

*The Absolutely True Diary
of a Part-Time Indian*

by Sherman Alexie

Summer Reading Packet

Welcome to the Summer Reading Program

Congratulations! You are ready to graduate from middle school and begin your life as a student at Oak Park and River Forest High School. Although this is an exciting time, it can also be a time filled with some anxiety and apprehension. To help you make the transition to high school and start the year off with a bang, the English Department at OPRF has included all incoming freshmen in the high school summer reading program.

The novel for incoming freshmen is *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. It can be purchased in the Oak Park and River Forest High School book store for a reduced price. There is also a packet of questions and activities for you to complete before coming to school in the fall. Your current English teacher will distribute the packet.

The packet of activities is designed to give you the opportunity to react on both universal and personal levels. Your new freshman teacher will get to know your talents and personal philosophies from the early writing samples in your completed packet.

- Be sure to have the book read and annotated (see required activity #1) and the packet completed **before the first day of school in August**.
- Your freshman teacher will collect the completed packet during that first week.
- There will be lively discussions pertaining to the novel and activities in the packet.

The packet includes:

Pre-Reading Activities which will be completed with your current eighth grade teacher
Required Response Activities which you will complete on your own during the summer

Pre-Reading Activities
For 8th Grade Teachers and Students

Pre-Reading Activity #2

Vocabulary

DIRECTIONS:

- Read the sentence from the novel that contains the vocabulary word.
 - Read the definition.
 - Read the question in the box. Then answer that question in a complete sentence using the vocabulary word.
1. “I haven’t had a seizure in seven years, but the doctors tell me that I am susceptible to seizure activity” (3).

Susceptible=likely to be stricken with or by

Question: What kind of behavior would make you susceptible to catching the flu?

2. “And let me tell you, that old, old, old, decrepit geometry book hit my heart with the force of a nuclear bomb” (31).

Decrepit=broken-down, fallen into ruin

Question: How would you feel if you had to attend an old, decrepit school?

3. “I couldn’t sleep that night because I kept thinking about my impending doom” (70).

Impending=hanging over one’s head, hovering in a threatening way

Question: What strategies do you use to tackle your impending homework?

4. “We should have all been delirious that she’d moved out of the basement” (91).

Delirious=wildly excited

Question: What kind of music makes you delirious?

5. “Can an Indian have a legacy in a white town?” (182).

Legacy=an inheritance, something passed from one generation to the next

Question: What is the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King?

6. “VULNERABLE! She told me I was vulnerable” (203).

Vulnerable=open to attack or being hurt

Question: What kind of a situation could make a teenager feel vulnerable?

7. “I wept because I was the only one who was brave and crazy enough to leave the rez. I was the only one with enough arrogance” (217).

Arrogance=an attitude of superiority

Question: Explain how arrogance can be a good thing.

8. “I kept expecting one of them to snap and send me plummeting to my death” (225).

Plummeting=falling

Question: What might cause your grades in school to start plummeting?

Pre-Reading Activity #3

In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Arnold says, “And I kept trying to find the pieces of joy in my life. That’s the only way I managed to make it through all of that death and change” (176).

Make a list of the **people** who give you **joy**.

Make a list of the **songs** that give you **joy**.

Make a list of the **foods** that give you **joy**.

Make a list of the **books and movies** that give you **joy**.

Pre-Reading Activity #4

In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Arnold is bullied and called names such as *globe*, *retarded*, *orbit*, *chief*, *hydrohead*, and *apple*.

- **Read the poem about bullying.**
- **Answer the questions that follow.**

“Lunch Money”

By Peter Kahn

J.J. Smith comes up to me
open palm, gloveless in 12 degree
slush-snot air, demanding my lunch

money like a perturbed landlord.
For a moment, I look
around for Mike--big cousin

who always spared me from hard
bully's glare. Remember
Mike is back in New York.

I'm stuck like tongue to metal like,
on Ohio playground.
Run tongue across new

permanent teeth that J.J.
could knock down my throat
It hits me—things are gonna be different.

Already miss family
hugs, sledding at Edgemont High,
walking Caesar—leash held tight

each time a bike passed.
The time I let go, teeth marks decorated
passing girl's blue jeans with red dots.

J.J.'s *Captian Crunch* breath shakes me
back to now. Palm closed; blue lips puff,
“I'm gonna ask you one more time.”

