult world are badly frustrated. They see the social rules

and norms as a means of threatening, overwhelming and bewildering. This can cause a disturbance of emotional relationship with the adults. It can result into the form of revolt that is negative one which is directed against the morality. In this sense, an individual is incapable of true feelings for other and behaves in a self-centered manner. There can be the lack of emotional ties to reality that can bring profound shock to the normal individual. Such children can't see their responsibility for anything that goes wrong. In this sense, they are lacking conscience though they act in a superficial way among other adults brought by his violent activities.

While considering above mentioned behavior of teenagers we can assume that adolescent itself seem a form of insanity. It is true that it is a vulnerable period in term of the painful problems they have to face because of which insanity of them may occur. When they make the shift from the world of innocence to the world of experience which is totally new and unfamiliar, persistent feeling of dislocation and estrangement shock them. At the same time, their identity is challenged. They not only discard their old role in this time but also have to refuse it. Here a new personality can't be questioned. Supporting this point Hurlock writes: "The individual status is vague and he is confused about the roles he is expected to play" (174).

Adolescents can be the victim of neurosis at this stage. They can find the world unsympathetic and indifferent to them which can make feel upset. In this context L. Joseph Stone and Joseph Church in their book further write: "The source of neurotic is usually anxiety or guilt, against which the neurotic erects defenses which themselves impede his functioning" (373). They feel that they are blocked or ineffective by reason of characteristic within themselves but beyond his voluntary control. These come along the activities done by the individual and hamper the functioning. They also feel the situation where they are not able to make decision.

The protagonists of this novel are experiencing the confusion and angst of adolescence. Their experience has direct influence over their own world in which they are living. These characters are in the midst of recognizing some truth of life. They are about to jump from their childlike view of the world and make settlements in another world. They are going to face something new where their identity is challenged. The journey from innocence to experience is well demonstrated in this novel. Along with it there are many features of teenagers documented in this novel. In short this novel deals with the issues of teenagers who attend school, develop relationship with friends, and lose their innocence, encounters love/hate and struggle of the characters to develop their identity.

Knowles makes it clear through the novel that the loss of innocence seems to be sad and tragic but it is necessary to pave the way for maturation and transition into adulthood. He portrays the loss of innocence as a necessity. It is a part of maturation and growth that leads to the adulthood and self fulfillments. To achieve this purpose, Knowles uses the world war as a powerful symbol. World War II stands for the arrival of adulthood into the innocence lives of the characters and also the victory of suffering over the carefree lives. By using this symbol, Knowles attempts to explore that conflict and enmity are the fundamental aspects of human life. Life doesn't remain peaceful and carefree forever. Life makes shifts from carefree youth to somber maturity. To deny this natural law is to lead oneself to the destruction.

Necessity to be with other is a characteristic feature of the teenagers. The activities conducted with friends take an important place in their life. Through the friendship they satisfy their needs. The novel tells a story about friendship between two friends. In the novel, Gene and Finny have a complex friendship. Their friendship is complex in the sense that they don't share common interests. They have interests

that are completely opposites. On the one hand, Gene enjoys his education and good at school. On the contrary, Finny enjoys the activities that require courage. Finny thinks that sports are the most important in life and tries to take away Gene from his studies. Although Gene thinks education is more important than sports, he still follows Finny and harms his studies. Though Gene feels that Finny has hold over him, he can't get rid of Finny's world.

Finny and Gene are friends and enemies at the same time because they share love/hate relationship. Gene likes Finny because he finds Finny as a person looking for some new and exciting adventure. Finny truly likes Gene and considers him his best friend whom he can fully trust. Finny takes Gene as a part of his glory. When Gene almost falls out of tree, Finny risks his own safety to save Gene from falling. Finny expects that his friend has same feeling and trust. On the other hand, when Gene and Finny climb to the top of the tree, Gene intentionally causes Finny's fall shattering his leg. In this sense Gene is not the good friend who turns against Finny.

The complexity between their friendship results because they are different people. They have different talents, personalities and interests. Finny is popular athlete and leader. He likes to do dangerous things. This daring athlete chooses Gene as his best friend who is a bookworm. The following is the illustration of Gene and Finny's differences; Finny says, "I m good for you that way. You have a tendency to back away from thing otherwise." In response, Gene thinks, "my indignation at this charge was naturally stronger because it was so true" (10). However, even in these wide differences between these two boys, friendship can still flourish.

