

The Internal Constant

While everyone on this earth is physically unique, all share many internal emotions and internal struggles with each other. Although outside they are different than anyone else, inside there is commonplace. In the book A Separate Peace, I believe that one of the main characters, Gene, resembles me as he grows up into this world.

In A Separate Peace, Gene had a great friendship with a boy named Finny, whose friendship resembled that of my friendship with my best friend, Mason. Whenever I would go anywhere with Mason, I would not know what to expect, but one thing I did know was that it would be exciting. This was the same for Gene and Finny; Gene would go along with Finny, never expecting what would happen next, but enjoying the sense of freedom. For example, one morning Mason decided to hike to the "500 acres," a large plot of land close to where we lived. We discovered an Indian reservation and a small clearing under the dense forest of oak trees next to a five foot waterfall. Mason told me never to tell anyone about this place and so I did not. (so here I am telling this to my English teacher...). Gene and Finny entered a large gymnasium and discovered a few pole vaults. Finny abruptly picked one up, ran, and pole vaulted, breaking the school record. He then told Gene never to tell anyone about Finny breaking the record. Both of these instances are incredibly alike. Finally, Finny was symbolically killed because of society. Finny was wounded and wound up in a cast. He eventually died after he had seen what society really was. This situation is a lot like Mason's situation. Mason moved out of our neighborhood and his new next door neighbor introduced him to drugs, killing that free spirit which made him alive. Society had taken the best of both Mason and Finny, but like Gene, I still had that inspiration which could never be stolen from either I or Gene.

In addition to these close relationships, Gene is a lot like me in that he must deal with growing up and maturing. One step in maturing is knowing who to listen to and who not to listen to. At Gene's school, teachers enforce rules, cutting and chipping away at all that his friend Finny stood for -- freedom. Gene was torn between one question; Is it better to live by rules and boundaries which teachers have, or to live like Finny? He finally matures and picks the Finny route, a wise decision. I have struggled with that question for quite some time now. Only recently have I chose the Finny route,

and currently I am trying to follow that narrow path. For example, I am not satisfied with any church in my area -- they are all too strict and confined. While the preacher preaches rules and strict discipline, I close my ears. Also, now I enjoy challenging authority, such as challenging vice principals who enforce tank top rules. In addition to this, Gene faces pressure from his peers. Some students decided to be Gene's enemy because they believed that Gene was sully responsible for Finny's death. In the same but not so dramatic way, some students decided to be my enemy because they believed that I was sully responsible for their bad grade in my math class.

Gene is a unique person who is amazingly like me at times. The people he deals with and the problems he faces as he grows up are like the people and problems that I have dealt with or will have to deal with. Growing up is a learning process. When that freshman goes into the wrong locker room, she realizes her mistake usually the hard way and covers it up by investigating the coke machine then quickly exiting, hiding the fact that she's learning something and growing up, and thinking that the rest of those guys have no more growing up to do. Growing up is something that we all have to face, so we are all alike in this respect, even though we try to hide this fact. It's amazing how many teenagers commit suicide thinking that they are the only ones who have to grow up.