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**English Honors I
Summer Assignment
Mrs. Conklin
2026-2027**

Classroom Code: gqwsnnam

Welcome! Students taking English I Honors will be required to complete a summer assignment. The summer assignment represents your first experience with several important skills and ideas which will be reinforced and referenced throughout the course, so completing it with your best effort is essential to success in English I Honors.

Additionally, **students are required to select and read a novel of their choice** that challenges them, and which interests or inspires them in some way. Students will participate in class conversations about their book choices at the beginning of the course, and should be prepared to discuss characters, conflicts, and themes of their novel.

Part I: Read the short story “Phineas” by John Knowles located in the “Burden of Proof” assignment provided by the English Department. Complete the assignment working through the “Observations and Evidence” section, which will ask you to respond to questions, highlight details from the text and provide evidence of your thoughts as you read.

Part II: Independent Reading

For this course, you are required to select and read a novel of your choice that is either at or above your reading level and interests or inspires you in some way.

You will participate in class conversations about your book choices at the beginning of the course, and should be prepared to discuss *characters*, *conflicts*, and *themes* of your novel.

You may take notes on these topics as you read in order to be prepared at the beginning of the course.

****Please note: We will be reading the novels *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton as part of our curriculum. You should not choose these novels for your summer reading.**

Check out the links on the Classroom for some suggested titles. Challenge yourselves but read something that sparks joy in you!

The Burden of Proof

Think of a written text as a form of communication, which contains details that help the reader understand something the writer wants them to know about. As we read *fiction*, texts that are made up stories, we gather details that can allow us to think about the setting, characters and conflicts in the story.

For example, you might read a story and find details that make you think, “*Wow, this main character is a very dangerous person.*” If you were asked to prove this idea you would need *proof*, kind of like when an investigator finds evidence that might be used to prove a person’s guilt or innocence in a trial. Of course, you would be using a text instead of a crime scene!

YOUR CASE: With this comparison in mind, you will act as an attorney assigned to defend one side of a case against the narrator in the short story “Phineas” by John Knowles. As you read the text, you will *investigate* and gather *evidence* to prove a *claim* once you begin Honors English I in the fall. The righthand column will provide you with guidance in the form of new vocabulary, guided questions and logical thoughts to encourage your own ideas about this case.

As you investigate: The righthand column will guide you through the “clues” the text provides. Details and questions will be indicated with the following images, but feel free to add your own observations and thought in the empty spaces.:



-an observation I’ve made about the text



-a detail you have to highlight



-a question you have to answer



- a vocabulary word that will help you understand the text

“Phineas” by John Knowles

¹It was the kind of place I had expected all right, an old, rooted, Massachusetts town. All of the homes along Main Street, from solid white mansions to neat saltboxes, were settled behind their fences and hedges as though invulnerable to change.

²I approached a particular house. The yard was large but the house had been built close to the street. A hedge as high as my shoulder separated it from the sidewalk. I kept calm until I reached the break in the hedge and saw the marker. It was the name, in small, clear letters. I stood beneath an ancient impregnable elm and got myself ready to knock at Finny’s door.

³Three months before, I had gone unsuspectingly to another door and first encountered him. The summer session of the Devon School convened that year in June, and when I opened the door of the room assigned to me, there was Finny, standing in the middle of the floor and pulling handfuls of clothes carelessly out of a suitcase.

⁴I had seen him at a distance around the school the previous winter and gotten the impression that he was bigger than I was. But when he straightened up, our eyes met dead level.

⁵For a second I thought he was going to say, “I bet my old man can lick your old man.” Then his mouth broke into a grin, and he said, “Where did you get that dizzy shirt?”

Observations and Evidence

I notice that the person telling the story (the narrator) uses the pronoun “I”, which is 1st person POV. This means the narrator is also a main character and it’s his story.

HIGHLIGHT *proof* of the setting of the story at this point.

I notice that the narrator seems nervous about going up to the house.

HIGHLIGHT in **TWO** places *proof* that the narrator is nervous going to Finny’s house.

? What does the highlighted detail in paragraph 3 *prove* about the setting of the story?

This detail proves that the story _____

because _____

HIGHLIGHT in **TWO** places *implicit* (implied but not directly stated) *proof* that helps you understand Finny’s character a little better. Use details from paragraphs 3, 7, 10 & 11.

Next to each detail you highlighted, write down what this reveals about Finny.

⁶“How many times have you slept with a girl?” he asked, fixing his interested eyes on mine.