Despite the complexity of the friendship between two boys, many critics and writers have written about the relationship between these characters. Among them some of the critics have made effort to apply the queer theory to Knowles novel

regarding the relationship between Gene and Finny. These critics try to reflect the homoerotic tone which is hidden in the story. French critic George Michel Sarotte in his text *Like a Lover Like a Brother* discusses the issue of homosexuality under the heading; Intense Friendship: relationship rejected shows the physical attraction between these two boys and writes: “friendship turns into the hatred out of fear of its changing into love” (45). Another critic Eric L. Tribunella highlighting this issue writes: “The novel is widely regarded as what some world call “Homoerotic” because of the romantic or passionate friendship between the boys” (313).

However there are some other critics who instead of focusing in the homosexual relationship between these teenagers, they have given emphasis in their friendship. In 1959, Anne Duchene wrote that “Knowles draws with tenderness and restraint the pure joys of affection between them” (754). Similarly, Harding Lemay noted in 1960 that “the corroding flaw in friendship between young males..... a theme which echoes in every sensitive man’s experience” (246).

However, misunderstanding, misjudgment and misinterpretation that often occur in teenagers led their friendship to the destruction in the novel.

The teenagers of the novel are not comfortable with their identity and they are trying hard to establish the identity which is authentic one. They are suffering from the identity which is instable and fluid. In the novel the characters are trying to establish their identity through the relationship of each other. In the beginning of the novel Finny displays his physical skills and abilities where as Gene feels to be academically better. Finny’s fall from tree exposes Gene’s dark feeling towards Finny and their relationship is directed towards the situation where they have to depend upon each other. Gene and Finny come to depend on each other for their psychological as well as physical support. Gene plays sports and Finny trains him

how to play. In this sense Finny lives through Gene and vice versa. Finny is satisfied by fulfilling his desire through Gene and Gene, too, feels happy in Finny's world. Here Gene loses his self and merges into Finny's self.

Like most of the teenagers, Gene and Finny struggle to define their identity. The boys depend on each other by fulfilling each other's desires and wishes. This codependency prevents the development of their identity. Neither Gene nor Finny has their separate identity. Gene and Finny become the part of each other. They are so much wrapped in each other. To develop an authentic identity one has to leave another. Gene becomes an individual with his own identity only after the death of Finny. Finny's death forces Gene to reestablish a separate identity. It was so difficult for Gene to untangle from Finny even after his death because they are the part of each other. Gene after Finny's death says feels it is his own death and says:

I didn't cry then or ever about Finny. I did not cry even when I stood watching him being lowered into his family's strait-laced burial ground outside of Boston. I couldn't escape a feeling that this was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case. (119)

Knowles portrays the death of Finny as a necessity for the development of Gene's separate identity. This attempt of Knowles in the novel is supported by the different critics. Paul Witherington thinks that the death of Finny enabled Gene to develop the different identity than before and understand the change and reality of the world. He writes:

Gene frees himself from fear not by hiding from war and the ambiguities of the human heart, not by building barriers between youth and age but by accepting the inevitability of the changes and loss. The act of coming in out o the rain, that ancient criterion distinguishing the

idealist from the realist, represents the peace Gene finds, the treaty established between what the world should be and what it really is.

(800)

Jealousy is another characteristic feature of teenagers which can also be noticed in the behavior in the characters of this novel. Regarding the jealousy among the characters, critic like James Ellis writes:

The progress of the novel after this joining of Phineas and Gene is the progress of Gene's growing envy of Finny. Incapable of the purity of Phineas, Gene finds himself jealous of Finny's ability to flout Devon rules in his quests to enjoy unregulated friendliness with the adult world. (314)

Although Gene is proud to have his well liked and courageous boy as a friend and a roommate, he also feels jealous of Finny for his daring ways; he thinks that he could be never be as free-spirited as his friend even though he wants to be. As a result, Gene frequently hopes that Finny will be punished for his deeds. But Finny with his tricks escapes punishments which makes Gene feel bitter. Gene feels highly jealous towards Finny who is a superior athlete. In order to lower down his bitterness, he thinks that Finny, too, is jealous of his academic achievement. He thinks:

I found it. I found a single sustaining thought. The thought was, you and Phineas are even already. You are even in enmity. You both coldly driving ahead for your selves. You did hate him for breaking the school swimming record, but so what? He hated you for getting an A in that one except for him. (28)

This vision of Gene provides him a kind of solace for sometimes. It also enables him to avoid feeling inferior to Finny. As soon as Gene realizes that Finny has

no feeling of competition to him, Gene's jealousy becomes more intense. Gene realizes that Finny is morally superior and thinks:

And fear I had ever had of the tree was nothing beside this. It wasn't my neck but my understanding was menaced. He had never been jealous of me for a second. Now I knew there never was and never could have been any rivalry between us. I was not of the same quality as he. (32)

Gene doesn't know what to think of Finny. He has a kind of mixture of feeling towards Finny that motivated him to cause Finny's fall.

