Brian Lopez

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* Book Talk

 

**Author Bio**

Sherman Alexie is the author of the book *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*. Alexie is from the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington. The book is somewhat about the life of Alexie and the struggles he suffered early on in his life. Currently he resides in Seattle, Washington. He has written other books as well with one of his most famous books being *The Lone Rider and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, which is a collection of many of his short stories including the short story “This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona” which was made into a film called *Smoke Signals*. Most of his writings are influenced by Indigenous Americans from several tribes.

<http://fallsapart.com/>

**Book Summary**

The book is about a young adult named Junior. Junior lives with his parents, sister, and grandmother on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Junior is picked on everyday due to a disease that he was born with and has caused him to suffer from in his life. His best friend is named Rowdy, who also has gone through many hardships himself. Together they both go to Wellpinit High School. Eventually Junior realizes that in order for him to have a better life than that of his parents he must go to a different school one outside of the reservation. He ends going to a school called Reardan High School. That results in new relationships at the new school and a broken friendship with Rowdy. Junior suffers through many more sad experiences through the loss of love ones but eventually rebuilds his friendship with Rowdy once again.

**Important Quotes**

1. “There was nothing I could do to save Oscar. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing… But I can’t blame my parents for our poverty because my mother and father are the twin suns around which I orbit and my world would EXPLODE without them,” (10-11).

Why this quote is important to the book and why it is important in general is because of Junior’s attitude, his interactions with his parents and his relationship with them. Junior is sensitive and different from the others on the reservation, others there believe it makes him weak but it shows the compassion he has. Then his interactions with his parents are different from things I have seen before. His parents are different from others on the reservation as well as other are ok with hitting their children if they talked the way Junior did but his parents are different than that. His parents love even though they have gone through hardships as well and show it and he knows he needs them as well.

1. “My mother and father weren’t home, so I turned to my grandmother for advice… ‘I love you grandma,’ I said. ‘But you’re crazy,’” (69-70).

 What makes this quote important is that it shows the relationship between Junior and his grandmother. This relationship has a huge effect on Junior especially later on in the book when she eventually dies. In this quote she gives him advice about what he should do in his new school and how to stop people from bullying him there too.

1. “The buzzer sounded. The game was over. We had killed the Redskins. Yep, we had humiliated them… Coach and my teammates thought I was crying tears of happiness. But I wasn’t. I was crying tears of shame,” (194-196).

 Why this is important is because of the way Junior feels towards the others from the reservation and the mix emotions that it is causing to have. Those players were his former teammates and Rowdy his once best friend was on the team. Junior felt that by winning it hurt the chances of any of the guys on the other team from having a chance to get away just like he did.

**Why Teach to Teens?**

 Why this book should be taught to teens is because of everything the character Junior stands for. The hardships that he goes through, the relationships he has with others around him are things teens would be able to connect with. Friendships ending, losing a loved one, and being a nerd (nerds are awesome) are things teens deal with daily. This book is a manual to show how to deal with all of those issues but can be used to show teens that the problems need to be dealt with and not pushed aside. There are causes for concern with this book as it has times in which alcoholism is talked about, sexual innuendos are used, and graphic scenes are discussed. Teens can be mature and should be given the opportunity to get a chance to read this book.

**Type of Book and Style of Author**

 The book falls into four different categories from the five chapters as it deals with many different things. The first is real-life experiences as it is based on the life of Alexie. Then death and loss as the character Junior deals with death throughout the book. Next is identity, discrimination, and struggles with decisions as Junior faces discrimination from his people and others, struggles with decisions as Junior has to deal with the decision to transfer schools. Finally, there is courage and survival as he needs courage to deal with the decisions that he made during his school year.

 The type of Alexie’s works fall into mainly identity, discrimination, and struggles. He mainly writes about the struggles of Native Americans and the challenges that he and others have face throughout. The short story “This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona” is about the discrimination that Native Americans face just among them. He wants change for his race and writes to help.

**Text Complexity**

 The age range recommended for this book is twelve to seventeen years old. The grade level for the book is grade seven and up. The Lexile measure for the book is 600L. All of these numbers seem right for the book as there are some scenes in it, which might be too much for younger readers. There are also some scenes that might seem childish to older readers that might have them looking for something else. The best range for me would have to around thirteen through fifteen. There are many scenes that are just to childish to some readers that would older teens could end up not liking.