⁷It was like one of the shifts which made him so good at sports: exactly what the opponent didn’t expect. I had been prepared to introduce myself, or to waive that and exclaim, “Well, I guess we’re roommates!” or to begin negotiating an immediate, hostile division of the available floor space. Instead he cut through everything and began criticizing my clothes—my clothes—while he stood there in hacked-off khaki pants and an undershirt. As a matter of fact, I was wearing a lime-green, short-sleeved sports shirt with the bottom squared and worn outside the pants, much admired in the South.

⁸“At home,” I said. “Where did you think?”

⁹“I don’t know, but I can see that home is way down yonder.”

¹⁰He had an unusual voice, as though he had some baritone instrument in his chest which would amaze you if he didn’t keep it under control. You could clearly hear the music in it when he spoke: it was only when he tried to sing, which he often did, that music fled and his voice wailed off key (“Like an Arabian lament,” the director of the Glee Club once commented).

¹¹Finny made me understand that we should be close friends at once. That first day, standing in our comfortless room amid his clothes, he began to talk and I began to listen. He wanted to establish a firm understanding on all subjects, so he covered the field, beginning with God and moving undeviatingly through to sex.

¹²“I’m not too bright about all this,” he began, “and I don’t understand much about theories, but the way it’s always seemed to me...” and then he outlined his beliefs.

¹³I didn’t like them much; they had an eccentric first-hand originality which cut straight across everything I had been told to believe. God, he felt, was Someone you had to discover for yourself. Nothing important had ever been written or said about Him. Sermons were usually hot air; formal prayers were drill.

Observations and Evidence

 I notice here that Finny is questioning religion, which seems surprising for the time they are living. Maybe this is meant to set Finny apart as a free thinker or a bit of a rebel compared to the narrator who seems upset that Finny is challenging his beliefs.

¹⁴Sex was vital, and that was why it was surrounded by even more fantasy than God. He had experienced it three times, and gave detailed, completely matter-of-fact and unboastful accounts of all three, omitting only the girls' names out of gallantry.

¹⁵I was supposed to take up my story at this point. But my ideas would have been as dull as a catechism after his; it seemed as though I had never had an original thought in my life. Besides, this wasn't the way we talked with strangers in the South.

¹⁶I hadn't asked for all these confidences, and I wasn't going to give mine in return. "I'll tell you about it someday," I answered in what I thought was a cool, rebuffing tone.

¹⁷"All right," exclaimed Finny with cheerful unconcern. "Will I be interested?"

¹⁸"You'll be as interested as I was in yours." I liked the screened irony of this reply, lie though it was.

¹⁹"Good!" He flung his empty suitcase into a corner, where it landed at an angle against the wall and stayed that way for the rest of the summer.

²⁰I wasn't going to be opened up like that suitcase, to have him yank out all my thoughts and feelings and scatter them around underfoot. So he went on talking and I kept on restively listening through the first weeks of summer.

²¹Finny declared himself especially pleased with this weather, but I found later that all weathers delighted Phineas.

²²For that was his real name, and it is important for two reasons: first, it was just the kind of special old New England name he would have, and second no one ever thought to kid him about it. At the Devon School kidding people, or "cutting them down," as it was called, gave place only to athletics as a field of concentration. No one could be allowed to grow above the prevailing level; anyone who threatened to must be instantly and collectively cut down.

Observations and Evidence

 I thought this was such a great way to see Finny as someone who doesn't care about doing things the proper way. He seems careless about certain things but very interested in others. Since the narrator wants to point this detail out, I'm also guessing that maybe the narrator is different than Finny in this way.

²³But *Phineas at Devon was like the elms* I came to find in his home town, so rooted and realized and proportional that the idea of **felling** them was unthinkable.

²⁴Not that he wasn't kidded: his amazing way of dressing, his enjoyment of singing and his inability to ever be on key, the score of fourteen he got on a Latin examination, his habit of emptying his pockets on the floor at night, the icebox he bought which wouldn't hold ice or water, his failure to realize that he was naked when he went calling around the dormitory after a shower, all of these habits were kidded endlessly. But not cut down; they were too exceptional for that. What we searched for was to get at him for a while and then realized that it was impossible because he never forced himself up.

²⁵All of us were at Devon for the summer session, the first in the history of the school. It was because of the war, to hurry us toward graduation before we became eighteen and draftable. We sixteen-year-olds were brought back for the summer and our pace was stepped up noticeably. **It's odd that such a peaceful summer should have resulted from war.**

²⁶We became a muted New England adaptation of **gilded** youth that summer, we boys of sixteen. The masters were more **benevolent** toward us than at any other time. I think we relieved them of some of their pressure; we reminded them of what peace was like, of lives not bound up with destruction.

