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Activity One

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian: The Comic

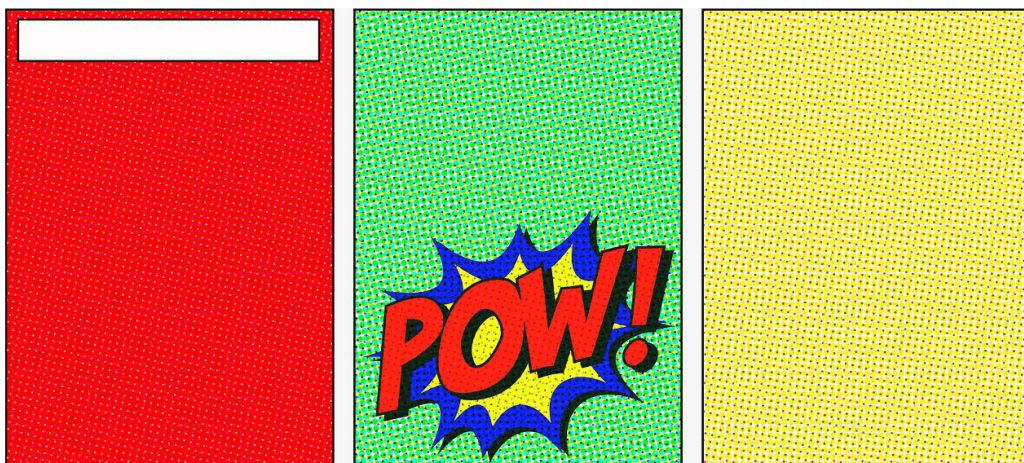
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian was written by Sherman Alexie in 2007. The book features art by Ellen Forney. Throughout the book, protagonist Arnold Spirit Jr.—mostly referred to as Junior—relates his interactions and feelings through comics. Junior feels comics are his way of talking to the world. They’re his way of making people pay attention. He shares them with his best friend Rowdy and uses his sense of humor and irony to comment on his experiences.

Go back through the book and select an exciting or an important moment that has significance within the context of the book. Use this moment as inspiration for a comic to showcase the event in a visual medium. Try to use an event that Junior himself didn’t make a comic of. The moment should have enough substance that it will make a compelling image.

Your comic can take advantage of multiple panels like a comic strip, or it can be one larger image depicting a scene of action or importance. Feel free to be creative with your comic.

Draw to the best of your ability and have fun with it. Use plenty of details from the book to fill out the scenery and look of the characters. You can take advantage of any dialog from the book to add to your comic.

Once you’ve finished your comic, write a short paragraph of no less than 100 words describing the scene. Discuss a little about why the scene is important to the story and why you chose to depict it. Use lots of detail and color in your work and have fun with it.



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Activity Two

Book Review



You've completed reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and now you have an opportunity to express your opinions on it. Didn't like the themes or characters? Did the ending leave you wanting more? Were you thoroughly entertained? This is your chance to make your voice heard.

In a review of no less than 700 words, discuss the book in enough detail to set up the plot, but be careful not to spoil the ending or any important twists for those reading your review.

Establish who are the major characters in the book and set up the problem that sets the plot in motion. Be sure to include details to establish the setting, geographical location, time of year, etc.

Make the review as entertaining as possible. You can be as critical or complimentary as you like. Give some examples of things you liked or didn't like about the book and explain why. If you didn't like anything about the book, describe in detail what made you feel that way. A review is meant to give people an idea of whether they should read the book using specific examples and without spoiling anything.

Discuss a favorite moment. If that moment is near the end, or at a critical moment that could be a spoiler, use language that is less definite. For example, instead of using character names, you could describe their role or things about them instead.

Give some details on relevant information like the price, length, and identify the appropriate reader level (toddler, young adult etc.).

Come up with your own grading scale—like the star ratings that are done for movies—and a guide to show what the rating means. Rate the book based on your created scale. Your final paragraph should sum up your thoughts and tell people whether they should read the book.

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Activity Three

Poetic License



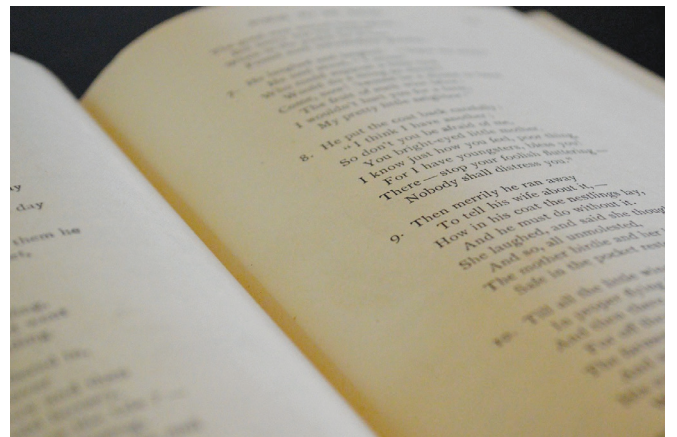
There is a lot of sadness and irony in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Both of these things are found in ample supply in the poetry crafted by writers for centuries.

Imagine you are tasked with translating the novel into a poem that captures the spirit or essence of the novel. Distill the themes and plot points that are presented into a concise composition using the conventions of poetry. You can use any type of poetry—from haiku to limerick—you want, as long as you stick to the rules of your chosen structure.

