

# The relationship between gene and finny



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BUSTER**

“ Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow, and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war.” (Herbert Clark Hoover). This speech, made by Mr. Hoover illustrates the misconception of war that is passed down by generation, filled by over-glorified lies, which enthrall the youth to join the war effort, where they are merely pawns in a global conflict. The misconception of war that the youths' have parallels their fear of the enemy, caused by the aura of warfare.

Although, this enemy often is a figment of their imagination, it makes the youth create boundaries, to such an extent that they start to believe that the boundaries are fortifying themselves, so that no enemy, externally, can harm them, while their internal enemy (themselves), creates internal conflicts, which long-go unresolved. By having these unresolved conflicts, it creates a strain on the relationship with other people (particularly a best friend), making it seem warlike.

John Knowles illustrates that the relationship between Gene Forester (hereafter referred to as Gene) and Phineas (no last name given and hereafter as Finny) is a microcosm of the outer world in his novel, A Separate Peace. Gene's resentment of Finny caused their relationship to become a miniature war because their constant battling results in casualties as does war. Gene's resentment for Finny causes him to jounce the limb of the tree; consequently, Finny, a young man with proclivity of athletics, falls from the tree and shattered his leg in many places and hence, Finny is the major casualty of their war.

The affection that Gene and Finny have for each other is symbolic to that of a soldier and his wounded Ally during combat. In this case, the soldier is Gene and the wounded ally is Finny. Gene's confusion of life makes him do many things, which alters his seemingly utopian relationship with Finny and falls into decadence. This is symbolic of war because at times, soldiers do not know who the enemy is; and if at all, there is an enemy. Gene's confusion, ultimately, leads him to aid in the cumulating events that end in the death of Finny. Consequently, the relationship between Gene and Finny is a microcosm of the outer world because Gene feels resentment for Finny; Gene and Finny had greatly affection for each other and Gene undergoes much confusion in life, all of which has parallels with war. Thus, the inability of people to resolve their conflicts results, not only in their suffering, but of others as well.

First of all, Gene's resentment of Finny caused their relationship to become a miniature war because their battling results in casualties as does war. Gene's resentment for Finny, a young man with a inclination for athletics and with impeccable balance, causes him to jounce the limb of the tree; consequently, Finny fell from the tree and shattered his leg in many places and this was the major casualty. Another, major casualty is Gene because with the death of his best friend, Finny, he felt lost. Their resentment of each is symbolic of war because in war you resent your enemy for being better then you or just different then you. At the Head Master's tea, Finny got in trouble for wearing a bright pink shirt and using the Devon Academy tie as a belt. This action at Devon normally results in severe consequences, but

Finny, as usual, with his ability to dissuade people goes without consequence for his action, saying that it was a tribute to the school.

Gene was enraged that Finny was able to get away with this act and said, “ he [Finny] had gotten away with everything. I [Gene] felt a sudden stab of disappointment.” (21). This quotation verifies that Gene resents Finny because Finny possessed the ability to talk his way out of anything. In addition, Gene wanted Finny to be punished for his disobedience; this proves his resentment because Gene knew that he could not get away with such an act, so he resents Finny because he can. After Gene witnessed Finny break the school swimming record and receive a B in trigonometry, he said to himself, “ you [Gene] did hate him [Finny] for breaking that school swimming record...He hated you for getting in A in every course but one last term. You would have had an A in that one except for him. Except for him.” (45).

This quotation further illustrates the resentment that Gene and Finny have for each other because Gene resents Finny for being better than him at sports and Finny resents Gene because Gene is better than him academically. Furthermore, hating each other for their achievements in life, proves that they are resentful because they should have been proud of each other's achievements, but instead they chose to be resentful of the fact that one was better than the other in certain aspects of life. Clearly, Gene's resentment of Finny causes their relationship to become a miniature representation of World War II because their battling resulted in casualties, Gene and Finny. Gene resents Finny for getting away with an act that he would surely have been punished for. In addition, they resented each other

for being better than the other in certain aspects of life, shows that there was resentment in their relationship.

Secondly, the affection that Gene and Finny have for each other is symbolic to that of a soldier and a wounded ally during combat. In this case, the soldier was Gene and the wounded ally is Finny. After Finny's fall from the tree, Gene takes care of him, as if he were his son. Before the fall, Finny decides to visit the beach and forces Gene to come with him, instead of going to school. The two boys (Finny and Gene) spend the day at the beach and as the day comes to its cessation, Finny says to Gene, "I hope you're having a pretty good time here. I know I kind of dragged you away at the point of a gun, but after all you can't come to the shore with just anybody and you can't come alone, and at this teen age period in life the proper person is your best pal...which is what you are." (40). This quotation validates their affection for each other because Finny states that he dragged Gene "away at the point of the gun" and by doing this he shows his great affection towards Gene because Finny realized that Gene had no desire to go, but Gene went anyway because he knew that Finny had a wistful desire to go to the beach and Finny thanked him for this.