²⁷**Phineas was the essence of this careless peace.** Not that he was unconcerned about the war. On the third morning of the session he decided to wear his pink shirt, to memorialize the bombing of the Ploesti oil fields. It was a finely woven broadcloth, carefully cut, and very pink. No one else in the school could have worn it without some risk of having it torn from his back. But Finny put it on with the air of a monarch assuming the regalia. As he was buttoning the collar he at last acknowledged my absorbed stare, letting his eye slide slowly from the mirror around to me.

Observations and Evidence



This is an interesting *simile* that helps me understand Finny a little more. Something “rooted” sounds like something that can't be taken down, so maybe he is a sturdy and confident character.



felling [verb]: the process of cutting down standing trees



Which war do you think the narrator is referring to and why does he say, “*It's odd that such a peaceful summer should have resulted from war.*”?

The war he is referring to is most likely _____

_____ because _____

_____. The narrator says this

because _____

_____.



gilded [adj]: covered with a thin layer of gold or a substance that looks like gold



benevolent [adj]: marked by kindness or generosity



Why might Phineas be described as “the essence of this careless peace.”?

Describing him this way might suggest that he _____

_____.

²⁸“I figured it was a good day to put it on,” he said stoutly, “on account of the oil fields.”

²⁹I just kept staring at him in mystification.

³⁰“Well, you’ve got to do something to celebrate,” he added rebukingly. “You can’t just let something like that go by.”

³¹“Talk about my dizzy shirt,” I broke out indignantly at last.

³²“Yeah, but yours really is just a dizzy shirt. This is an **emblem**.”

³³“Is that right!”

³⁴“Yeah, that is right.”

³⁵It was right. I watched him break it out during the next weeks for certain specific triumphs—his grade of C on a history quiz, the Battle of Midway, the retirement of Mrs. Carrian, our school dietitian, or “Lucrezia,” as we called her.

³⁶During the regular school terms, Phineas told me, he wore the shirt principally to celebrate the victories of the soccer, hockey, and lacrosse squads. He had elected to play, and therefore star, on these three teams the previous year. **He excelled at any sport because he had never yet realized that a player had to work for years to master completely one co-ordinated athletic movement, such as swinging a golf club. He thought an athlete was naturally good at everything at once.** And he was right, for himself.

³⁷But why had he picked these teams, which drew smaller crowds and commanded less **prestige** than some of the others? It looked a little **phony** to me, deliberately turning his back on fame so that people would admire him even more. That might be it. So I asked him.

³⁸“Football!” he exclaimed in a tone of thrilling scorn. “Who would ever want to play football!”

³⁹We were walking across the playing fields toward the gym after an hour of **compulsory calisthenics**.

Observations and Evidence

emblem [noun]: a picture of an object that is used to represent a particular person, group, or idea

 Maybe Finny is his own “emblem”, like he stands for an idea. I’m going to pay attention to the way the narrator describes him to see if I can figure out what it might be.

 Finny is a natural athlete and is the best at any sport he tries.

prestige [noun]: respect and admiration given to someone or something

phony [adj]: represented as real but actually false; intended to deceive

 Think about the definitions of the two words above. What is the narrator’s complaint about Finny?

The narrator thinks Finny only plays sports

that _____, in order for people to _____.

compulsory calisthenics [noun]: required exercises

⁴⁰“It’s just like those damn pushups and knee bends today. ‘All together now, one-two-three,’ that’s football. Do you know they draw a map of every player’s move, like it was geometry or something?”

⁴¹Privately I thought that gave football a praiseworthy orderliness. I was going to say so, but Finny had encountered one of his principles and I wanted to enlarge on it.

⁴²“In a sport you’ve got to be loose,” he went on. “You have to invent something new all the time. It’s no fun if you don’t.”

⁴³This, as it turned out, was his personal athletic code. To be free, to invent, to create without any imposed plan. There was the essence of happiness. Or at least, as we walked back to the gym that late afternoon, so he gave me to believe.

⁴⁴He applied the same individualization, or anarchy, to his studies. We were sitting in our room memorizing the Presidents of the United States one night.

⁴⁵“Washington-Adams-Jefferson-Madison-Monroe-Adams-Jackson,” said Finny. “I’ve got those guys cold. Then who was there?”

⁴⁶“VanBuren-Harrison-Tyler-Polk-Taylor-Fillmore.”

⁴⁷“What!” Finny cried. “Who ever heard of them!”

⁴⁸“Well, they were President of the United States once.”

⁴⁹He smiled as though at a wry, touching dream. “I guess somebody has to make up lists for schoolboys.”

⁵⁰I turned back to the Cleveland - Harrison - Cleveland - McKinley - Roosevelt - Taft period with a divided mind. With Phineas sitting next to me day after day like some guiltless doubting Thomas, I began to wonder not whether history was real, but whether it was important.

Observations and Evidence

? In your own words, described Finny;s “personal athletic code”.