I realize it's time to let go. Start
over. I go hungry that week.
Stay in with Mrs. Jones rest of winter.

1. What bullying incident does the speaker of the poem have to endure?
2. How does this incident make him feel?

Find a line from the poem to support your answer.

3. How does the speaker handle the bullying?
4. Is this a good solution to the problem? Explain.

What effect does name calling and bullying have on

people who are being bullied?
people who are the bullies?
people who are on the sidelines watching the bullying?

What are some of the things **you** can do to put a stop to bullying?

**Required Response Activities
For Incoming Freshman Students
2009-2010**

Required Activity #1: Annotating the Text

You will be expected to hand in an annotated text to your freshman English teacher on the first day of the Fall 2009 school year. This will be one of the first grades you will receive for the course.

Remember, annotating includes the following:

- Square vocabulary words
- Circle characters' names
- Underline key details
- Write notes in the margins (things you are confused about, things you understand, predictions, questions, reflections, etc.)
- Write a one-sentence summary at the end of each chapter
- Write "Q" in the margins for memorable quotes, striking lines, and greater human truths

Required Activity #2: Two Worlds

Open your book to page 57 and check out the drawing of Arnold (Junior) in his two worlds. Now, it is your turn to think about your own two worlds.

- In the space below, make an outline sketch of yourself and put a line down the middle.
- On one side, draw and describe yourself as a student in **middle school**.
- On the other side, draw and describe yourself as you hope you will be in **high school**.
- Be sure to include your feelings and emotions about both parts of your life. (Note: Arnold uses “hope” to describe his white side and “bone-crushing reality” to describe his Indian side.)

Required Activity #3: Reservation Life

Arnold presents a realistic view of reservation life, giving the reader an opportunity to see the ugliness and the beauty. Fill in the chart with specific examples of the beautiful and ugly sides of the life he witnesses.

RESERVATION LIFE

The beautiful side	The ugly side

Required Activity #4: Greater Human Truths

As you actively read (annotate) this book, be sure to put a “Q” by examples of greater human truths.

Example: “If you let people into your life a bit that can be pretty damn amazing” (129).

- Make a list of these greater human truths. You must have at least five.
- *Be sure to cite the quote correctly. Include quotation marks and page number. See above example.*

Greater Human Truths

Required Activity #5: Tribes

Reread page 217. Pay particular attention to the list Arnold makes of his “tribes.”

Make a list of eight of the “tribes” you belong to and explain what role you play in each “tribe.”

My Tribes

Tribe I belong to	Role I play in the tribe

Required Activity #6: Artifacts

- An artifact is an object or material thing.
- Make a list of **five artifacts** that represent Arnold's life **on the reservation** and **five artifacts** that represent Arnold's life **off the reservation**.
- Explain the **significance** of each artifact. Why is it important as a symbol of this part of his life?

Example: The **basketball** plays a significant role on and off the reservation. (You are free to use this as your first example.)

Artifacts from Reservation Life

Artifact	Significance/Symbol of his life

Artifacts from Life off the Reservation

Artifact	Significance/Symbol of his life

Required Activity #7: Alcohol on the Reservation

Fill this bottle with specific instances of alcohol abuse that directly affect Arnold (Junior).

Required Activity #8: Rowdy and Arnold

The relationship between Rowdy and Arnold changes and matures throughout the book.

Explain what their relationship is like

when Arnold is still going to school on the reservation.

Give two specific examples to support your answer.

1.

2.

Explain what their relationship is like

when Arnold goes to the white school off the reservation.

Give two specific examples to support your answer.

1.

2.

Explain what their relationship is like

After the final basketball game between the Wellpinit team and the Reardan team.

Give two specific examples to support your answer.

1.

2.

Required Activity #9: Mentors

Arnold is fortunate to have a number of people who mentor him along his journey to maturity.

- Name four of these mentors (positive influences and helpers).
- Explain the positive role each plays in Arnold's life.

Mentor	Role each mentor played

Required Activity #10: Cartooning

Arnold uses cartooning to help him understand his life better, to make fun of himself, and to honor people he loves.

- Draw a cartoon that represents your relationship with your closest friend or friends.
- You may use the one-frame method (page 63) or the multi-frame method (page 128).

