Characterizing Gene Essay, Research Paper

Gene is a prime example of the typical Devon School pupil. He s a good student, and most likely of a relatively wealthy background. Physically, Gene is sixteen years old. He s five feet, eight and one half inches tall and weighs one hundred forty pounds. And while walking, Gene is often breaking into West Point stride [page 11]. These, basically, are the only physical descriptions offered by the narrator. Through his retellings, however, we as readers do get some idea of Gene s thoughts and personality.

On page seven Gene explains I said a lot of things sarcastically that summer, that was my sarcastic summer, 1942. This is the first hint to the reader that there are unpleasant events to come. Initially Gene and his best friend Phineas are even . Finny is the great athlete, and Gene is the academic scholar. As each strives to become the best, an obvious, mutual envying develops between Gene and Finny. Naturally, they begin sabotaging each other s efforts to reach the top. By page forty five, Gene realizes that Finny had deliberately set out to wreck my studies that explained his insistence that I share all his diversions. The way I believed that you re-my-best-friend blabber! Sure, he wanted to share everything with me, especially his procession of D s in every subject. That way he, the great athlete, would be way ahead of me. Gene hated Phineas for breaking the school swimming record, yet the hatred was also mutual, as Finny hated Gene for getting an A in every course. As tensions mount, Gene, aware of the hidden purposes behind Finny s actions, becomes more and more fed up with his deceptive ways. Before their double jump at the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session , Gene jounces the limb upon which Finny is perched. With his leg shattered, Phineas would have no way to compete with Gene in the race to become the best. And yet after all this, Gene has regrets. After learning that Finny will never again be able to engage in sports, Gene recounts his feelings and resulting actions; I burst out crying into my hands; I cried for Phineas [page 56]. He even admits his shocking guilt to Phineas on page 62; I was thinking about it about you because I was thinking about you and the accident because I caused it.