Finny believes that a sport should _____

unlike football, which he feels is too _____

**AB
CD**

wry [adj]: showing that you find a bad or difficult situation slightly funny

⁵¹I didn't do well in that course; that is, I got a B. At the end of the summer Mr. Patch-Withers told me that I didn't receive an A because of a "veiled flippancy" in some of my work. But by that time nothing like grades mattered any more.

⁵²I knew Finny was interfering with my studies, and then I began to suspect why. I was smarter than he was. He couldn't stand that. I wasn't deceived by that amazed, happy grin of his when he learned that I'd scored the highest grade in Latin, or his candid questions about how I balanced trigonometry equations in three steps when he took twelve. He was trying to take me in; he hated the fact that I could beat him at this. He might be the best natural athlete in the school, the most popular boy, but I was winning where it counted. Of all that there was to know about Phineas, I grasped this hidden **enmity** best.

⁵³And then I realized, with relief, that we were equals. He wasn't so unlike me, so peacefully himself, unconscious of conflict and rivalry, after all. He was as vulnerable and treacherous as everybody else. I began to feel more comfortable with him; I almost even liked him.

⁵⁴Summer moved on in its measureless peace. Finny put up with the compulsory calisthenics in the afternoons, but it was in the hour or two of daylight after supper that he set out to enjoy himself. One evening when five of us were sitting around the Common Room, all bored except Phineas, the idea came to him. His face lit up in inspiration.

⁵⁵"I know, let's go jump in the river!"

⁵⁶The rest of us looked up warily.

⁵⁷"You know," he said, already full of enthusiasm, "out of that tree the seniors use to practice abandoning a troopship." He looked at us in the amused, **cajoling** way he had, as though we were a good but reluctant team and he was the coach. "Come on, don't just sit there waiting for the end of the world."

Observations and Evidence

 **HIGHLIGHT** evidence from paragraph 52 that supports claim that Finny is "interfering with my studies".

 **Explain** how the detail you highlighted in paragraph 52 supports the narrator's claim about Finny.

The detail I highlighted supports the narrator's claim because _____

 **enmity** [noun]: a feeling of hate

 **The narrator expresses "relief" when he believes that Finny and he are "equals". In paragraph 53, he explains that Finny isn't as confident and self assured as he once thought because he is jealous of the narrator. This means Finny can be as dangerous as the other boys, which makes the narrator like Finny more. This seems strange though, and I wonder if the narrator's beliefs are true.**

 **cajoling** [adj]: to describe a person who can persuade someone to do something they might not want to do

⁵⁸So we went out across the empty campus. There was a heightened, theatrical glow around us, as though we were crossing an empty stage with light flooding out from the wings. It gave what we were about to do the aura of a drama.

⁵⁹The tree grew alone and leaned out slightly over the river's edge. We looked up at its extraordinary height, and none of us believed that we would jump from it. None but Phineas. He stripped to his underpants and began scrambling up the wooden rungs nailed on the side of the tree. At last he stepped onto a branch which reached out a little farther over the water.

⁶⁰"Is this the one they jump from?" he called down.

⁶¹None of us knew.

⁶²"If I do it, will everybody do it?" We didn't say anything very clearly. "Well," he cried out, "here's my contribution to the war effort!" and he sprang out, fell through the tips of some lower branches, and smashed into the water.

⁶³"Great!" he cried, bobbing instantly to the surface again. "That's the most fun I've had this whole week. Who's next?"

⁶⁴I was. I hated the very existence of that tree. The idea of jumping from it revolted every instinct for self-preservation I had. But I would not lose in this to Phineas. I took off my clothes and began to climb. The branch he had jumped from was more slender than it looked from the ground, and much higher. It was impossible to walk out on it far enough to be well over the river. I would have to spring far out or risk falling into the shallows next to the bank.

⁶⁵"Come on," drawled Finny from below, "don't admire the view. When they torpedo the troopship you can't stand around admiring the waves. Jump!"

⁶⁶It took one hatred to overcome another.

Observations and Evidence

? In your own words and using ONE complete sentences, summarize what Finny asks the boys to do at the river.

? What does the highlighted portion on paragraph 64 reveal about the narrator?

This reveals that the narrator _____

⁶⁷ I hated him at that moment, always trying to show me up, to get revenge for my procession of A's and his of D's. Damn him. I jumped.

⁶⁸The tips of the branches snapped past me and then I crashed into the water. An instant later I was on the surface getting congratulations.

⁶⁹"I think it was better than Finny's," said Bobby Zane, who was bidding for an ally in the dispute he foresaw.

⁷⁰"Oh, yeah." Finny grimaced in pretend fury. "Let's see you pass the course before you start handing out grades. The tree's all yours."