It is very common for teenagers to want to be like others. Gene in the novel is highly attracted by the vibrant personality of Finny and wants to become like Finny. For that purpose he puts on Finny's clothes one evening soon after his accident. This action can be analyzed as Gene's desire to be Finny. He feels comfortable after putting this dress and says; "I had no idea why this gave me such intense relief but it seemed, standing there in Finny's triumphant shirt that would never stumble through the confusion of my own character again" (54).

It is true that in an authoritarian atmosphere the teenagers become more rebellious and they may revolt against strict discipline. They even develop moral norms in their school and groups. Finny in the novel, is not afraid to revolt against authority. He dares to wear the Devon school tie as a belt and pink shirt as his uniform. After putting school tie as his belt, he says:

I wore this, you see because it goes with the shirt and it all ties in together- I didn't mean that to be a pun, I don't think they are to be very funny, especially in polite company, do you? It all ties together with what we have been talking about. (13)

He is also not afraid to skip class to have some fun or to ride three miles to the beach on his bicycle. He justifies not studying because he is involved in athletics and spends most of his time working out in gym or on the playing fields. At the same time, Finny doesn't need the approval of his superior to feel good about himself. He thinks of himself as successful even though his grades are not good. When he breaks the school swimming record, he has no need to make it official, it is enough for him. In this regard Finny says; "I just wanted to see if I could do it. Now I know but I don't to do it public" (22).

Different critics have different opinion about the nature of Finny. Critic like Paul Witherington describes Finny who uses his innocence as a tool which he uses to hypnotize others and get his own ways with teacher as well as classmates.

Witherington in this regard writes: "Skipping classes and wearing the school tie as a belt, playing poker in the dorm, sleeping on the beach may be serious breaches of discipline and therefore threat to the established order" (795). He further argues:

Finny's charming audacity and simplicity- in short his style- throws those in power off balance and gets away with everything there by irritating Gene, who would like to see Finny get into trouble at least once. Finny's ability to get away with everything, however also sets up the potential for chaos in a carefully ordered and protected school world. (796)

Similarly Joseph E. Devine calls Finny as a Nazi agent and Gene as the all American boy. Divine is in such opinion because Finny sees the handwritten lines above the printed words in a Latin text not as translation but as a secret code. He views these two protagonists in this way:

John Knowles, then, is not very subtly using Gene and Finny to symbolize, respectively democracy and totalitarianism. Finny, the German spy, is a deceitfully clever, decadent, psychosis-ridden Eastern kid. Gene, on the other hand, is a perfectly healthy, hard studying, all-American boy. (520)

Games and athletics are great interests of the teenagers. *A Separate Peace* is filled with athletic activities from tree-climbing to the swimming, skiing and snowball fights. Almost all the characters are involved in these activities. Among them Finny is a vital athlete who never associates the sports with winner and loser. Regarding this tremendous athlete, critics like Wiley Lee Umphlett in *The Sporting Myth and the American Experience* (1975) takes as the prototypical athlete dying young and calls as “incarnation of the sporting hero before the fall” (84). Similarly another writer Cathy Piehl in 1983 places the novel in the context of boys’ school story noting the typical school boys’ concern about classes and sports.

The language of the novel should also be noticed. We can find the clarity and simplicity in the language as it is used by the teenagers. The language is made more realistic by the use of typical slangs that are used by the teenaged school boys. The language of the characters is informal. This informal language contributes to capture the action and emotion of the characters. For example, when Finny misses his dinner because of his outgoing habit and when he is asked by the teacher for the reason, he replies in an informal way; “The real reason sir, was that we just had to jump out of that tree, you know that tree....” (9).

Underpinning of these characteristics, we can notice the child psychology projected in the novel. Last but not the least, this novel *A Separate Peace* is about

teenagers and for teenagers, a book which is strong enough to reflect the teen psychology.

The numerous symbols in the novel illustrate the major theme of *A Separate Peace*. The relationship between Gene and Finny helps to develop the theme of this novel such as lack of reality, low maturity level, false appearance etc. Their relationship deteriorates and leads to death because they fail to learn these valuable life lessons.

