

Essay 3-Textual Analysis

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is a coming of age novel that follows the growth of Arnold Spirit Jr. and his dilemma with defining his true identity despite the countless individual and societal limitations; the numerous internal and external conflicts of his life ultimately shape his identity and make him a more confident young man.

PROMPT: Write an essay through a close reading and analysis of Arnold Spirit addressing the following questions:

1. What is the cause(s) of Arnold's identity crisis? (external and internal conflicts)
2. How is the identity crisis resolved? (What did Arnold do to overcome these conflicts?)
3. What important life lesson does Arnold learn by overcoming his conflicts?

Essay Requirements:

- Evidence in the form of direct quotes, summary, and paraphrase from the text, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.
- Analysis of at least **one or two** of Arnold's cartoons from the text that supports your analysis of the text.
- Note: **Avoid summary of the book** – you may assume that your audience has read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*; however, do provide some type of brief context when providing evidence from the text.

Additional Requirements:

- Polished draft that is **at least 4-6 FULL pages in length, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA guidelines with Times New Roman 12 pt. font and 1" margins.**
- Proper MLA in-text citation required. See the "Guidelines for Quoting" handout provided.
- Works Cited page in MLA formation

Proposal & Outline: Due Wednesday, April 1

Directions: Answer all of the following questions as completely as possible – Please type out your responses, and please make sure to indicate what questions you are answering. Please provide an outline of your main points, including textual references and cartoons.

1. How will you address points 1-3 of the prompt? Write specifically the conflicts, resolutions, and the life lesson you will be addressing in your essay.
2. What *specific* sections/incidents/ideas from our text, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, will you focus your analysis on in order to provide evidence and support for your essay idea?
3. What *specific* cartoons from the text will you use to support your essay? What evidence do you find in the cartoons? How do these cartoons support your ideas in the three prompt questions?
4. What is your 'working thesis'?

Rough Draft Peer Review/Bring 2 copies: Monday, April 13

Final Draft Due: Monday, April 20

Do not forget to go to the LRC for help before writing final draft!

The Elements of Fiction

Characters: the individuals who perform the action of the story, most often human beings but sometimes animals or objects.

1. protagonist: central character
2. antagonist: protagonist's opponent (not necessarily a character)
3. flat character: undeveloped character
4. round character: well-developed character
5. foil: character with qualities unlike or opposite the main character's in order to illuminate the main character by comparison.

Plot: the arrangement of events in a story

1. chronological: dramatic
2. episodic: mini plots/story within story
3. conflict
4. rising action/falling action
5. climax: highest point of action where conflict resolved.
6. denouement: falling action/unwinding
7. antagonist: agent of conflict
8. Flashback: narrative representing events that happened before the time of the story
9. Foreshadow: to indicate beforehand, by constructing a parallel but lesser event, a larger event that will occur later

Theme: the meaning or point of the story

1. major theme(s)
2. minor theme(s)

Narrator: the voice that tells the story (not the author)

1. first person
 - a. internal
 - b. external
2. third person
 - a. omniscient
 - b. limited-omniscient
 - c. dramatic

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Point of View: the perspective through which the story is told

Setting: the location, historical time, and/or social circumstances in which the action occurs as well as other conditions such as weather, climate, and even emotional climate or mood which is created through setting.

Style: The manner in which the artist expresses her/himself. For text—the use of verbal rhythm, phrasing, imagery, figurative language, etc.

1. **Imagery:** descriptions that appeal to the senses, creating a sensory experience, a picture in the mind of the reader
2. **Symbolism:** a repeated word, phrase, or image often becomes a symbol and connotes something beyond its literal self.

Tone: The writer's attitude toward the subject and/or the audience.

Guidelines for Introducing Quotations: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Always avoid simply sticking a quotation down in the middle of your paper without introducing it. Instead, use one of these three techniques for introducing your quotations.

Note: For most papers, writing the last name of the author in the parenthetical reference is a requirement. However, because you are only referring to one text, you are not required to do this. Instead, always indicate the page number in the parenthesis after the quote. Note that the period comes after the parenthesis, and not before except when block quoting (see other side for example of a block quote).

Three ways to introduce quotes:

1. Use some sort of introductory phrase.

- a) Arnold Spirit, the narrator of the story, asks Mr. P, "Where is hope?"(43).
- b) Mr. P replies, "You're going to find more and more hope the farther and farther you walk away from this sad, sad, sad reservation" (43).

2. Introduce the quote with a sentence that prepares us for it, which ends in a colon.

- a) Early in the story, Arnold humorously describes life on the reservation: "If the government wants to hide somebody, there's probably no place more isolated than my reservation, which is located approximately one million miles north of Important, and two billion miles west of Happy" (30).
- b) Arnold expresses his dismay when he opens his geometry book and reads his mother's name written on the inside front cover: "And let me tell you, that old, old, decrepit geometry book hit my heart with the force of a nuclear bomb" (31).

3. Incorporate the quote into your own text (enclosing the words or phrases from your source in quotation marks, of course).

- a) In the first sentence of the story, Arnold Spirit already shocks his reader and claims that he "was born with water on the brain" (1).
- b) Arnold claims that "his head was so big that little Indian skulls orbited around it" (3).

Note: if your direct quotation is more than four typed lines, it must be inset TWO TAB STOPS from the left margin, and does not need quotation marks (the indentation signals that you are quoting). Here's a sample paragraph from an essay based on *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, but with a much longer direct quotation.

In the novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Arnold Spirit Jr., the narrator, has to face several conflicts externally and internally that can get in the way of achieving his goals. One of those conflicts that affect him externally and internally is that he is very poor. At one point in the novel, Arnold reveals this state of poverty:

It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and *there's nothing you can do about it.* (13)

This quote is important because it not only shows that Arnold and those on the reservation are poor externally, but also shows the state of mind that being poor has created for Arnold and the Indians on the reservation. This state of mind, deserving to be poor, is one of the biggest internal conflicts that Arnold has to face. He has to realize that he cannot maintain this defeatist belief in himself if he wants to succeed, and that there is something that he *can* do about it.

Note: the following is how your works cited page should be formatted.

Works Cited

Alexie, Sherman, and Ellen Forney. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown, 2007. Print.