⁷¹Bobby's mouth closed as though forever. He didn't argue or refuse. He became inanimate. But the other two, Chet Douglass and Leper Lepellier, were vocal enough, complaining about school regulations, the danger of stomach cramps, chronic infirmities they had never mentioned before.

⁷²"It's you, pal," Finny said to me at last, "just you and me." He and I started back across the campus preceding the others like two **seigneurs**.

⁷³But this made me feel no closer to Phineas. Neither did the document he drew up, the Charter of the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session, inscribing his name and mine as charter members. He listed Chet, Bobby, and Leper as "trainees," and posted the paper in the Common Room. A few added their names to the trainee list and came with us in the evenings. The thing was respected: Finny's direct and aspiring pleasure in this game carried the whole dormitory with him.

⁷⁴August arrived with a deepening of all the summertime splendors of New Hampshire. There was a latent freshness in the air, as though spring were returning in the middle of summer.

Observations and Evidence

 **HIGHLIGHT** evidence from paragraphs 64-67 that reveals the narrator's motivations for jumping.

 **In your own words explain how your evidence from paragraphs 64-67 reveal the narrator's motivations for jumping.**

The narrator jumps because he _____

 **seigneurs** [noun]: men of rank or authority

 **In paragraphs 72-73, Finny seems to think the jump bonds him to the narrator, but the narrator doesn't seem to feel the same.**

⁷⁵But examinations were at hand. I wasn't as ready for them as I should have been. The Suicide Society now met almost every evening, and all members were required to attend and jump. I never got **inured** to it. But when Phineas did it backwards one evening, so did I, with the sensation that I was throwing my life away. He promoted both of us on the spot to Senior Overseer Charter Members.

⁷⁶I would not let myself be shaken off, even though I began to see that it didn't really matter whether he showed me up at the tree or not. Because it was what you had in your heart that counted. **And I had detected that Finny's was a den of lonely, selfish ambition. He was no better than I was, no matter who won all the contests.**

⁷⁷A French examination was announced for one Friday late in August. Finny and I studied for it in the library Thursday afternoon; I went over vocabulary lists, and he wrote messages and passed them with great seriousness to me, as aides-mémoire. Of course I didn't get any work done.

⁷⁸After supper I went to our room to try again. Phineas came in.

⁷⁹"Arise," he began airily, "Senior Overseer Charter Member! Elwin 'Leper' Lepellier has announced his intention to make the leap this very night, to qualify, to save his face at last."

⁸⁰I didn't believe it. Leper Lepellier would go down paralyzed with panic on any sinking troopship before making such a jump. **Finny had put him up to it, to finish me for good on the exam.** I turned around with elaborate resignation. "If he jumps out of that tree I'm Mahatma Gandhi."

⁸¹"All right," Finny agreed. He had a way of turning clichés inside out like that. "Come on. We've got to be there. Maybe he will do it this time."

⁸²"Jee-sus!" I slammed the French book shut.

Observations and Evidence



***inured* [noun]: having become accustomed to something difficult**



Look at the highlighted portion of paragraph 68. The narrator again seems to see something in Finny that is negative. Do you see it this way? Why or why not?

I do/do not think that the narrator is correct about

Finny because _____

_____.



The narrator thinks Finny convinced Leper to jump, so the narrator would not do well on his French exam. I'm going to pay attention to the dialogue in the next few paragraphs in order to see if this is true.

⁸³“What’s the matter?”

⁸⁴What a performance! His face was completely questioning and candid. “Studying!” I snarled. “You know, books. Examinations.”

⁸⁵“Yeah...” He waited for me to go on, as though he didn’t see what I was getting at yet.

⁸⁶“Oh, of course, you wouldn’t know what I’m talking about. Not you.” I stood up and slammed the chair against the desk. “Okay, we go. We watch little lily-liver Lepellier not jump from the tree, and I ruin my grade.”

⁸⁷He looked at me with an interested expression. “You want to study?”

⁸⁸I sighed heavily. “Never mind, forget it. I know. I joined the club. I’m going.”

⁸⁹“Don’t go!” He shrugged. “What the hell, it’s only a game.”

⁹⁰I stopped halfway to the door. “What d’you mean?” I muttered. What he meant was clear enough, but I was groping for what lay behind his words. I might have asked, “Who are you, then?” instead. I was facing a total stranger.

⁹¹I didn’t know you needed to study,” he said simply. “I didn’t think you ever did. I thought it just came to you.”

⁹²It seemed that he had made some kind of parallel between my studies and his sports. He probably thought anything you were good at came without effort. He didn’t know yet that he was unique.

⁹³I couldn’t quite achieve a normal speaking voice. “If I need to study, then so do you.”