This novel attracts many young readers because of its high school setting. Knowles uses symbolism in order to show how Gene and Finny are complete opposites. He also makes use of symbols to present the war as a reality and how it affects the students at Devon. Another purpose of using symbolism is to show the Devon as carefree summer days and Naguamsett as problematic adulthood. Thus, John Knowles uses symbolism in the novel to put forward the coming of age, in young people in high school.

The two rivers that are part of the Devon school symbolize how Gene and Finny grow up through the course of the novel. The students love Devon River because it contains clean water. It symbolizes childhood and innocence because it is safe and simple because of which the boys prefer it. This shows how the boys choose to stay onto their youth instead of growing up. The Naguamsett River is the dirty one that symbolizes adulthood because of its difficulties and complexities. The two rivers intermingle showing the boys' change from immature individual to slightly older and wiser men.

Phineas death stands for the end of Gene's childhood. Gene realizes the world is full of hate, crime, and disappointment and he feels the need of growing up. Along with the death of Finny, Gene skips from Finny's world of fantasy where war doesn't

exist. Gene is getting older and wiser and getting closer to his eighteenth birthday when he will be drafted into the war and he finally begins to prepare for it. After the death of Finny, Gene says, “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” (105). It shows how the war helps Gene to move forward into adulthood by escaping Finny’s make-believe world.

The war is a symbol of how things are not always what they seem. In the beginning, the characters are highly fascinated by the war. The war has a romantic influence on the characters. Army recruiting posters and propaganda advertising attracts many boys’ attention and makes them think the war is an exciting adventure in which many young men interact. The school boys are highly obsessed to join battlefield.

Leper enlists in the army after being impressed by the film shown by a recruiter from the U.S. Ski troops. “I’m really glad I saw that movie in time, you bet I’m” (117). Leper is amazed by this movie about war. He gives very positive response to war. As soon as he joins the army troops, he has an emotional breakdown. He becomes psychotic and goes crazy and he is given a Section Eight. His impression about the war and the true nature of the war don’t match. The war proves too much for him who is an isolated and innocent boy. There is a lack of preparation for involving in violence and bloodshed in Leper. In this sense, Leper’s desire to join the battlefield is something more than he could handle. The bitter reality of the war is unbearable for Leper.

A Separate Peace spends a lot of time talking about the war and sports. Sports for Finny is “purely good” whereas war is destructive and Gene says war is caused by

something ignorant in the human heart. For the boys of the Devon war is similar to sports. These boys' act of playing different games resembles their position in the battlefield. They take part in sport as a kind of preparation for the war. For them sports is parallel to war. Their eagerness to enlist in military service suggests a misguided understanding of warfare as the games. Finny, the master of all the sports is shocked to know he can't play sports after his accident. This novel shows that war is an evil thing which is opposite to purely good fun and games.

Finny invents the playful game called Blitzball. This game is invented by him to mimic what he thinks of the war. This game requires no teams and places the odds against the ball carrier, who must outrun every other competitor to relinquish possession to another participant, who, in turn, has the right to refuse the challenging task of being ball carrier. This game symbolizes the war which is never ending. This game is also a symbol of individual struggle of boys at Devon who find themselves alone in this world without teammates.

The tree by the Devon River is a symbol of the object that draws Gene back to the school fifteen years ago when he was a student there. Gene perceives the tree at two different time periods. This tree reflects the change that has occurred within him. When Gene was teenager at Devon, the tree, "was tremendous, an irate, steely black steeple beside the river" (6). Before fifteen years ago, the tree was a fear itself because he had to climb and jump unwillingly into the river.

As an adult, now the tree seems to Gene "weary from age, enfeebled, dry" (6). According to Gene it is a symbol for "those men, the giants of your childhood whom you encounter years later and find that they are not merely smaller in relation to your growth but they are absolutely smaller, shrunken by age" (6). Because of the change in Gene, the narrator, the tree is not as fearful as it used to be in the past. In

this regard Gene says “Nothing endures, not a tree, not love, not even death by violence” (6).

The Summer Session at Devon is a time of freedom and joy. This session symbolizes innocence and youth which comes to an end with Finny’s fall. Finny’s fall is the climax of the novel which is highly symbolic and it brings to an end of the Summer Session- the period of carefree innocence. This carefree Summer Session at Devon is followed by the Winter Session. Then life becomes much harsher because of the war as it is increasingly affects the lives of the boys.

