Phineas And Gene A Comparitive Essay Essay, Research Paper

Phineas and Gene: A Comparative Study

Throughout the story, Phineas and Gene, the two main characters, showed a number of contrasting traits. Phineas was a confident, non competitive, naive, irresponsible, and unintelligent person throughout the story, whereas Gene, Phineas’ roommate, was insecure, competitive, mature, responsible, and intelligent throughout the story.

Phineas had a confident nature in everything he did. As Phineas and Gene first met, they noticed they were both the same height, but Phineas, being confident, said, “Where did you get that dizzy shirt?”(100). Only a person with extreme confidence could have insulted someone they just met because the other person could have easily struck back to cause a conflict, but Phineas’ confident nature helped him get through the situation as he laughed his way through the conversation. Another example which showed Phineas’ confidence occurred during a conversation he had with Gene. Even though Phineas did not know Gene, he felt perfectly comfortable talking about his sexual history. The author explained what Phineas was talking about as he stated, ” He had experienced it three times, and gave detailed, completely matter-of-fact and unboastful accounts of all three.”(101). If Phineas was not a confident person, he would not have shared his story with a complete stranger. Gene, on the other hand, was a very insecure person. The reader was able to see Gene’s insecurities when he first tried to have a conversation with Phineas. His roommate was being very explicit in revealing the stories of his past, but when it came for Gene’s turn to tell his stories he felt his “ideas would have been as dull as catechism after his;”(101). If Gene was confident, he would have been comfortable in partaking in the

conversation between him and his roommate. Another example displaying Gene’s insecure nature occurred after Phineas ridiculed him for his choice of shirt. After a small argument between the two, Gene gave in and admitted to himself that his shirt was dizzy by saying, ” It was right”(103) when replying to a rude comment Phineas made on his shirt. If Gene was more secure in his own choices, he could have stood up for himself, and not let anyone cut him up or insult his choice of shirt.

One definite difference between Phineas and Gene was their competitive natures. Phineas was a naturally talented athlete who excelled in every sport he played and did not have the need to compete with others. An example of Phineas just finding the fun in sports and not being competitive occurred when he was discussing football with Gene. Phines explained, “In a sport you’ve got to be loose..you have to invent something new all the time”(104). When Phineas said this, he explained how he enjoyed the fun out of games and not the aggressiveness about it. When Phineas was explaining football to Gene, he stated, “It’s just like those damn push-ups and knee-bends today,”(104). Phineas did not like the fact he had to follow rules and maps, he just wanted to enjoy the activity. Gene, however, was very competitive, especially toward Phineas. Gene did not like the fact that Phineas was a natural athlete, so when he would beat Phineas in school, he became very happy. Gene stated, “He might be the best natural athlete in the school, the most popular boy, but I was winning where it counted.”(105). Even though he and Phineas were not in competition, Gene always managed to try and be on top. Gene was aware that Phineas did not excel academically, but in his mind he believed Phineas “was trying to take me in; he hated the fact that I could beat him at this”(105), although Gene knew Phineas had no desire to compete with him.

Phineas and Genes’ personality also differed in the area of maturity. Phineas was a very naive boy whose every move was very innocent and harmless. An example of Phineas being naive occurred when Gene was describing the acts that Phineas performed innocently where no one could cut him down, but if another person committed the same acts they would instantly be ridiculed. Gene explained how for all Phineas’ acts, ” felling them was unthinkable.”(102). This proved that Phineas was naive because for a person to commit such acts, they must have an innocent attitude, which Phineas obviously had. Gene also explained how “Phineas was the essence of this careless peace.” This quote explained how Phineas must have an inner peace within himself that is emerged to others, therefore his actions are passed as innocent games. Phineas may be innocent and naive, but Gene proved to be somewhat mature for his age. One occasion where Gene proved to be mature occurred when he admitted to himself that he almost started to like Phineas as he stated, “I almost liked him, even”(105). For one to admit they like the person who they are trying their hardest to hate takes maturity as the person is forfeiting their opinions to try and make a clean slate and be a better person, which is exactly what Gene did in this case.

A contrast is also seen between Gene and Phineas in their responsibility. Phineas proved to be a very irresponsible person. One example displaying Phineas’ irresponsible nature occurred when he and Gene were studying for a French examination. Phineas wanted to jump off a tree into water, than to focus on studying and achieving a good mark. When Gene told Phineas he should stay, Phineas replied, ” You want to study?”(108). At the time, Phineas did not understand the importance of studying for his test. Gene persistently tried to keep Phineas’ from leaving the books as he stated sarcastically, ” You know, books, examinations?”(108), butPhineas still found it hard to believe that Gene wanted to study, thus showing that Phineas was an irresponsible student. Gene on the other hand was a very responsible student because he wanted to stay in and study for his French test rather than jump off a tree as his friends wanted him to. Gene stated to Phineas as he tried to explain his situation, ” If I need to study, then so do you.”(108). This proved that Gene was responsible because at that time, he sacrificed having fun for his grades. More proof demonstrating Gene’s sense of responsibility occurred when he stated to Phineas, “We watch lily-liver Lepelier not jump from the tree, and I ruin my grade”(108), because it showed how Gene was aware of the consequences of not studying.

One last difference between the two characters in the story is the fact that one of the boys was a follower, whereas the other was a leader. Gene proved to be a follower when Phineas jumped of the tree into a body of water and he followed him. Even though Gene did not want to jump of the tree, he did so anyway because he wanted to be like Phineas. Gene explained his feelings toward the tree when he stated, ” I hated the very existence of that tree”(106). Gene’s statement proved he was a follower because if it were not for Phineas, Gene would not have had any desire to jump. Gene later explained, ” When Phineas did it backwards one evening, so did I”(107). Gene’s statement proved he was a follower because he had to jump off the tree backwards to feel he was equal to Phineas. Gene proved he was a follower, yet Phineas proved to be a natural leader. Phineas was the first person to jump off the tree, and after he did, other kids joined him. Gene stated, ” none of us believed that we would jump from it. None but Phineas”(105). This proved that Phineas was a leader because it explained how Phineas jumped first off the tree, and no one else believed they could. Phineas proved he was a natural leader even at the beginning of the story when he and Gene first met. Phineas was the fist one to speak out of the two of them, as Gene commented, ” That first day, standing in that comfortless room, amid his clothes, he began to talk and I began to listen”(100). Gene explained how he listened to Phineas speak when they first met, which proved that Phineas was a leader because he began the conversation, and instead of participating, Gene just listened.

The two characters in the short story, ” Phineas,” proved to have very contrasting personality traits throughout the entire story. Phineas was confident, non competitive, naive, irresponsible, unintelligent, and a natural leader, whereas Gene was insecure, competitive, mature, responsible, intelligent, and a follower. Thus causing them to be foils.