⁹⁴“Me?” He smiled faintly. “Listen, I could study forever and I’d never break C. But it’s different for you, you’re good. You really are. If I had a brain like that, I’d—I’d have my head cut open so people could look at it.”

Observations and Evidence

 Look back at the interaction between the narrator and Finny in paragraphs 83-91 as they talk about going to watch the jump versus studying for French. What does Finny’s reaction to the narrator’s frustration reveal about Finny?

Finny’s reaction to the narrator’s frustrations

reveal that Finny _____

_____.

 So, the narrator thinks that Finny believes studies come naturally to the narrator, just like sports come naturally to Finny. However, the narrator says that Finny is unique, which means only Finny has natural talent. This might be upsetting for the narrator.

⁹⁵He put his hands on the back of a chair and leaned toward me. “I know. We kid around a lot, but you have to be serious sometime, about something. If you’re really good at something, I mean if there’s nobody, or hardly anybody, who’s as good as you are, then you’ve got to be serious about that. Don’t mess around.” He frowned. “Why didn’t you say you had to study before?”

⁹⁶“Wait a minute,” I said.

⁹⁷“It’s okay. I’ll oversee old Leper. I know he’s not going to do it.” He was at the door.

⁹⁸“Wait a minute,” I said more sharply. “I’m coming.”

⁹⁹“No you aren’t, pal, you’re going to study.”

¹⁰⁰“Never mind my studying.”

¹⁰¹“You think you’ve done enough already?”

¹⁰²“Yes.” I let this drop curtly, to bar him from telling me what to do about my work. He let it go at that, and went out the door ahead of me, whistling off key.

¹⁰³We followed our gigantic shadows across the campus, and Phineas began talking in wild French, to give me a little extra practice. I said nothing, my mind exploring the new dimensions of isolation around me. Any feat I had ever had of the tree was nothing beside this. It wasn’t my neck but my understanding that was menaced. He had never been jealous of me. Now I knew that there never had been and never could have been any rivalry between us. I was not of the same quality as he.

¹⁰⁴I couldn’t stand this. We reached the others loitering around the base of the tree, and Phineas began exuberantly to throw off his clothes, delighted by the challenge, the competitive tension of all of us. “Let’s go, you and me,” he called. A new idea struck him. “We’ll go together, a double jump! Neat, eh?”

Observations and Evidence



I really like this moment between Finny and the narrator because we get to see how Finny can take things seriously, especially when it comes to someone he cares about.



The narrator changes his mind about going to see Leper jump. What do you think causes this change?

While at first the narrator was upset that Finny was trying to disrupt his studies, he changes his mind because _____

_____.



Look at the highlighted portion in paragraph 103. In your own words, explain the narrator’s revelation about Finny.

The narrator has finally realized that _____

_____.

¹⁰⁵None of this mattered now: I would have listlessly agreed to anything. He started up the wooden rungs and I began climbing behind, up to the limb high over the bank. Phineas ventured a little way along it, holding a thin, nearby branch for support. "Come out a little way," he said, "and then we'll jump side by side." The countryside was striking from here, a deep-green sweep of playing fields and bordering shrubbery, with the school stadium white and miniature-looking across the river. From behind us the last long rays of light cut across the campus.

¹⁰⁶Holding firmly to the trunk, I took a step toward him, and then my knees bent and I jounced the limb. Finny, his balance gone, swung his head around to look at me for an instant with extreme interest, and then he tumbled sideways, broke through the little branches below and hit the bank with a sickening, unnatural thud. It was the first clumsy physical action I had ever seen him make.

¹⁰⁷With unthinking sureness I moved out on the limb and jumped into the river, every trace of my fear of this forgotten.

¹⁰⁸None of us was allowed near the infirmary during the next days, but I heard all the rumors that came out of it. Eventually a fact emerged: one of his legs had been "shattered." I learned no more, although the subject was discussed endlessly. Everyone talked about Phineas to me. I suppose this was natural. I had been right beside him when it happened: I was his roommate.

¹⁰⁹I couldn't go on hearing about it much longer. If anyone had been suspicious of me, I might have developed some strength to defend myself. But no one suspected. Phineas must still be too sick, or too noble, to tell them.

¹¹⁰I spent as much time as I could alone in our room, trying to empty my mind of every thought, to forget where I was, even who I was.

Observations and Evidence

 The plot event that occurs in paragraph 106 can be consider the *climax* of the story or "the point of no return" for the main character. What are some ways this event alters the narrator's and Finny's path moving forward?

The narrator's path is changed because now _____

Finny's path has changed because _____

 I think it's really interesting to see how the narrator jumps so easily once Finny falls and is injured.

