**English 3201 A Separate Peace Speaking Assignment**

Directions:

1. Teacher will select a question at random for class discussion.
2. Students will be expected to respond and discuss their understanding and interpretation of a question.
3. Student involvement with more than one question will show in-depth analysis and participation in speaking and listening with their peers. The following scoring guide will be used to evaluate each question response.

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| Score 1-5 | Limited knowledge of content. Does not answer the question completely.  |
| Score 6-7 | Adequate knowledge of content. Makes some connection to the novel which supports the answering of the question but question is only partially answered. |
| Score 7.5-8 | Strong knowledge of content. Usually speaks effectively, analytically and thoughtfully. Provides specific support for ideas and justifies their analysis. |
| Score 8.5-10 | Outstanding knowledge of content. Consistently speaks effectively, analytically and thoughtfully. Consistently provides specific support for ideas and justifies their analysis. (Contributes to the answering of at least two questions) |

1. The opening of the story begins with the introduction of our narrator - Gene Forrester. He is looking back on his youth and how his life has changed since his time at Devon. Discuss the role and effectiveness of point of view.

1. What is the role of the tree, its possible purpose, and its symbolic significance?
2. Describe how Gene was feeling when he made the decision to jump from the branch. What other feelings might have been going through his head?
3. Gene strikes the reader immediately as a potentially jealous character. He seems to be jealous of all that Finny has and does. Give examples of why Gene is jealous of Finny.
4. When Finny shares with Gene that Gene is his best friend, Gene cannot respond in kind, even though he wants to. Discuss this scene and what it says about each character.
5. Gene decides he does want to be valedictorian, further demonstrating his need to be the best at everything he does. Do you think Gene really wants to be superior to Finny?
6. When Finny falls from the tree, he is injured, but Gene seems to be damaged as well. Discuss this idea.
7. When Gene dresses in Finny's clothing, it might seem odd to a reader, but it's not something to be completely unexpected. Explain why you think he does this and what does this says about Gene?
8. Do you think Finny and Gene are really one person in this story - metaphorically speaking? Why or why not?
9. Gene feels horrible about Finny's fall and tries to confess his guilt to him, but Finny doesn't allow it. Discuss why you think he does not accept the confession and what does this say about Finny?
10. Gene is feeling guilty, it seems, when he is pulled into the Butt Room with Brinker. It's almost as if he wants to be caught in his lies so he can confess. Discuss the idea of guilt, how it can affect a person, and how it affects Gene.
11. Discuss the scene that takes place in the Butt Room. What were the intentions of all those involved? Especially Brinker?
12. Discuss the idea of denial within a relationship. How are both Finny and Gene in denial?
13. The idea of childhood versus adulthood is one that continues to be shown in this story, especially in the opening chapters. Discuss how the boys are straddling two worlds, how it affects them, and what this might mean for their futures.
14. Do you think Leper truly understands the war after he returns from basic training? How did his experience change him?
15. The trial of Gene that Brinker arranges is sudden and nerve-wracking for everyone involved. What is Brinker’s intention? Is he justified in having such a trial?
16. By the end of lunch, Gene is certain that Leper’s mother is convinced Gene is “a good boy underneath.” Gene states that Leper was “closer to the truth” (when he said Gene was a “savage underneath”). What is your opinion of Gene? Is he a “good boy” or is he a “savage”?
17. As Gene watches Finny being carried out in the chair, he states that he again had the feeling “of having all along ignored what was finest” in Finny. To what was Gene was referring? What, in your opinion, was “finest” in Finny?
18. Gene tells Finny that what he did to him wasn’t “anything personal,” that it was just “some ignorance inside” him, “something blind.” Is Gene telling Finny the truth? Recall Gene’s realization right before the jump that there hadn’t, after all, been any rivalry between him and Finny.
19. Gene the adult states that he had never cried about Finny, that at Finny’s funeral he had a feeling it had been his own. What do you think Gene means?
20. Discuss how Gene and Finny each must have felt when Finny lashed out at Gene in the hospital. What does this say about their relationship?
21. The love between Gene and Finny is something that continues to bind them together, even in the face of Finny's tragedies. Finny simply cannot imagine Gene not loving him in return. Discuss the idea of love between friends and whether you believe it can be as selfless as this story seems to show.
22. Restate and evaluate the conclusion Gene comes to about the cause of wars. Who constructed lines against their enemies, and at what cost? What does Gene wonder about “this enemy”?
23. Mr. Hadley tells Gene and Brinker that one’s greatest moment, greatest privilege, is to serve one’s country. He goes on to say that the “old guys” like him are proud of the young ones going off to war, and jealous of them, too. Brinker then angrily tells Gene that the “old guys” are responsible for the war but that the young ones will have to fight it. Comment on these two divergent opinions about war. Are typical of all the older and younger generations?
24. Gene has the epiphany that he killed his enemy at Devon. Who do you think Gene is talking about when he speaks of the enemy? Is this a particular person and/or an idea? What does he finally come to understand about himself?
25. Through Gene, Knowles offers a clear theme at the end of his book: “Because it seemed clear that wars were not made by generations and their special stupidities, but that wars were made instead by something ignorant in the human heart.” P.201 Explain this statement as it connects to the novel.
26. Gene states that everyone he ever knew, except for Finny, found themselves “pitted violently against something in the world around them,” and that this “hostile thing” broke “the simplicity and unity of their character.” What kinds of “hostile things” do people find themselves pitted against? Is Gene just referring to such things as war, or is he perhaps referring to other types of conflict that cause people to change?
27. How would you define Finny’s character? How is he different from the other boys at Devon? Discuss.
28. Discuss the significance of the people in Gene’s life. What role does Brinker, Leper, and Finny have on Gene?
29. Throughout the novel, Finny seems to force himself to remain in the innocent moment, denying both his accident and the war until Brinker and the trial force him to come face to face with his injury and Gene’s role in it. Yet, it is this knowledge that ultimately destroys him. What comment is Knowles making about people like Finny in the novel? Is it possible to stay youthful and free or is that simply irresponsible? Was it Finny’s naivety that destroyed him or Gene’s jealousy?
30. Considering Gene’s descriptions of the events in the novel, his descriptions of Finny, and his descriptions of their relationship, argue whether or not Finny is a good friend to Gene or would Gene be better off without Finny in his life. What statement is Knowles making about friendship? Were they ever really friends?
31. At the end of the novel Gene says, “Wars were made instead by something ignorant in the human heart” (Knowles 201). Considering these lines, what was the war that Gene waged in the novel and why was it based on ignorance? Consider how usually ignorance is attributed to the mind and not the heart. Why would Gene attribute it to the heart? What does he learn from his war and ultimately how is it resolved?
32. Competition and rivalry play a large role in the novel. Considering the relationship between Gene and Finny, discuss whether or not competition between peers is a healthy or unhealthy thing. What are the dangers of competition/rivalry? Consider the last lines in the novel about constructing Maginot Lines against imaginary enemies in your response.
33. There is quite a bit of symbolism in the novel. There is symbolism relating to the characters’ names, relating to the war, and relating to the Bible. Choose one area of symbolism and explore the significance of the symbolism in relation to the themes in the novel.
34. Throughout the book, Gene is associated with bitterness, rivalry, complicacy, and competence. In contrast, Finny is associated with strength, power, goodness, and excellence. Yet, it is Finny who dies and Gene who lives. Considering both characters explain the strengths and weaknesses in both boys arguing who is the weaker character. Consider the statement Knowles is making about strength and survival through these young men. What does it take to survive in a modern world?