

Freshman Summer Reading

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Overview:

As you read this book, notice the balancing act that Alexie creates, beginning with his title. Although he calls this a young adult novel, which would classify it as fiction, the title proclaims it an “Absolutely True Diary.” If you check out Alexie’s biography on his official website (at www.ShermanAlexie.com), you’ll see that the “novel” follows this part of Alexie’s life nearly as closely as a memoir. In all of his work, Alexie balances biting humor and unflinching realism; in this novel, he presents one of the central balancing acts of his life--existing in two conflicting cultures as a “Part-Time Indian.”

Written Assignment:

Alexie personifies this conflict of cultures in the on-and-off friendship between Junior and his best friend Rowdy. For *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, we want you to keep a **reading journal** looking closely at these two characters. Consider each character by looking at their traits, their choices, and their changing relationship. You should complete **a total of eight entries**. Take four passages from the novel that help you to understand Junior, and four that help you to understand Rowdy. For each one, copy down the sentences that you want to focus on, then explain why the passage intrigued you, moved you, or illuminated something about the character for you. If you want to respond to a cartoon, then describe it briefly and quote some of his commentary. For all of them, please include the page number.

Please note that we’re not asking you to summarize the passages; we’re asking you to react to them. Depending on your preferences, you are welcome to write your entries on notebook paper or in a bound journal, or you may create your entries on the computer. **For each passage you should have at least three sentences explaining what you think is important about it.** Feel free to write more if you think you have more to say, as these entries will prove valuable as the basis for the first discussions and writing assignments of the year. What matters most is the thoughtfulness with which you craft your entries. Please refer to the example on the back of this assignment. **Your journal entries are due on the first day of class. Please have them and the book with you then.**

Optional Outside Reading:

You are not *required* to do any other reading for English class besides this book, but we encourage you to improve your vocabulary, extend your general knowledge, and deepen your love of literature by reading widely on your own. You will have a chance to earn extra credit by sharing your outside reading experiences in book talks and on social networking sites such as Ning or Moodle.

You are also assigned to read an all-school choice, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. If you wish to report on that book in the first two weeks of school, you will be able to apply those pages to the outside reading requirement as well. We look forward to talking about books with you when you arrive in the fall!

Textual Evidence	Reactions
<p>1. Cartoon on page 23 This is a picture of Rowdy reading a comic book. Junior has drawn a pretty good likeness of Rowdy, but on top of that there is a cartoonish picture of Rowdy's angry face, with the commentary that Rowdy hates it when Junior draws him.</p>	<p>The fact that the picture is realistic and honest but covered with another face for Rowdy makes me think that there are two sides of Rowdy that Junior is able to see. One face of Rowdy is just a normal kid; the other face is a pretty angry kid. I wonder which is more real or if they both are just as true?</p>
<p>2. "Wow, I wanted to cry, No teacher had ever said anything so nice, so incredibly nice, to me." (41)</p>	<p>This shows me that teachers haven't exactly thought much about him, or about his future. It means a lot to Junior that somebody believes in him, so maybe he hasn't had much of that. Also, it shows he's emotional and not afraid to cry.</p>