 **infirmary** [noun]: a room in a school, college, or university where students who are injured or feeling sick can go to a nurse for treatment

 After Finny falls, the narrator doesn't seem to be doing so well. He prefers to be alone. I wonder why he's feeling this way.

¹¹¹One evening when I was dressing for dinner an idea occurred to me, the first with any energy behind it since Finny fell from the tree. I decided to put on his clothes. We wore the same size, though he always criticized my clothes, he used to wear them frequently, quickly forgetting what belonged to him and what to me.

¹¹²I never forget, and that evening I put on his cordovan shoes and his pants, and I looked for and finally found his pink shirt neatly folded, in a drawer. Its high stiff collar against my neck, the rich material against my skin excited the sense of strangeness and distinction; I felt like some nobleman, some Spanish grandee.

¹¹³But when I looked in the mirror it was no remote aristocrat I had become. I was Phineas, Phineas to the life. I even had his humorous expression on my face, his sharp awareness. I had no idea why this gave me such intense relief, but it seemed, as I stood there in Finny's shirt, that I would never stumble over the twists and pitfalls of my own character again.

¹¹⁴I didn't go down to dinner. The sense of transformation stayed with me throughout the evening, and even when I undressed and went to bed. That night I slept easily, and it was only on waking up that this illusion was gone, and I was confronted with myself, and what I had done to Finny.

¹¹⁵Sooner or later it had to happen, and that morning it did. "Finny's better!" Dr. Stanpole called to me on the chapel steps. He steered me amiably to the lane leading toward the infirmary. "He could stand a visitor or two now, after these very nasty few days."

¹¹⁶"You—you don't think I'll upset him or anything?"

¹¹⁷"You? No, why? It'll do him good."

¹¹⁸"I suppose he's still pretty sick."

¹¹⁹"It was a messy break, but we'll have him walking again."

Observations and Evidence

 Highlight a piece of evidence that helps you understand why the narrator decides to put on Finny's clothes in paragraphs 111-113.

 Why do you think the narrator decides to put on Finny's clothes?

I think the narrator decides to wear Finny's

clothes because _____

_____.

¹²⁰“Walking again!”

¹²¹“Yes.” The Doctor didn’t look at me, and barely changed his tone of voice. “Sports are finished for him after an accident like that, of course.”

¹²²“But he must be able to,” I burst out, “if his leg’s still there, if you aren’t going to amputate it—you aren’t, are you?—then it must come back the way it was, why shouldn’t it? Of course it will.”

¹²³Dr. Stanpole hesitated, and I think he glanced at me for a moment. “Sports are finished. As a friend you ought to help him face that and accept it.”

¹²⁴I grabbed my head and the doctor, trying to be kind, put his hand on my shoulder. At his touch I lost all hope of controlling myself. I burst out crying into my hands; I cried for Phineas and for myself and for this doctor who believed in facing things. Most of all I cried because of kindness, which I had not expected.

¹²⁵“Now, that’s no good. You’ve got to be cheerful and hopeful. He needs that from you. He wanted especially to see you. You were the one person he asked for.”

¹²⁶That stopped my tears. Of course I was the first person he wanted to see. Phineas would say nothing behind my back; he could accuse me, face to face.

¹²⁷We were walking up the steps of the infirmary. Everything was very swift, and next I was in a corridor, being nudged by Dr. Stanpole toward a door. “He’s in there. I’ll be with you in a minute.”

¹²⁸I pushed back the door, which was slightly ajar, and stood transfixed on the threshold. Phineas lay among pillows and sheets, his left leg, enormous in its white bindings, suspended a little above the bed.

Observations and Evidence



This is such a big deal because sports were the one thing Finny was good at! Almost like sports were his identity.

¹²⁹A tube led from a glass bottle into his right arm. Some channel began to close inside me and I knew I was about to black out.

¹³⁰“Come on in,” he said. “You look worse than I do.” The fact that he could make a light remark pulled me back a little, and I went to a chair beside his bed. He seemed to have diminished physically in the few days which had passed, and to have lost his tan. His eyes studied me as though I were the patient. They no longer had their sharp good humor, but had become clouded and visionary. After a while I realized he had been given a drug. “What are you looking so sick about?” he went on.

¹³¹“Finny, I—“ there was no controlling what I said; the words were instinctive, like the reactions of someone cornered. “What happened at the tree? That damn tree, I’m going to cut down that tree. Who cares who can jump out of it? How did you fall, how could you fall off like that?”

¹³²“I just fell.” His eyes looked vaguely into my face. “Something jiggled and I fell over. I remember I turned around and looked at you; it was like I had all the time in the world. I thought I could reach out and get hold of you.”

¹³³I flinched violently away from him. “To drag me down too!”

