**ELA 3201 -- Review of the Assignment (A Separate Peace)**

* On your public exam, you may be asked to respond to an excerpt from a novel selection (or even a short story). This first assignment/test gave you the opportunity to work on practicing and developing that skill
* You will take this practice into your second assessment (on the second ½ of the novel) but due to the extenuating circumstances discussed in class (namely, the copying of assignments and plagiarism rather than considering and developing your own ideas), the second assessment will be written as a test only.
* Due to this change, you will be provided with an excerpt (or will be asked to review a page/pages of the novel during the test) to aid in the development of your response.

**Review of Analytical Essay #1**

* Overall, grades on this assignment were on par with the results of the analytical component on the mid-term exam (which was on an essay)
* However, there were some common mistakes that must be corrected before the second test to improve overall scores. These were:
1. Choosing not to use any literary devices or elements and discuss only character changes (here, you could not earn more than 2.5 or 3 at the most on a 5 mark section).
2. Choosing not to discuss any character changes and only discuss the existence of literary elements (here, you could not earn any more than 2 or 2.5 at the most on a 5 mark section)
3. Discussing character change through plot but never isolating what particular traits emerge from those incidents
4. Discussing incidents in a very general manner where it was unclear what event or character change (or both!) was occurring.
* If you are unclear on why you received your grade, please review the comments, this review sheet, the models, and if you are still unclear, please come see me to discuss.

**Model Responses of introduction/body paragraphs/conclusion**

These have been cut and pasted from model student work submitted. Note that they are from multiple students (not one paper from one student) so there will likely not be any unity between body paragraphs. Consider each on their own as a piece of writing.

***Introductions***

The novel “A Separate Peace” by John Knowles chronicles the life of the main character Gene Forrester during his time spent at Devon School during The Second World War. Throughout the first five chapters we become acquainted with not only Gene, but also the charismatic and kind fellow classmate known as Finny. While at first Gene appears to be a typical teenage boy who seeks adventure and acceptance amongst peers, as the novel progresses and his friendship with Finny develops, distinct, yet disturbing qualities in his character are revealed. Through his corrupt thoughts and actions towards Finny, we begin to see the image of an average school boy is simply a façade to hide his dark and hateful nature. Through the use of epiphanies, repetition and first person point of view the author gradually reveals Gene to be an accusatory, insecure, jealous, malicious character.

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In the novel *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, the author uses many methods to develop the character of Gene Forrester. The novel is set about a decade and a half after the Second World War, where Gene is reminiscing about his time in a military boarding school in America. The early chapters of the book speak about the tightly knit relationship between Gene and his friend Phineas, a charismatic athlete who tends to get his own way with his words. Much of the character development that occurs in Gene relates back to his relationship with Phineas, and how Gene’s dark nature makes him perceive their friendship as friendly competition at first, but later see it as a burning desire to be better than one another. Overall, Gene’s character starts with envy over Phineas, which then develops into vindictiveness, which in turn, causes him swathes of guilt. The author uses many methods to portray these character changes, such as imagery, epiphany, and foil.

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***Body Paragraphs***

*(Diction, Atmosphere, Imagery)**(Paranoia, Vindictiveness)*

 The paranoia festering in Gene’s mind continues to develop, bringing out the vindictive and malicious nature inside of him. Knowles’ use of fantastic diction adds to the imagery that effectively portrays Gene’s feelings of malice towards Finny. The morning on the beach when Gene wakes up before Finny he describes Finny as looking “more dead than asleep”, and that the beach was “gray and dead-looking itself”. The repetition of the words gray and dead create an ominous atmosphere, and by the way that Gene describes Finny as looking “dead” perhaps is an insight to his true feelings of animosity towards his friend. Furthermore, the afternoon after Gene fails his first test Finny convinces him to come out to the tree for another meeting of the “Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session”. The boys both climb up the tree - Finny just ahead of Gene - and when they get to the end of the branch Finny turns to wait for him. Steady and poised, Gene takes a step towards Finny and “jounced the limb”. Gene’s outright intentional act of malice is shown here, as well as how he so graphically describes how Finny “hit the bank with a sickening, unnatural thud”. Although he intentionally knocked his best friend out of a tree and watched as he hit the ground in such a sickening and gruesome fashion Gene does not hesitate to jump off the branch and into the river, “every trace of [his] fear of this forgotten”. He remains calm, cool, and collected, with no signs of remorse for what he has done to his friend.

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*(Dialogue, Irony) (Insecurity, Nervous)*

In the beginning of the novel, in retrospect, Gene describes the summer of 1942 as his “sarcastic summer”. Gene’s sarcasm is first used in the first chapter when he tries to make fun of Finny’s admiration of a tree by saying “Is that what you like best?” in an attempt to make his friends laugh. When Finny brushes off Gene’s sarcastic comment with a joke and makes Gene laugh, Gene explains that this made him “feel less sarcastic, less scared.” This dialogue reveals that Gene is nervous around his friends is desperate for their approval. He feels he has to hide how insecure he is and make people believe he is funny by acting sarcastically. Gene also becomes extremely defensive when his bravery or confidence is questioned. For example, when Finny insists that Gene only jumped off the tree because Finny “shamed” him into it and that he has a “tendency to back away from things otherwise”, Gene cried, “I never backed away from anything in my life” with indignation and followed with an insult calling Finny “goofy”. Gene’s dialogue in his childish attempt to defend his bravery reveals how insecure he is because even with his best friend, someone you should feel comfortable with, he feels like he has to prove himself and when he felt as though Finny didn’t believe him, he insulted him to try and hurt him.

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(Epiphany) (Malicious, Impulsive)

 Gene’s character development is established through the author’s use of epiphany. This is introduced in chapter four when Gene suddenly realizes that Finny is not only jealous of his academic success, but also that the pair were (unadmitted) rivals. When Finny states that he would “…kill [himself] out of jealous envy,” Gene takes that very literally. Because he knew of his own jealous nature when it came to Phineas’ athletic ability, Gene suddenly concluded that it was the same way for Finny because “[they were] even already. [They were] even in enmity.” This proves that not only is Gene a competitive character, but is a resentful one as well. As the chapter progresses, Gene has yet another epiphany when he realizes that Finny had “never been jealous of [him] for a second.” This causes Gene to realize that he was in fact “…not of the same quality as [Phineas],” resulting in pure fury from the protagonist. As a result of his fury, Gene jostled the branch upon which his best friend stood, and caused him to fall. Gene felt no residing guilt for this action, thus proving that he is not only the competitive, resentful character initially believed, but also one of a malicious and impulsive nature.

***Conclusion***

To conclude, John Knowles uses foreshadowing, irony, and dialogue to help develop Gene’s character traits in the first five chapters of the novel. Within this frame, Gene’s transformation from an apathetic schoolboy to a cruel and bitter man is evident through his actions and the actions of those around him. Overall, Gene has a dangerous personality and becomes easily overrun by emotions, resulting in irreversible disaster.

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