Be sure to present the themes fairly and seriously while capturing some of what makes Junior a likeable character. Try to encapsulate the major plot points from the book as best you can to present as full a picture of the novel as you can.

Be creative and have fun with it. Your poem should be at least 150 words. Be creative and have fun with it. Once you are finished with your poem, use a sheet of blank paper and write out your composition in a creative way. You can decorate your page any way you like (for example, you could give it the appearance of parchment, an ancient scroll or use some traditional Native American imagery).

After you've finished, take turns reading your compositions to the class and discuss some of the idiosyncrasies of each.



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Activity Four

Researching the Author



Researching is an important skill, especially if you're planning to move on to higher education. Having the ability to confirm facts through multiple individual sources is critical to factual and detailed reports. More information and plenty of sources allows for a more balanced assessment of events and situations, and helps improve critical thinking skills.

This activity will have you exercise your researching skills. Start by looking up author Sherman Alexie. What is his background? Where did he grow up? When did he write *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*? When was his first novel written? Does his writing have common themes? What connections can be drawn between his different compositions?

Consider the themes that are presented in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. How do these themes relate to Alexie's life? Why might Alexie's writing have more emotional weight than some authors who have written about similar themes or events? Why might Alexie be able to identify with a character like Arnold Spirit Jr.?

Was there anything controversial about *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* when it was first published? Why? Is there still controversy? Explain why or why not.

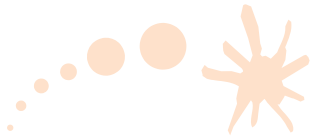
Alexie has said in the past he prefers the term "Indian" over "Native American". Why does Alexie feel this way? Could this term be offensive to some? Why?

Take everything you've discovered in your research and distill it into a research report. This report should explain your findings to each of the questions posed above and should explain how the author's life experience connects to *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

Be sure to keep track of where you obtain your information and include a numbered "Works Cited" section. Track your sources within the report using a superscript number¹ to denote which fact relates to which source.

Your finished product should be at least 700 words in length.

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Activity Five

Alternate Ending



At the end of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Rowdy shows up at Junior's door. He acts as if he still hates Junior, but says he's bored. It's summer and school is out and there's not much to do. Rowdy asks Junior if he wants to go play some basketball. The two take shots for a while before playing one-on-one, but they don't keep score. They play for hours until the streetlights come on and bats swoop at their heads.

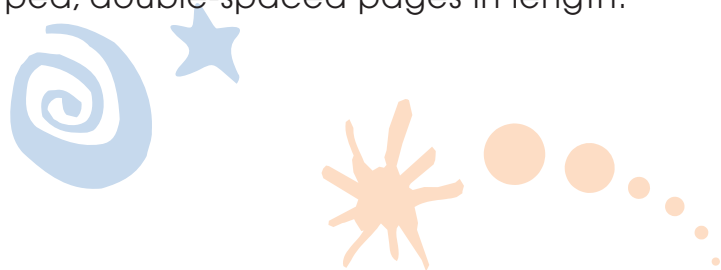
The ending is poignant and humorous. It also completes Rowdy and Junior's friendship arc that began with Rowdy giving Junior a black eye upon being told Junior was switching schools. While the ending wraps up on a hopeful note, perhaps it left you wanting more. If it did, now's your chance to turn it around.

In this activity, your task will be to rewrite the ending to your own expectations. You will come up with a new conclusion to the story that will wrap up the plot in a new way. If you weren't happy with how the book ended, now is your chance to change things up.

You can choose where you want to start your ending, either before Mary dies or when Rowdy comes to see Junior. It's up to you. Use your imagination to come up with an alternate ending that concludes Junior's story and all of the major characters.

Your alternate ending can include new settings, new characters, or anything else you want. Your ending should comment on what happened to Junior and his family, Rowdy, and how Junior feels about the future.

Your final product should be two typed, double-spaced pages in length.



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Activity Six

Comparing Compositions

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian features themes such as racism, alienation, death, friendship, identity, belonging, poverty, and class. The coming-of-age story centers around Arnold Spirit Jr. (referred to primarily as Junior) as he begins his first year of high school. However, an incident with his geometry teacher Mr. P reminds Junior of the uphill battle he faces as a Native American living in a small town on a reservation. It reminds him of the seemingly endless cycle of alcoholism and poverty that many Native Americans face. In order to break the cycle and save himself, Junior feels he has to do something. He decides to go to a different school in Reardan to give himself a better chance to succeed.

Consider these ideas. Use either the Internet or another resource to find a novel with similar themes and ideas as those presented in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Read that novel and take notes about how the themes are addressed throughout the plot. Take these notes and consider how they compare to how those same themes are presented in this novel.

Write a paragraph that summarizes the events of your chosen novel. In a few paragraphs, compare your chosen novel's themes and plot with those of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Are they similar? How? Are they different? In what ways? What impact do these themes have within their respective stories?

How do the authors' styles differ? How are they similar? How does writing style affect the tone of the story? Do the themes affect you differently based on writing style? Which author do you believe did a better job conveying these themes? Why?

Answer each of these questions in a few paragraphs. Your finished product should be no less than 700 words. Be sure to use plenty of detail and examples from the stories to back up your opinions.