¹³⁴He kept looking vaguely over my face. “To get hold of you, so I wouldn’t fall.”

¹³⁵“Yes, naturally.” I was fighting for air in this close room. “I tried, you remember? I reached out but you were gone, down through those little branches.”

¹³⁶“I remember looking at your face for a second. Funny expression you had. Very shocked, like you have right now.”

¹³⁷“Right now? Well of course, I am shocked. It’s terrible.”

¹³⁸“But I don’t see why you should look so personally shocked. You look like it happened to you or something.”

Observations and Evidence

Reread paragraphs 132-135 where Finny and the narrator discuss the accident at the tree.

 **HIGHLIGHT** a detail that helps you understand what the narrator thinks happened at the tree.

 **HIGHLIGHT** a detail that helps you understand what Finny thinks happened at the tree.

 **Based on the details you highlighted in paragraph 132-135, explain how the narrator’s understanding of what happened at the tree differs from Finny’s.**

The narrator seems to think that _____

_____.

while Finny believes _____

_____.

¹³⁹“It’s almost like it did! I was right there, right on the limb beside you!”

¹⁴⁰“Yes, I know. I remember it all.”

¹⁴¹There was a hard block of silence, and then I said quietly, as though my words might detonate the room, “Do you remember what made you fall?”

¹⁴²His eyes continued their roaming across my face. “I don’t know. I must have lost my balance. It must have been that. I did have this feeling that when you were standing there beside me, y---I don’t know. I must have been delirious. So I just have to forget it. I just fell, that’s all.”

¹⁴³He turned away to grope for something among the pillows. “I’m sorry about that feeling I had.”

¹⁴⁴I couldn’t say anything to this sincere, drugged apology for having suspected the truth. He was never going to accuse me. It was only a feeling he had, and at this moment he must have been formulating a new commandment in his personal Decalogue: Never accuse a friend of a crime if you only have a feeling he did it.”

¹⁴⁵It was his best victory. If I had been the one in the hospital bed I would have brought Devon down around his ears with my accusations; I would have hounded him out of the school. And I had thought we were competitors! It was so ludicrous I wanted to cry.

¹⁴⁶And If Phineas had been sitting here in this pool of guilt, how would he have felt, what would he have done?

¹⁴⁷He would have told the truth.

¹⁴⁸I got up so suddenly that the chair overturned. I stared at him in amazement, and he stared back, his mouth gradually breaking into a grin. “Well,” he said in his friendly, knowing voice, “what are you going to do, hypnotize me?”

Observations and Evidence

 **Finny almost admits something to the narrator here, but stops himself before saying it. What do you think Finny wanted to say to the narrator in this moment?**

Finny probably wanted to say that _____

but he doesn’t because _____

 **I think it’s interesting how the narrator reacts to what Finny almost said, especially since the narrator admits he would react differently if he were the one in the hospital bed. The narrator also has another realization here about the truth of his relationship with Finny.**

¹⁴⁹“Finny, I’ve got something to tell you.”

¹⁵⁰But I didn’t tell him. Dr. Stanpole came in before I was able to, and then a nurse came in, and I was sent away. I walked down the corridor of elms descending from the infirmary to the dormitories, and at every tree I seemed to leave something I had envied Finny—his popularity, his skill at sports, his background, his ease. It was none of these I had wanted from him. It was the honesty of his every move and his every thought.

¹⁵¹But the story wasn’t yet complete.

¹⁵²I had to wait for a while before ending it, because the day after I saw Finny, the doctor decided that he was not yet well enough for visitors, even old pals like me, after all. The summer session closed. Phineas was taken by ambulance to his home outside Boston, and I went south for a month’s vacation.

¹⁵³At the end of September I came back to Boston, en route to Devon for the fall term. I found the town where he lived, and I waited a little longer under that tree in front of Finny’s house, struggling, maybe for the last time, with the risky emotions I had had for years. Tomorrow, back at Devon, I would be someone else. A week later I was going to turn seventeen and begin the last acceleration which would pitch me into some corner of the war.

¹⁵⁴The sun was going down much earlier those days, and it began to get chilly. I rehearsed what I was going to say once more, and then turned in through the hedge and knocked at Finny’s door.

Observations and Evidence

? The narrator speaks to the reader very honestly here. What is he admitting to and what does it reveal about the narrator?

The narrator tells the reader that he envied

Finny because _____,

but what he really wanted from him was _____

_____.

I think this shows that the narrator _____

_____.

? In the end of the story, the narrator visits Finny’s home. After rehearsing what he is going to say, he knocks on his door. Do you think the narrator will or will not tell Finny the truth? What do you know about the narrator after reading this story that might help support your answer?

I think the narrator will/will not tell Finny the truth

because _____

_____.