**‘Ms. Diehl**

**Honors 9th English**

**Summerville High School**

*“There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of*

*human intelligence, imagination, and wonder.”*

*–Ronald Reagan*

**Assignment (PART I)**: Please read the attached three essays. As you read, I’d like you to annotate them, looking through the lens of an editor/grader. Check for the six rubric criteria:

1. Ideas (20%):
   * + Do they have strong thesis statements?
     + Are they answering the prompts affectively?
     + Do they continue to support their arguments throughout the paragraph?
2. Organization (30%):
   * + Do they develop their ideas with solid evidence to support their positions?
     + Is there a logical development of ideas throughout the paragraph?
     + Does the paragraph provide an effective introductory sentence and conclusion?
     + Is the essay saturated with high-level analysis (is the writer teaching the reader)?
3. Voice (20%):
   * + Does the writer make his or her tone clear and does it set a specific mood for the reader?
4. Word Choice (10%):
   * + Does high level diction satiate the essay?
     + Do words and phrases create memorable pictures?
5. Sentence Fluency (10%):
   * + Does the writer lead the reader through the claim and evidence smoothly?
     + Does the text use varied syntax to lead the reader through the ideas?
6. Conventions (10%):
   * + Does the writer avoid first or second person, unless specifically discussion a personal event/situation that strengthens his or her argument?
     + Does the writer avoid contractions?
     + Is the paragraph free of grammatical and spelling errors?
     + Is the paragraph written in MLA format?
     + Are there proper citations?

**Assignment (PART II)**:

* Now that you have read and provided feedback in the margins for each essay, I’d like you to, on the bottom of the essays, write a short paragraph (five sentences) in response to the essay. Make sure to highlight strengths and weaknesses and give them suggestions as to how to strengthen their writing.
* Then, please provide a letter grade at the bottom of the essay.
* Make sure your name is on the front page of the paragraph packet.
* We will discuss the grades given in class today or next time, depending on time.

**\*\*\*Make sure that you note all of the above criteria within the margins of the paragraphs. They should be satiated with feedback.**

**Essay #1 prompt #8**

Opposites: Prompt #8  
"You couldn't have strength without weakness, you couldn't have light without dark, you couldn't have love without loss."  
-Jodi Picoult  
As Picoult stated, opposites are in some ways tied to each other. In the novel, "A Separate Peace," John Knowles shows how opposites in the end come together. "A Separate Peace" is a novel based on the life in an all boy's school. In his book, Knowles used symbolism of the two rivers at Devon and Gene and Finny's personalities to demonstrate how opposites, in the end, become each other.   
    One of the examples of this symbolism are Gene and Finny's personalities. In the beginning of the story, Gene when speaking about Finny and the tree says, "He of course saw nothing the slightest bit intimidating about it" (14 Knowles). When Gene slip out of the tree and Finny grabs his hand and saves him, Gene thinks afterwards, "Yes, he had practically saved my life. He had also practically lost it for me" (33 Knowles). In the first quote, Finny’s confidence and recklessness is shown as he doesn't think about what he is going to do, he just acts upon his impulses. On the other hand, Gene is more of the person to look at both sides and to see the negative of the situation, unlike the carelessness of Finny. Finny pushed Gene to do things he was not comfortable with, such as jumping out of the tree, because Finny was a fun-loving teenage boy. Gene saw it as a threat and accepted Finny’s challenges because he did not want to show weakness. At the end of the story, Finny, when he dies, becomes a part of Gene as he now has a new personality, a sense of carelessness, although it is different still from Finny’s carelessness. The two personalities of Gene and Finny are opposites but they attract to each other and in the end come together as one.

    Another example of symbolism from the novel is the two rivers at Devon. The Naguamsett is described, "It was ugly, saline, fringed with marsh, mud and seaweed" (76 Knowles). When the two rivers were compared, "It was nothing like the fresh-water Devon above the dam where we'd had so much fun, all the summer" (76 Knowles). The Naguamsett River is the dark, dirty, and complex river that runs through the Devon School. The Devon River is clean, clear, and where  the boys would play. In the end, the Devon River flows into the Naguamsett River and they become one whole river that flows out into the ocean. The two rivers at the Devon school are opposites but in the end come together to form one river.

    John Knowles added conflicting points to his novel to show how they are connected. He used the personality differences of Gene and Finny and the different qualities of the two rivers at Devon to exhibit how they blend into one. Picoult put into specific words what Knowles was attempting to show through his symbolism: opposites are connected.