Super Suicide Society is a club formed by Phineas during the summer session. Its function was to have a group of school boys meet and watch each other jump out of tree into the river as a means of preparation for the coming world war. Similarly Finny had dream of being in the Olympics himself and declares that Gene must compete in his place after the accident. He begins training Gene to be ready for the 1944 Olympics. Gene realizes this is just another fantastic illusion just as he thinks that war is a fake. These two symbols Super Suicide Society and 1944 Olympics are the symbols of Finny’s make-believe world where war does not take place.

The purpose of Knowles’s novel is to represent the life of two young boys in order to reveal that unfortunate thing that can happen in a relationship when these things are not taken seriously. The conflict between Phineas and Gene is a symbol used by Knowles to show the way two boys learn to become mature and learn to deal with misfortunate at a young age. Knowles highly focuses on the symbolic meaning of the war as reality and how it has an effect on students at a Devon. Knowles uses symbols as major components in his novel.

III. Conclusion: Ignorance to Knowledge

The setting of this novel *A Separate Peace* is the Second World War.

Knowles' purpose of using Second World War as setting is to show physical and emotional difficulties of the teenagers with symbolic significance. In this sense, war in the novel holds less literal meaning and more symbolic meaning. As war is opposite to the peace, adulthood life is different from childhood life. The war is full of violence and bloodshed, similarly, adulthood is characterized by difficulties and complexities. A child can't enjoy his freedom forever. Slowly and gradually, he needs to be adjusted in the well-structured life of adulthood. No one can deny the existence of it. One has to enter into the world of suffering and problem leaving the childhood fantasy. In this regard, peace symbolically represents the carefree life of the teenagers and war stands for the repressive force of somber maturity over the peacefulness of the characters. The external war helps us to understand that internal war exists in every individual's heart. It means every human being goes to the war at a certain point of life, when he or she realizes that world is a hostile place to live and there exists in it some enemies who must be destroyed. We have to fight a war against ourselves to be complete human being. Escaping from this inimical world through the fantasy is impossible.

This novel takes place in the first half of the 1940s and explains so many references to the war. Here, the real struggle takes place in the human heart of the characters not on the battlefields. This war becomes the vital source knowledge and maturity. The Second World War stands for adulthood and the end of childhood. It tries to establish the fact that conflict and difficulty are the part of human life. The arrival of this war in the novel helps to contribute to mark the characters as adults. The novel deals with the issue of how the characters refuse to enter into adulthood life

by denying the war. Knowles makes vivid in the novel that what can be the result if one fails to accept the reality of life.

The novel is centered on how the characters react with the arrival of the war. That is to say, how the characters like Finny and Gene struggle during their transformation from a child to a matured man. The war in the novel appears as a repressive force. But the teenagers are not ready to be the part of it rather they try to escape through fantasy. They are not ready to leave their childlike view of the world. Instead of realizing the reality of life, they run away from it in the beginning of the novel. They appear to be rebellious and socially dissident.

Finny lacks practicality in his life though he is in the phase of transition. He has no interest in his study rather he loves sports. For him war is not the truth. The war appears to him in the form of fantasy. In this sense, he is not ready to leave his world though he has to do sooner or later. In the course of time, the war which is unavoidable comes to invade the life. The characters try to tackle in different ways to the repressive nature adulthood. These characters are involved in different tasks; their sole purpose is to avoid the unavoidable.

Finny and Gene's freedom is interrupted by the arrival of the world war. They are forced to leave their innocence. War makes them realize their freedom as momentary phenomena. The characters' refusal to take part in war can be understood as their unwillingness to initiate in to the life of adulthood. They try to live in the narrow world of childhood and run away from the reality of the world. As a result there occurs the pressure in their world as we can see the symbolic pressure of war in the novel. The characters in the novel are seen in the verge of confusion and angst

whether to accept or deny the truth of life. They tend to satisfy their desire for a while. When they realize their momentary happiness, they are shocked.

The novel shows that difficulties lie not in the external world and its system but within the heart of characters. Towards the end of the novel, Finny dies perhaps unable or unwilling to face adulthood. He never enters into disillusioning mode of existence. For Finny everyone was friend; no one deserved fear and hatred. In this sense, he is too weak to grow up which led to his destruction. His death symbolizes his inability to anticipate and cope the suffering of adulthood. On the other hand, Gene, who believes that this world as a hostile place and has the concept of enemy survives entering into the world of adulthood.