

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	OHS English Department	School:	OHS
Book Title:	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian	Genre:	fiction
Author:	Sherman Alexie	Pages:	240
Publisher:	Little, Brown Young Readers	Copyright:	2007

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

In his first book for young adults, bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist who leaves his school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white high school. This heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written tale, coupled with poignant drawings that reflect the character's art, is based on the author's own experiences and chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he seems destined to live. (<http://www.fallsapart.com/truediary.htm>)

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

The following key indicators from the 10th grade map will be explored:

Reading 4. Influences on Texts

b. Describe archetypal images used in literature and film (e.g., the hero's journey as portrayed in Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha* and Bernardo Bertolucci's film *Little Buddha*) c. Explain the effects of the author's life upon his or her work (e.g., F. Scott Fitzgerald's experience with social class as reflected in his novel *The Great Gatsby*)

Reading 5. Author's Voice and Method

b. Distinguish between author and narrator/speaker/persona; articulate how the choice of narrator shapes the meaning of increasingly challenging texts
g. Describe what makes an author's style distinct from the styles of others

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 7–10—Exploring Indian identity, both self and tribal, Alexie's first young adult novel is a semiautobiographical chronicle of Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, a Spokane Indian from Wellpinit, WA. The bright 14-year-old was born with water on the brain, is regularly the target of bullies, and loves to draw. He says, "I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats." He expects disaster when he transfers from the reservation school to the rich, white school in Reardan, but soon finds himself making friends with both geeky and popular students and starting on the basketball team. Meeting his old classmates on the court, Junior

grapples with questions about what constitutes one's community, identity, and tribe. The daily struggles of reservation life and the tragic deaths of the protagonist's grandmother, dog, and older sister would be all but unbearable without the humor and resilience of spirit with which Junior faces the world. The many characters, on and off the rez, with whom he has dealings are portrayed with compassion and verve, particularly the adults in his extended family. Forney's simple pencil cartoons fit perfectly within the story and reflect the burgeoning artist within Junior. Reluctant readers can even skim the pictures and construct their own story based exclusively on Forney's illustrations. The teen's determination to both improve himself and overcome poverty, despite the handicaps of birth, circumstances, and race, delivers a positive message in a low-key manner. Alexie's tale of self-discovery is a first purchase for all libraries.—Chris Shoemaker, New York Public Library

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review #2

From Booklist

Arnold Spirit, a goofy-looking dork with a decent jumpshot, spends his time lamenting life on the "poor-ass" Spokane Indian reservation, drawing cartoons (which accompany, and often provide more insight than, the narrative), and, along with his aptly named pal Rowdy, laughing those laughs over anything and nothing that affix best friends so intricately together. When a teacher pleads with Arnold to want more, to escape the hopelessness of the rez, Arnold switches to a rich white school and immediately becomes as much an outcast in his own community as he is a curiosity in his new one. He weathers the typical teenage indignations and triumphs like a champ but soon faces far more trying ordeals as his home life begins to crumble and decay amidst the suffocating mire of alcoholism on the reservation. Alexie's humor and prose are easygoing and well suited to his young audience, and he doesn't pull many punches as he levels his eye at stereotypes both warranted and inapt. A few of the plotlines fade to gray by the end, but this ultimately affirms the incredible power of best friends to hurt and heal in equal measure. Younger teens looking for the strength to lift themselves out of rough situations would do well to start here. Chipman, Ian

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: **The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven** Author: **Sherman Alexie**

Title: **American Born Chinese** Author: **Gene Luen Yang**

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

niggers & fuck: both used once in a derogatory manner in a joke told
damn, shit, ass, bitch, fag: used in dialog primarily exposing prejudice in characters

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable):

Date Submitted to Department Chair:

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults