

Chapter 6

Identifying Facts

1. What does Gene conclude is the point of the sermon he hears upon his return to Devon?
2. Why does Gene hit Quackenbush?
3. Why is Finny relieved to find that he and Gene will still be roommates?
4. What directive does Finny give Gene about playing sports?
5. After hearing Finny's directive to him, what does Gene then feel his (Gene's) purpose must have been?

Interpreting Meanings

6. Gene indicates his regret at not having "seized and held and prized the multitudes of advantages" the summer has offered him. What advantages had the summer offered? What hadn't he prized?
7. During Finny's phone call to Gene, he again apologizes to Gene for having had doubts about him. Finny outwardly refuses to accept the truth about what Gene has done to him. Of what, then, might these "doubts" be an indication?
8. Gene states that he "lost part of myself" to Finny and realizes that his purpose had been "to become a part of Phineas." Why would he want or need to become a part of Finny?

Chapter 7

Identifying Facts

1. What does Brinker accuse Gene of having done in regard to choosing Finny as a roommate?

2. Describe how Gene manages to maintain control when he is "accused" in the Butt Room.

3. When Gene is recounting the series of "crimes" he had committed against Finny, what words could he not say?

4. How does Gene shift the attention from himself?

5. What does Leper do while the other boys aid in the "war effort"?

6. What is Gene's reaction to Brinker's announcement that he will enlist the following day? What decision does Gene make?

7. What effect does Finny's return have on Gene's plan?

Interpreting Meanings

Why do you think Gene is unable to say he had pushed Finny out of the tree? What had he promised himself he would do when Finny returned to Devon? What effect might his admission to the other boys of what he had done have on the relationship between him and Finny?

9. Gene admits that there was always "something deadly" in the things he wanted or loved, and that if it wasn't there, he put it there himself, as he had done with Finny. What is Gene saying? What is he acknowledging about himself?

10. Near the end of the chapter, Gene states that the war was chipping away at the one thing he had loved at Devon, "the measureless, careless peace of the Devon summer." In view of Gene's jealousy of Finny and his causing Finny to fall, had it been a careless, peaceful summer? Recall his earlier comment in Chapter 6, that he hadn't taken advantage of the situation the summer had offered him. How do you account for these differing conclusions?

Chapter 8

Identifying Facts

1. Why does Gene feel a certain "disapproval" of Finny?
2. What does Gene realize about Finny's reaction to the thought of his enlisting?
3. Why does Gene feel that had come back to Devon for him?
4. Summarize Finny's conclusion about the war.
5. Why does Finny say he understands the joke about the war?
6. What are both Gene and Finny startled by? What do the boys do about this discovery?
7. Describe the plan Finny announces he has for Gene.
8. After Gene finds his rhythm what does Finny tell him?
9. What does Mr. Ludsbury tell Finny about exercise What is Finny's response?

Interpreting Meanings

10. Gene observes that prior to Finny's return, he had felt that each new day erased that past failures, and opened all possibilities anew. Now in the winter of snow and crutches, he feels that "each morning reasserted the problems of the night before, that sleep suspended all but changed nothing." Which description is closest to your feelings about morning? Discuss a time in your life that illustrates your position.

11. Before Finny's return to Devon, Gene had looked forward to enlisting and making a clean start. When he realizes that Finny needs him, even though he has been untrustworthy, Gene decides to stay at Devon. Why do you think he makes this decision? What motivates him to give up his plan to make a clean start? Do you think Finny needs Gene? If so, why?

12. Finny tells Gene that "when you really love something, then it loves you back, in whatever way it has to love." Gene doesn't think this is true. What do you think?

Chapter 9

Identifying Facts

1. What does Leper's enlistment make Gene feel about the war?
2. What conclusion does Leper come to about "everything" after seeing the war film?
3. As the boys joke about Leper's "glories", what do they wonder about themselves and what do they hope about Leper?
4. Describe the type of "world" Finny eventually creates for himself and Gene.
5. Explain how Gene convinces Brinker to go along with the WINTER CARNIVAL.
6. Describe how Finny opens the games of the Winter Carnival.

7. What does Gene say Finny's "dance" was?
8. To what does Gene attribute his surpassing himself in the Decathlon?
9. What occurs that causes the "special and separate" peace of that afternoon to drain away.

Interpreting Meanings

10. Gene states that the film about the United States ski troops revealed what they all were seeking: "a recognizable and friendly face to the war." He goes on to say it "was the cleanest image of war" that he had ever seen. Why were the boys seeking a "friendly face to the war"? What images of war does one usually have?

11. Leper concludes that "Everything has to evolve or else it perishes." Gene asks himself how Leper's theory applies to him, to Phineas, and to Leper. Why do you think Gene is wondering about this? How do you think Leper's theory might apply to each of the three boys?

12. Leper signs the telegram he sends to Gene "Your best friend." Why do you think Leper does this? Has there been any indication that Gene is Leper's friend, particularly a best friend?

Chapter 10 Identifying Facts

1. What does the "older" narrator reveal about his army career?
2. What conclusion does Gene come to about Leper's "escape"?

3. Why does Gene react with fear to Leper's use of the word *psycho*?

4. When Leper accuses Gene of being a "savage underneath," what example does he use to make his point?

5. For what two reasons does Gene accept Leper's invitation to stay for lunch?

6. Explain why Leper thinks maybe it is the army that is psycho.

7. Describe how Gene reacts "gory details" of Leper's story.

8. Why does Gene say he doesn't care about what happened to Leper?

Interpreting Meanings

9. Before Gene reaches Leper's house, he is encouraged by his fantasy that Leper had escaped from spies, that "this wasn't going to be such a bad war," after all. What do you think he means? Why would he want to believe this?

10. 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"?

11. Gene tells Leper that he doesn't care what happened to him because it has nothing to do with him. Why do you think Gene reacts so violently to what Leper is relating to him? Do you think he really doesn't care? Does it really have nothing to do with him?

Chapter 11
Identifying Facts

1. Why does Gene want to see only Phineas when he returns to Devon?
2. What happens during the snowball fight?
3. Describe Brinker's reaction when he finds out what happened to Leper.
4. Why does Brinker believe Gene has put off in listing? How does Brinker say Finny should be treated? Why?
5. What does Brinker say should be done about Finny's accident?
6. What does Finny say convinced him the war was real?
7. When Brinker and his friends come for Gene and Finny, what does Gene think is happening?
8. What does Brinker say they have convened to do?
9. When Brinker sends two boys to bring Leper to the Assembly Room, what calculations does Gene make?
10. After Leper refuses to say anything more, what does Finny tell the group of boys? what does he tell Brinker in particular

11. What final sound does the group of boys hear?

Interpreting meanings

12. When Gene and Finny are discussing Caesar, Finny tells Gene he doesn't believe books and teachers but that he does believe Gene, and that he knows Gene better than anybody. Why does Finny need to believe Gene? Does he really know Gene?

13. Brinker tells the group that for both Finny and Gene's good, the matter of Finny's accident should be brought out into the open. He then tells Finny they aren't trying to make him feel bad. What do you think is Brinker's motivation for imagining himself, as Gene puts it, "Justice incarnate"? Why is he so determined to force this issue? Isn't it likely that Finny will be made to feel bad, considering the subject of discussion? Is Brinker, in your opinion, trying to help anyone? If so, who?

14. At the end of Leper's testimony, Finny calls out, "I just don't care. Never mind." What do you think he means? If he doesn't care about the investigation or getting to the "truth," why do you think he mentioned that Leper was at Devon?

Chapter 12

Identifying Facts

1. Why does Gene keep "out of the way" when Phil Latham wraps the blanket around Finny?

2. What realization does Gene have about Finny's lack of pride in accepting Gene's help?

3. What is Dr. Stanpole's diagnosis of Finny's condition?

4. When Finny discovers Gene at the window, what does he accuse Gene of?

5. When Gene takes Finny's suitcase to the infirmary, what does Finny admit he has been doing all winter? What has been the result?

6. What does Gene tell Finny about his being in the war?

7. What explanation does Gene give Finny about what he had done in the tree? What does Finny tell Gene?

8. What does Dr. Stanpole conclude was the cause of Finny's death?

9. Why does Gene say he didn't ever cry about Finny?

Interpreting Meanings

10. 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. What do you think Gene was referring to? What, in your opinion, was "finest" in Finny?

11. 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.

12. Gene the adult states that he had never cried about Finny, that at Finny's funeral he had had a feeling it had been his own. What do you think Gene means? Recall his earlier remark that his purpose had been to become part of Finny.

Chapter 13 **Identifying Facts**

1. Who occupies the Far Common? What do they bring with them?

2. Why does Gene conclude none of the Devon boys ever accused him of being responsible for what happened to Finny?

3. What does Brinker's father tell Gene and Brinker?

4. Restate the conclusion Gene comes to about the cause of wars.

5. What, according to Gene, had Phineas alone escaped? Who, then, had inflicted this on Finny?

6. What does Gene say had happened to his fury?

7. Explain why Gene says his war ended before he ever put on a uniform?

8. Describe what, according to Gene, people who "sight" the enemy do.

9. Who constructed lines against their enemies, and at what cost? What does Gene wonder about "this enemy?"

Interpreting Meanings

10. 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 the young ones will have to fight it. Comment on these two divergent opinions about war. Do you think they are typical of all the older and younger generations?

11. 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 the characters." 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 causes people to change?

12. Gene comments that he was ready for the war since he no longer had any hatred to contribute to it. What does he mean by this?

13. From Gene's experience with his own "enemy," what conclusions does he come to about enemies in general? What do you think Gene is suggesting about human nature in the last paragraph of the novel?