**Feedback: (at least 5 sentences)**

**Essay #2 (prompt 2)**

The Army of Adulthood.

In John Knowles’ coming of age novel *A Separate Peace*, there is a boarding school based on his own experiences and in this there are also symbolic references to what is happening in the background at first that affects the entire premise and all characters, and what ultimately becomes the entire idea of why one character dies and one character lives.

There is one main, overlying symbol in the entire book, which was a real problem in the time it is set, which is the foreboding World War II, and more importantly how boys similar to the students were being enlisted. While it was a real event and while the second World War did actually affect America as a whole, in the book it’s set more for a symbolism of adulthood, and how while the students talk about it in excited tones when they may brag and be untouched, when it trully approaches their armor of childish grandeur fades away. It’s first shown in chapter one, when the students attending a summer session are attending to move ahead a year in order to enlist sooner. There is a regimend they set for seniors to prepare them, such as jumping from a tree to prepare to jump from a sinking ship, which is what the leader of the group of younger boys that takes focus wants to do. The character is called Phineas, who believes the war is not a true problem, but also wants to be ready to jump from a tree they were told not to to be ready. Both him and the narrator, Gene, do so, before they shake themselves off and continue to play games of childish intent, like always. One game that adds to the symbolism of war is a ball game called Blitzball, created by Phineas and often changed by Phineas, representing different bombing, and when Phineas tells Gene to attack another player he’s passed the ball, similar to how some turn on others and attack after swearing loyalty in war, or how a friend doesn’t follow to being as close in adulthood as they were when they were children.

Later on, however, it’s shown that Phineas believes he can show spirit for the war effort, such as wearing a pink shirt as an “emblem”, celebrating the bombing in the war. When Gene comments, “It makes [him] look like a *fairy*!” (Knowles, 24) he brushes it off as an opinion, similar to a child wearing something to make them look older despite how strange it seems on them. Phineas spins stories of war at first as though he’s positive when he’s in it, everything will change-similar to how a child dreams of growing up to be something, how it will only truly begin when they are there, in the thick of it. Phineas has this attitude often until he has an accident, and is absent from the story for a bit as Gene adjusts with both guilt and beginning maturity. One might argue the way he does it with sudden anger is how a child throws away a favored toy, and tries to get it back only after the deed is done, or how one might symbolically throw away chilkdhood and long for it back later in life.

Often when talking about the war to others, Gene finds they’re all mostly the same-other students bragging about what sort of soldiers they’ll be, and how they’ll change the entire world-again, like a child imagining they’ll change the world without truly thinking about how or why. They often use the war for make believe, and until one day, that’s all it is-they even see a train passing when they’re working to help once, full of fresh soldiers, who call and cheer, before they disappear again, adding to the dream of it all. Only one enlists, Leper, coming back crazed, and confused, and having gone insane from different problems, thoroughly scaring Gene that the man will reveal his secret, and this reflects on Gene’s own fears about the war and leaving adolescence.

Phineas returns with a uncaring attitude, saying; “‘That’s all this whole war story is. A medicinal drug.’” (Knowles, 114), like he refuses to accept it as anything other than that. It’s similar to how in the story of Peter Pan, he is in denial of how to grow up, and that it’s all a conspiracy  created in order to control the population as a whole, Gene not once believing him. Later, however, we find out this is actually because when Phineas tried enlisting, he was unable to because he’d injured his leg before when Gene was shaking a tree branch he was on, angry at him. Because of the break, Phineas couldn’t walk correctly, and thus was unable to join the army anywhere he tried-a later break after this also kills him, not allowing him to reach full adulthood, or the army.

When the book ends Gene explains so has his personal war as he prepares to enlist, unclear when he says he didn’t even need to because he’d already taken care of it at school; “[He] was on active time all [his] time at school; [he] killed [his] enemy there.” (Knowles, 204), and he himself is unsure if Phineas was truly his enemy at all-because he was a child in thorough, Gene the more mature one often influenced by him, and when Phineas dies, so do the doubts, the fears of adulthood, the problems only a child worries about, and Gene transcends into adulthood newly understanding everything around him and approaching. When the army surrounds the students, it’s daunting and truly scares them, but after the trials and error faced, they are more prepared, and the conflict is resolved as they begin, Gene even mentioning how he will enlist instead of having himself be called and forced in, as he is a willing participant, and willing to grow up instead of being forced.

