

- Encouraged by poetry teacher Alex Kuo, Alexie excelled at writing and has published over a dozen books of both poetry and prose, and has received several national awards and honours, including the National Book Award and the Pen/Faulkner Award.
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The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian By Sherman Alexie



Directions: Each day you will discuss one of the following quotes in your journal. Re-write the entire quote or paraphrase the quote if it is especially long at the top of each journal entry and mark it off this list once you have completed your entry. The purpose of this activity is for you to draw parallels between the book and your life, so approach each prompt not as it relates to the characters of the book, but as it relates to your life. What does the quote mean to you?

Journal Writing Prompts

- "I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats." (6)
- "If you let people into your life a little bit, they can be pretty damn amazing." (129)
- "Life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community." (132)
- "If you're good at it, and you love it, and it helps you navigate the river of the world, then it can't be wrong." (95)
- "I think all of us are always five years old in the presence and absence of our parents." (157)
- "My school and my tribe are so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from. That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world." (31)
- "Do you understand how amazing it is to hear that from an adult? Do you know how amazing it is to hear that from anybody? It's one of the simplest sentences in the world, just four words, but they're the four hugest words in the world when they're put together. You can do it!" (189)
- "Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor." (13)

- "draw because words are too unpredictable. I draw because words are too limited. If you speak and write in English, or Spanish, or Chinese, or any other language, then only a certain percentage of human beings will get your meaning. But when you draw a picture everybody can understand it. If I draw a cartoon of a flower, then every man, woman, and child in the world can look at it and say, "That's a flower." (5)
- "I know only, like, five Indians in our whole tribe who have never drunk alcohol. And my grandmother was one of them. "Drinking would shut down my seeing and my hearing and my feeling," she used to say. "Why would I want to be in the world if I couldn't touch the world with all of my senses intact?" (158)
- "I suddenly understood that if every moment of a book should be taken seriously, then every moment of a life should be taken seriously as well." (95)
- "I've learned that the worst thing a parent can do is ignore their children." (153)
- "My grandmother's greatest gift was tolerance. Now, in the old days, Indians used to be forgiving of any kind of eccentricity. In fact, weird people were often celebrated. Epileptics were often shamans because people just assumed that God gave seizure-visions to the lucky ones. Gay people were seen as magical too. I mean, like in many cultures, men were viewed as warriors and women were viewed as caregivers. But gay people, being both male and female, were seen as both warriors and caregivers. Gay people could do anything. They were like Swiss Army knives! My grandmother had no use for all the gay bashing and homophobia in the world, especially among other Indians. "Jeez," she said, "Who cares if a man wants to marry another man? All I want to know is who's going to pick up all the dirty socks?" (155)
- "If you let people into your life a little bit, they can be pretty damn amazing." (129)
- "We all have to find our own ways to say good-bye." (161)
- "When it comes to death, we know that laughter and tears are pretty much the same thing. (166)"

- "Coach said. "The quality of a man's life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, regardless of his chosen field of endeavor." (148)

- "I wasn't just defending myself. I was defending Indians, black people, and buffalo." (65)

- "I always think it's funny when Indians celebrate Thanksgiving. I mean, sure, the Indians and Pilgrims were best friends during the first

- "We Indians really should be better liars, considering how often we've

- "We Indians really should be better liars, considering how often we've been lied to." (10)

- "I realized that I might be a lonely Indian boy, but I was not alone in the loneliness. There were millions of other Americans who had left their

- "I realized that I might be a lonely Indian boy, but I was not alone in the loneliness. There were millions of other Americans who had left their birthplaces in search of a dream." (217)

- "He made me realize that hard work—that the act of finishing, of completing, of accomplishing a task—is joyous." (98)

- "Hey, Arnold," he said. I looked up 'in love with a white girl' on Google and found an article about that white girl named Cynthia who disappeared in Mexico last summer. You remember how her face was all over the papers and everybody said it was such a sad thing?"

- "I kinda remember," I said.

- "Well this article said that over two hundred Mexican girls have disappeared in the last three years in that same part of the country. And nobody says much about that. And that's racist. The guy who wrote the article says people care more about beautiful white girls than they do about everybody else on the planet. White girls are privileged. They're damsels in distress."

- "So what does that mean?" I asked.

- "I think it means you're just a racist asshole like everybody else." (116)

- "What if someone picks on me?" I asked.

- "Then I'll pick on them."

