



***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie**

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2007

ISBN: 9780316013680

\*Age Range: 12 & up (Suggested by publisher)

Grade Range: 7+ (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

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.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ “The line between dramatic monologue, verse novel, and standup comedy gets unequivocally—and hilariously and triumphantly—bent in this novel.” —Horn Book, starred review

★ “A Native American equivalent of *Angela's Ashes*.” —Publishers Weekly, starred review

★ “Realistic and fantastical and funny and tragic—all at the same time.” —VOYA, starred review

★ “Nimble blends sharp with unapologetic emotion....fluid narration deftly mingles raw feelings with funny, sardonic insight.” —Kirkus, starred review

★ “Breathtakingly honest, funny, profane, sad....will stay with readers.” —KLIATT, starred review

★ “What emerges most strongly is Junior's uncompromising determination to press on while leaving nothing important behind.” —BCCB, starred review

“This is a gem of a book....may be [Sherman Alexie's] best work yet.” —New York Times

Updated 2.23.24

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## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- 2007 National Book Award winner
- A New York Times bestseller—over one million copies sold
- 2008 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award winner
- New York Times Notable Children’s Book of 2007
- American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults 2008
- School Library Journal Best Book of the Year
- 2009 Odyssey Award winner
- Nominated for state awards in AZ, CA, CO, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, VT, WY (20 states)

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Educator’s Guide](#)
- [Sherman Alexie’s 2008 BGHB Fiction Award Speech](#)

## RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

### [From Eanes Westlake ISD \(Austin, TX\):](#)

This book provides mirrors for students seeking stories about young Native Americans and provides windows so others can gain awareness and perspective of another culture.

The reader is drawn into the story and easily develops a heightened sense of awareness and empathy for his struggles. The admirable characteristics highlighted in the book along with its empathetic tenor align with lessons and values we try to instill in our students.

Race is a critical tenet of this book; however, racism and racist behavior is not promoted. In fact, racist behavior and people who try to appropriate someone else’s culture are explicitly called out in the book. Relationships built on friendship, shared interests and care regardless of race or other characteristics are celebrated throughout the book.

There are curse words, mentions of some sexual activity and drinking. However, the book is not profane; the references to these activities are minimal and mild, and inappropriate behavior is not promoted or glorified.

### [From Greeley-Evans School District in Greeley, CO:](#)

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is educationally suitable for the maturity of high school and middle school students despite its inclusion of content or language that may be considered offensive. The committee also recommends that, although the book contains limited passages that discuss complex topics, it does not find The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian to be pervasively vulgar. Rather, this is a novel that exposes its readers to an authentic, coming-of-age story that reflects the experiences of Indigenous teenagers who may come from difficult socioeconomic circumstances.

The Committee encourages school staff to work directly with students who desire to read The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian to discuss and process the complex topics or themes.

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One committee member remarked "this book appeals to boys when I can't get boys to read anything else"

The literary value of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* far outweighs the few mentions of sexual content.

## **AUTHOR STATEMENT**

### [Sherman Alexie on Book Banning and Censorship:](#)

"These folks would gladly have a nationwide effort to ban certain books. They would gladly control everything that anybody can read. So these small battles are fought so that they don't gain power to fight that larger war of controlling all of literature, which is what they want to do."

### [Sherman Alexie: NCAC and books everywhere NEED YOU!](#)

"Censorship, banning of books is really about crushing the childhood spirit of a kid. So the reason why we need to fight against these things is they're not trying to just ban books, they're trying to ban thinking. They're trying to ban critical thinking, they're trying to ban the questioning of authority, they're trying to ban the questioning of any idea that remotely approaches originality. They're punishing imagination."

### [Sherman Alexie Speaks at FREE SPEECH MATTERS](#)

"They're trying to ban what has happened to us, Native Americans. This book of mine is the fictional story of this kid whose family's pain, whose tribe's pain comes directly from the genocide of Native Americans. So when this book is challenged, it's people challenging the truth of what happened here, and that it continues to happen."

### [SHERMAN ALEXIE TALKS TO NCAC ABOUT BEING BANNED](#)

"I have no objection to a parent not wanting their kid to read my book. But when they try to control a school's curriculum, that's when the fight is on. So the second they try to make it a policy, no, I can't think of when it's acceptable because whatever the text, you can teach and learn from it."

## **\*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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