

Book Club Kits!



About the Author:

Winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the PEN/Malamud Award for Short Fiction, a PEN/Hemingway Citation for Best First Fiction, and the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, **Sherman Alexie** is a poet, short story writer, novelist, and performer.

He has published 25 books including his first picture book, *Thunder Boy Jr.*, and young adult novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*; *What I've Stolen*, *What I've Earned*, a book of poetry; and *Blasphemy: New and Selected Stories*.

He has also published the 20th Anniversary edition of his classic book of stories, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*.

Smoke Signals, the movie he wrote and co-produced, won the Audience Award and Filmmakers Trophy at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival.

A Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian, Alexie grew up in Wellpinit, Washington, on the Spokane Indian Reservation.

Alexie has been an urban Indian since 1994 and lives in Seattle with his family.

<http://fallsapart.com/press/>



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Inside the kit:

- (8) book copies
- (1) book club guide

About the Book:

From Goodreads:

Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

With a forward by Markus Zusak, interviews with Sherman Alexie and Ellen Forney, and four-color interior art throughout, this edition is perfect for fans and collectors alike.

Suggested Reads:

Alexie, Sherman
War Dances

Cisneros, Sandra
The House on Mango Street

Haddon, Mark
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Yang, Gene Luen
American Born Chinese

Walls, Jeannette
The Glass Castle

Discussion Questions:

1. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian shows a different side of American Indian life than do many other books. What did you learn about Indians from it?
2. Why does Alexie call his book the diary of a “part-time” Indian?
3. On his reservation, Alexie’s main character is known as “Junior.” But when he switches to a new high school, Reardan, people call him by his formal name, Arnold. “I felt like two different people inside of one body, “ he says. Do you think Junior/Arnold was just talking about his name? Or did he feel split in other ways, too?
4. Arnold misses his best friend, Rowdy, after he starts his new school. But Rowdy doesn’t seem to want to join him there. How do Arnold’s and Rowdy’s views of the reservation—and their own lives— differ? What do you think Alexie is trying to show you through those differences?
5. At his new school, Reardan, Arnold gets to know a book-lover named Gordy, who says that “life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community.” How does this idea relate to Arnold’s life?
6. Arnold tells Gordy that some Indians taunt him: “They call me an apple because they think I’m red on the outside and white on the inside.” What did they mean? Did their comment describe Arnold accurately?
7. What’s the purpose of the humor in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part –Time Indian*? Why does Alexie use it when Arnold is clearly angry about a lot of things?
8. Arnold’s math teacher at Wellpinit High School, Mr. P, tells him that the teachers at the school used to beat the Indians with a stick: “That’s how we were taught to teach you. We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child.: What did he mean?
9. Alexie uses a racial slur (the “n” word) and stronger language (the “f” word) in a joke on page 64. He repeated the words in a talk at an Illinois high school, and some students walked out. Alexie apologized to anyone he had offended but stood by his use of the words in his novel “because that was what was said. And to blunt the hatred of that insult blunts the incredible obstacles my character had to face, “ a newspaper reported. (“Author Defends Using Slur, but Apologizes to Student,” by Melissa Jenco, Daily Herald of Arlington Heights, IL, October 6, 2007.) Do you agree with Alexie that in order to make his point, he had to use words that would offend some people” How do these words relate to the rest of the novels?
10. What did you think of Ellen Forney’s pictures for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*? What is their purpose in the book:? Do they provide a mirror for the text, reflecting back only what you read on the page? Or do they expand it? How?
11. Arnold falls in love with Penelope, a beautiful white student. In Greek mythology, Penelope married Odysseus, the hero of Homer’s *The Odyssey*. If you’ve read about Penelope in that book or others, how does she resemble the student in this novel?