"What if someone picks my nose?" I asked.

"Then I'll pick your nose too," Rowdy said. (18)

• "The people at home," I said. "A lot of them call me an apple."

"Do they think you're a fruit or something?" he asked.

"No, no," I said. "They call me an apple because they think I'm red on the outside and white on the inside."

"Ah, so they think you're a traitor."

"Yep." (131)

• "And I couldn't make fun of her for that dream. It was my dream, too. And Indian boys weren't supposed to dream like that. And white girls from small towns weren't supposed to dream big, either. We were supposed to be happy with our limitations. But there was no way Penelope and I were going to sit still. Nope, we both wanted to fly:" (112)

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Student Review Questions

Chapter One: "The Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club"

1. Identify the "Point of View" of this novel.
2. Who is the Protagonist of the novel? What do we know about him so far?
3. How old is the Protagonist?
4. Name at least three challenges that the Protagonist has had to face throughout his life so far.
5. What does the Protagonist do to cope with all of these challenges?
6. Explain why the Protagonist draws and what he hopes to achieve with his cartoons.

Chapter Two: "Why Chicken Means So Much to Me"

1. What is the Narrator's name?
2. Where does he live?
3. Describe the Narrator's life at home.
4. Who is Oscar? Describe what happened to him.
5. Identify the other characters that the Narrator has mentioned so far.
6. How does the Narrator describe his parents?

Chapter Three: "Revenge is my Middle Name"

1. Who is Rowdy?
2. Describe Rowdy's life. Why do you think that he is angry all of the time?
3. Why did Junior say, "Nah" when Rowdy wanted him to go to the powwow?
4. Why do you think the Andrus brothers beat up Junior?

5. How did Rowdy get revenge on the Andrus brothers?

**Chapter Four: "Because Geometry is not a Country Somewhere
Near France"**

1. Who is Mary Runs Away, and how does Junior describe her?
2. Who is Mr. P and how does Junior describe him?
3. Whose name does Junior find in his Geometry textbook, and how does this make him feel?
4. Do you think that the cartoon at the bottom of page 31 shows what really happened, or does it just show what Junior wishes he could have done with the textbook?

Chapter Five: "Hope Against Hope"

1. What does Mr. P mean when he says, "We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child," on page 35?
2. How does Mr. P now feel about how he used to treat his Indian students in the past?
3. What does Mr. P think about Junior's sister? How does Mr. P feel about the choices Mary has made since she left school?
4. What does Mr. P think about Junior?
5. What does Mr. P tell Junior to do? Why?
6. Mr. P thinks that he deserves to be smashed in the face for what he has done to Indian students. He says that all of the White people on the reserve deserve to be smashed in the face too. What does he mean by this?
7. Mr. P makes a massive generalization about the Natives who live on Junior's reservation. "All these kids have given up," he said. "All your friends and bullies. And their mothers and fathers have given up, too. And their grandparents gave up on their grandparents before them. . . We're all defeated." Do you think that Mr. P's statement is realistic and true for other First Nations reservations? Explain your answer.

8. What do you think Mr. P is trying to tell Junior in the following statement? "If you stay on this rez," Mr. P said, "they're going to kill you. I'm going to kill you. We're all going to kill you. You can't fight us forever."

Chapter Six: "Go Means Go"

1. Junior asks his parents, "Who has the most hope?" Junior's parents answer, "White people." Why do you think that Junior and his parents believe this? Do you think that "White People" have more hope than Native People? Explain.
2. Junior's mother tells him, "You'll be the first one to ever leave the rez this way. The Indians around here are going to be so angry with you." Why do you think the Indians on the reservation will be angry with Junior?

Chapter Seven: "How to Fight Monsters"

1. On the way to his new high school, Junior confesses to his dad that he is scared, but he would not consider going back to his old school. How would Junior be treated if he tried to return to his old school? Why would his friends treat him that way?
2. What is the school mascot at Reardon High School? Is the school mascot acceptable? Would it be acceptable if the mascot were based on the stereotype of another well-known ethnic group, such as Asians or African Americans? Explain.
3. Who is Junior's homeroom teacher?
4. What is Junior's full name?
5. Roger the Giant tells a very rude and racist joke to Junior, and is very upset when Junior retaliates by punching him. Explain why Roger's reaction to being hit is ridiculous.
6. Roger the Giant and Junior react in very different ways when they get into a conflict. Explain why you think that neither one of them understands how to have a fight with the other.