By Finny stating that, "the proper person is your best pal," he proved that he loves Gene to the extent that he is his best pal. A while later, Finny dies because of a second leg break, where bone marrow escaped from his leg bone, then into his blood stream and then stopped his heart. Gene attends Finny's funeral and Gene narrated, "I did not cry then or ever about Finny. I did not cry even when I stood watching him being lowered into his family's

strait-laced burial ground outside of Boston. I could not escape a feeling that his was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case." (186).

This quotation proves Gene's affection for Finny he did not cry at Finny's funeral because there are no more tears to shed; Gene too has suffered to death. His alter ego, best friend and constant source of energy has been taken away and replaced by nothing. Furthermore, Gene states, " I could not escape a feeling that his was my own funeral, and you do not cry in that case," proves that he had great affection for Finny because with the death of his best pal, a part of him dies, due to their close and affectionate relationship. In conclusion, the affection that Gene and Finny have for each other is symbolic to that of a soldier and a wounded ally during combat because Finny thought greatly of Gene for going to the beach and Gene feeling that a part of him dies with the death of his best pal, Finny.

Finally, Gene's and Finny's confusion of life, make them do many things which negatively alter their seemingly utopian relationship with each other causing it to fall into decadence. This is symbolic of war because, at times, soldiers do not know who the enemy is, if there some force to be afraid and what the consequences of their actions will mean. Gene's confusion, ultimately, makes him to be the principle cause, for the accumulating events, resulting in the death Finny. After the first incident, where Finny falls from the tree there is an investigation, head by Brinker Hadley, a pompous young man who enjoys giving orders. During the interrogation, Finny, no longer able to bare the allegations placed against his friend, Gene, that claim he jounces the limb, which causes him to fall and break his leg, he then runs

out of the interrogation. The impairment that Finny sustains from the fall (a shattered leg) results, in the lose of his agility.

Consequently, he then falls down the stairs and breaks his leg for a second time. Gene, later that night, rushes to the Informatory to see how his friend is doing. The next day Finny asks Gene why he came the night before and Gene replied, ““ I thought I belonged here.”” (181). This quotation proves that Gene is confused because he does not know where he belongs and if Finny was indeed, still his friend. Furthermore, Gene is confused due to his uncertainties of life and he assumes that Finny needed him, without actually knowing that someone he is close too, may or may not need him. After the death of Finny, Gene reflects, “.... I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there... All of them [including Gene], all expect Phineas, constructed at infinite cost to themselves these Maginot Lines against this enemy they saw across the frontier, this enemy who never attacked that way-if he ever attacked at all; if he was indeed the enemy.” (196).

This quotation proves the Gene is confused because he did not know who the enemy is and his confusion causes the hostilities towards Finny that is one of the many cumulative events, in the death of Finny, which ontically was not the enemy, but his best pal. Furthermore, if Gene is not confused, then he would have knew who the enemy is and if this enemy really exist, then he would not have shaken the limb of tree, which is the first of many events, which leads to the death of Finny, his best pal. In conclusion, Gene’s confusion of life, made him do many things which alters his ideal relationship with Finny causing it to fall into decadence and this is symbolic of war because at times it is unclear as to whether or not there is an enemy and

what are the consequences of individuals actions and words. In addition, Gene did not know where he and his allegiance belongs and if, in fact, Finny is the enemy or even if there is an enemy.

Because the relationship between Gene and Finny is a microcosm of the outer world, Gene feels resentment for Finny; Gene and Finny have greatly affection for each other and they both undergo much confusion in life. Thus, the inability of people to resolve their internal wars and the misunderstandings that result, not only in their suffering, but of others as well. Gene's resentment of Finny causes their relationship to become a miniature war because their battling results in casualties, as does war. The affection that Gene and Finny had for each other is symbolic to that of a soldier and a wounded ally during combat.

Gene's confusion makes him do many things, which negatively alters his relationship with Finny and this is symbolic of war because at times you do not know who the enemy is and if their interpretation of this enemy is reasonable or justified. Thus, the characters, Gene and Finny, in John Knowles's novel, *A Separate Peace*, illustrates that their (Finny and Gene) relationship is a miniature representation of a world at war. The misconception of war that youths' have is parallel to the fear of the enemy, which attacks externally and the suffering that comes with the internal wars caused by their internal enemy (themselves). " Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow, and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war." (Herbert Clark Hoover).

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