**Feedback: (at least five sentences)**

**Essay #3 prompt #6**

The Duration of Friendship

         In John Knowles award-winning novel “A Separate Peace,” the attribute of friendship is defined as two boys discover the trials and hardships that come with being competitive best friends. Though almost complete opposites in character, Gene and Finny make an unbreakable bond of companionship throughout their days at Devon Academy, the all boys school. As the story progresses, the boys’ friendship is constructed by the chisel of admiration, jealousy, freedom, and guilt. Ultimately showing the author's view on friendship being a relationship that requires balance to succeed, and if the balance is disrupted, friendship will fail to exist.

         Throughout the course of the story, Gene and Finny’s relationship fluctuates from happy and carefree to one full of guilt and sorrow. At the beginning of the book, during the summer session, the balance of friendship is stable and equal, resulting in the peaceful and relaxed setting that is formed. Gene is intellectual and soft-spoken while Finny is strong-minded and extroverted, these opposites in character are what create equality. The author symbolizes this balance with the pleasant weather, carefree times, and relaxed rules. Gene, who is the narrator, describes his feelings of friendship with Finny when he states, “[Gene] laughed along with Finny, [his] best friend, and also unique, able to get away with anything at all... It was quite a compliment to [Gene], as a matter of fact, to have such a person choose [him] for his best friend" (Knowles 28-29). The author implies that, during this time, Finny and Gene had a friendship that was genuine and real. Gene, in fact, feels honored to have Finny choose him to be his best friend, and the reader can assume that Finny likewise shares the same feelings toward Gene. Ultimately showing that friendship, when balanced, can lead to true happiness and joy. During the summer session of peace and comfort, friendship is defined as a loving relationship of equality, peace, and purity.

         However, not all friendships can remain in this state of perfectness, and some are inevitably going to experience pain and hate when the equality is jeopardized. When Gene felt that the balance of his friendship with Finny was threatened, he did everything in his power to balance the scales. Gene sensed that Finny had set out to ruin what he was best at, his academics, when he states, “Then a second realization broke as clearly and bleakly as dawn at the beach. Finny had deliberately set out to wreck [Gene's] studies. That explained blitzball, that explained the nightly meetings of the Super Suicide Society, that explained his insistence that [Gene] share all his diversions. The way [Gene] believed that you're-my-best-friend blabber! The shadow falling across his face if [Gene] didn't want to something with him! Sure, he wanted to share everything with [Gene], especially his procession of D's in every subject. That way he, the great athlete, would be way ahead of [Gene]. It was all cold trickery, it was calculated, it was all enmity" (Knowles 53). After the realization that Finny had tried to tip the scales in his favor, Gene set out to do his absolute best in academics, determined that the balance should remain intact. This shows that balance or the lack of it, is a powerful factor that may determine the course a friendship will take. Even though Finny's attempt to ruin Gene turned out to be unintentional, Gene still felt the sting of shock that their friendship had been on the brink of inequality. The author clearly depicts friendship as a relationship that has perilous twists and turns of envy, and that the controlling factor of that envy is the shift of balance and equality.

         Gene and Finny’s relationship started with genuine friendship, but when Finny’s leg shattered so did the equality, and at his passing the friendship died with him. Showing that the deterioration of friendship begins with a simple nudge in the wrong direction, one misplaced step, or even a small jounce of a limb. The author symbolizes this loss of friendship with the last paragraph of chapter twelve, when he relates, “[Gene] did not cry then or ever about Finny. [He] did not cry even when [he] stood watching [Finny] being lowered into his family’s straight-laced burial ground outside of Boston. [Gene] could not escape a feeling that this was [his] own funeral, and [one] does not cry in that case” (Knowles 194). The funeral taking place is not only Finny’s physical funeral, but also the funeral of the boys’ friendship. This death of friendship is why ‘[Gene] could not escape a feeling that this was [his] own funeral’. The friendship that had once thrived among Gene and Finny, deteriorated to the point of extinction, showing that an unbalanced friendship will inevitably cease to exist.

         The author is explaining, all throughout the astounding story,  That friendship when unbalanced, is not always enveloped in purity, but is instead tainted with feelings of jealousy, sorrow, and guilt. The balance or the lack of it, governs the actions and ultimately the lives of those involved. Friendship is a relationship full of love, hate, pride, and humility that will inevitably fall when balance is disrupted. Only when balance is restored can there be peace among friends, otherwise friendship will cease to exist and, as the book depicted, end in a state much worse than it had begun.

**Feedback: (at least five sentences)**