

# Independent Reading

## Pre-Writing: Planning & Such

### The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Example

#### → Paragraph One: Synopsis & Summary

1. **Introductory Statement:** In Sherman Alexie's The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Junior narrates his journey as he transfers from the reservation school (Wellpinit) to the all-white school in Reardan.
2. **Plot Diagram at a Closer Look**
  - A. **Exposition:** Junior is born with a brain condition that leads to physical differences and internal complications. His life on the Rez is underprivileged. There is very little money in the school system. His best friend, Rowdy, is one of the only things that Junior has in his life.
  - B. **Rising Action:** Junior transfers to Reardan, where he is not accepted initially. However, over time, he gains respect, begins dating Penelope, and joins the basketball team. He begins to find his identity in a predominantly white society.
  - C. **Climax:** At the second basketball game at Reardan, Junior and his team beat Wellpinit and Rowdy. However, Junior realizes that his "win" was more of a loss, because he begins losing his tribal identity.
  - D. **Falling Action:** There are a plethora of losses among Junior's friends and families on the Rez. His grandmother is hit by a drunk driver. His dad's best friend is shot and killed over the last sip of wine. His sister is too drunk and passed out to notice her trailer is on fire and subsequently dies. He realizes the cause of all unhappiness on the rez is alcohol.
  - E. **Resolution:** Rowdy explains that Junior can still be a Spokane Indian and live within white society.
3. **Characterization**
  - A. **Dynamic Characters:** Junior, Rowdy, Roger, Penelope, Mary, Gordy, and Mr. P  
Junior is a dynamic character because he gains confidence and identity as the story progresses.
  - B. **Static Characters:** Grandmother Spirit, dad, Eugene, Agnes Adams, Mr. Dodge, Miss Warren, etc.  
Earl is a static character, because he does not really develop throughout the story. All we know is that he likes Roger and dislikes Junior because he is American Indian.
4. **Thesis Statement:** In Sherman Alexie's The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian, the theme of racism is analyzed through Junior's struggles in securing an identity in both white and Spokane society.

## → Paragraph Two: Opinion (With Textual Support)

1. **Message:** Realistic View on Alcoholism
2. **Textual Support:** “Tolstoy wrote, ‘Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.’ Well, I hate to argue with a Russian genius, but Tolstoy didn’t know Indians. And he didn’t know that all Indian families are unhappy for the same exact reason: the fricking booze” (Alexie 200).
3. **Explanation:** As mentioned in the summary, Junior loses his grandmother, sister, and his dad’s best friend to alcohol or alcohol-related events. In addition, the irregularity and instability in Junior’s family revolves around his father’s drinking problem. I appreciate the incorporation of this throughout, because it is something that could be versatile and applicable to the lives of many living on reservations or not.
4. **Message:** Accurate Description of Discrepancies in School Systems
5. **Textual Support:** “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” (Alexie 31).
6. **Explanation:** This shows that tribal schools often do not have the funds to compete with other school systems. This continues a cycle of poverty on the reservation. In a knowledge-based economy, education is pertinent. I like that he includes all factors that lead to the cycle of poverty. It makes this text more realistic.
7. **Message:** Collective Sense of Family & Traditional Identity
8. **Textual Support:** “On the rez, you know every kid’s father, mother, grandparents, dog, cat, and shoe size. I mean, yeah, Indians are screwed up, but we’re really close to each other. We KNOW each other. Everybody knows everybody” (Alexie 153).
9. **Explanation:** Despite the effects of alcoholism and inequity and poverty, Alexie does not fail to emphasize the collective support system on the Rez.

## → Paragraph Three: Recommendations

1. **Recommendations:** I would suggest this novel to someone who enjoys an easy read with a complex philosophical and psychological premise. This novel sheds insight into the lives of contemporary Native Americans struggling to live in two worlds at once- the Western world (which dictates educational and economic policy) and the traditional world (in this case- the Spokane world). It is the same overlap that allows individuals of all backgrounds to identify in some way with this text. From alcoholism and death, to high school dances and everlasting friendships, this text skillfully strikes a balance between the positive and negative aspects that plague and drive life. However, with all of that being said, to fully appreciate the depth of this text beyond the writing style, one must attain a level of maturity, insight, and experience.