

**World Literature**  
**Mrs. Osborne**  
**Summer Reading Assignment 2014**

Novel – *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles

- Select **one** of the following essay options to write 1,000 words (3 pages) or more.
- Use 5-8 quotations from the novel and follow attached style guidelines.
- Paper will be typed, double spaced, 12 point font
- Include your name, class, and the date (2 September 2014) on page one (MLA format); you do not need a cover page
- There will be an in-class quiz on the novel as well.

**Essay options:**

1. **Frame Narrative** – In a way, this novel has two narrators: Gene as an adult, and Gene as an adolescent. Analyze the author’s use of the “frame” of the larger narrative. What distinguishes one from the other? What purpose does the frame serve in preparing the reader for the novel, and guiding the reader’s interpretation once the novel’s action has concluded?
2. **Supporting Characters** – Discuss how the characters of Leper and Brinker contribute to the action and the tension in the novel. Evaluate each of them and argue for their necessity in the novel’s action and its thematic considerations. In other words, why does Knowles need them for both plot and theme?
3. **Identity** – Who am I? What do I represent? How do I become the person that I am? These are questions we all face as we mature and develop. These are questions that you face as you begin to plan out your future life. Apply the concept of identity to an analysis of Gene. Consider both how his sense of identity determines his actions, and conversely, how events in the novel help shape Gene’s identity.
4. **Unreliable Narrator** – In a first person narrative, there is always some value in considering the reliability of the narrator. Are we as readers to trust everything Gene tells us, or is it possible that we may be given an incomplete or imperfect version of the story’s “truth”? Are we meant to see through Gene’s narration to detect flaws or weaknesses in his character and to adjust our interpretations accordingly? If you see reason to view Gene as an unreliable narrator, present evidence to support that position and argue for its effect on the novel.
5. **Theme** – At the end of the novel, Gene says, “...my war ended before I even put on a uniform; I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there.” An essay in *Time* magazine about *A Separate Peace* states, “...one of the things the novelist seems to be saying is that the enemy Gene killed, and loved, is the one every man must kill: his own youth, the innocence that burns too hotly to be endured.” Do you believe that the writer of the essay and Gene are referring to the same enemy – innocence? Do you believe that every person must leave his or her innocence behind in order to mature? Write an essay that explores these ideas and presents an intelligent argument.