

## *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie READING GUIDE FROM THE SJSU CAMPUS READING PROGRAM

Read for the pleasure of the story and the reading experience. Since you'll have many opportunities to talk to others at SJSU about the book, as you read, you may want to jot down some notes about characters, events and passages that are interesting to you. Bring your notes to the discussion group you attend. If you have questions, visit the website ([www.sjsu.edu/reading/](http://www.sjsu.edu/reading/)) or send an email to [annette.nellen@sjsu.edu](mailto:annette.nellen@sjsu.edu).

### CHARACTERS

The key characters and the page where they are first introduced:

Arnold Spirit or Junior (1)  
Rowdy – Junior's best friend (5)  
Oscar – Junior's dog (9)  
Junior's parents (9 & 10)  
Mary – Junior's older sister (26)  
Mr. P – teacher (28)  
Penelope (59)  
Roger (64)  
Grandma (68)  
Eugene – Father's best friend (70)  
Mr. Dodge – teacher (84)  
Gordy (85)  
Earl – Penelope's father (109)  
Basketball coach (136)

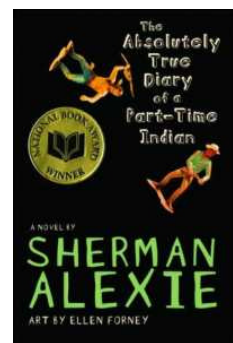


### AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT ...

- What did you like most about the story? What did you like least?
  - Who are your favorite characters? Why?
  - Who are your least favorite characters? Why?
  - Which scene was most memorable for you? Why?
  - What do you think of the main character from his description of himself in the first chapter?
  - How important is drawing cartoons to Junior? Why does he refer to them as lifeboats? (page 6)
  - Do you think the pictures enhance the story or distract from it?
  - What might Oscar have taught Junior? (page 9)
  - What message is the author trying to convey by noting that a bullet is 2¢ which anyone can afford, but few can afford veterinary bills?
  - Why do Junior and Rowdy get along (most of the time)? Is it because of their similarities or differences?
  - What does Mr. P mean by saying that Mary faded away and you could barely see her? (page 40)
  - Why does Junior describe Reardan as a mythical creature? (page 50)
  - What is your reaction to the picture on page 57? How does it enhance the story?
  - How long would it take you to walk 22 miles? Would you walk that far to get to school?
- Why did Junior hide his poverty at Reardan? What is the significance of Roger giving him \$40 so casually?
  - How do the students at Reardan change because of Junior's attendance there for a year?
  - How were Mr. P, the basketball coach and Eugene similar and different?
  - What does Junior learn after Reardan defeats Wellpinit at the basketball game?
  - How does alcohol affect Junior's life and perspective?
  - Why don't Junior and Rowdy keep score? (last line)

### A FEW FACTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Born in 1966
- Grew up on the Spokane Indian reservation in Wellpinit, WA
- Today lives in Seattle with his wife and two sons
- Childhood ties to that of Arnold Spirit (Junior) in the book including water on the brain, receiving a school textbook previously used by his mother, playing basketball and graduating from Reardan High
- Entered college intending to go on to medical school, but kept fainting in his anatomy class; turned on to writing after attending a poetry workshop at Washington State University
- Writings include:
  - *The Business of Fancydancing* – poetry (1991)
  - *I Would Steal Horses* – poetry (1992)
  - *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* – short stories (1993)
  - *Reservation Blues* – novel (1995)
  - *Smoke Signals* – movie (1998)
  - *Ten Little Indians* – short stories (2003)
  - *Flight* – novel (2007)
  - *War Dances* – poems and stories (2009)
- Recipient of numerous literary awards
- Author's website: [www.fallsapart.com](http://www.fallsapart.com)



For more information on the book, online discussion link and fall events visit [www.sjsu.edu/reading/](http://www.sjsu.edu/reading/).