

Knowles' Separate Peace Essays: Enemies of the Heart

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Enemies of the Heart in A Separate Peace

Dealing with enemies has been a problem ever since the beginning of time. In *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, the value of dealing with your feelings and dealing with your enemies is shown by Gene Forester, a student in Devon during World War 2 dealing with few human enemies, but his emotions create a [nemesis](#) far greater than any human enemy. "I never killed anybody," Gene had commented later in his adulthood, "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 Devon; I killed my enemy there."

At Devon, Gene had a best friend, Finny, they were roommates and did many activities together. Finny was never the culprit, but usually the catalyst, for most of Gene's feelings, both good and bad. Gene was jealous of Finny's confidence, openness, modesty, superb athletic abilities, leadership skills, ability to deal with stress easily, care-free attitude, people skills and, of course, his good [looks](#).

Early in the story Finny demonstrated his openness when asked for his height, he said 5 [foot](#), 8½ inches, while Gene replied 5 foot, 9 inches. Finny pointed out that they were the

same height and Gene shouldn't be ashamed of his real height. Later that day, Finney suggests they skip dinner to go swimming in the river. They are asked where they have been upon their return. Finny quickly replied that they were swimming in the river, something that is forbidden, and they got away with it. Gene said that the rules are very bent during the summer session, but it was actually Finny's people skills that had kept them out of trouble.

Finny was very bold, as Gene many a time wished he was, on one occasion Finny wore a bright pink shirt "symbolizing the first U.S. bombing in Europe. Gene called him a "faerie" but really envied him. Later Finny wore the school tie as a belt and when questioned he claimed that it represented "Devon in the war." Gene was happily awaiting a scolding for Finny, but again, he got in no trouble. Another day the two were walking and came across a plaque near the pool claiming that A. Hopkins Parker held the record for swimming across the pool the fastest, Finny took one look at and thought he could beat it, so without any practice at all he plunged into the pool, Gene timed him and he beat it, just like that.

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