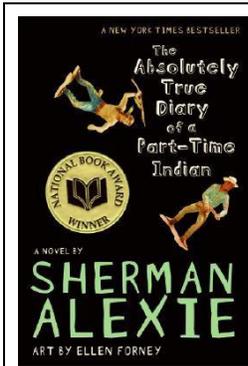


## ENGL 50: ALTERNATIVE PROMPT FOR ESSAY #4 -- THE VALUE OF LITERATURE



**Assignment:** Based on what you've read of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, write a four-page essay in response to this question: **"How might reading the book help to improve a person's life?"**

To illustrate how reading the book might help create positive change (however big or small it might be), please write your essay in response to the specific scenario below or invent your own scenario. To help focus your essay, you might imagine a thesis along these lines: "Reading *The Absolutely True Diary* might be beneficial for the reader because it could teach him more about X, encourage him to Y, and motivate him to Z."

**Here's a hypothetical scenario you can work with and respond to in your essay:**

*You have a friend—let's call him Randy. Randy's family is pretty poor, and his dad is an alcoholic. Randy is a junior in high school, but he doesn't put any effort into it. He's good at sports, but it's obvious he won't be drafted by the NBA (National Basketball Association) any time soon. Perhaps Randy vaguely realizes where his life is heading, but he doesn't seem to care. He just seems angry, unfriendly, and unmotivated. Nowadays, Randy mostly sits at home playing old video games, especially Guitar Hero. Actually, Randy is really good at classical and folk guitar, which his mom taught him when he was young; he secretly loves it, but he believes that it's nerdy. Yesterday at school, he got suspended because he beat up a "wimp" and was then discovered to be intoxicated when he was brought into the principal's office. It seems like Randy's been acting out and drinking more and more these days—poor Randy.*

- OK, we all know that *The Absolutely True Diary* is not a magic book. Reading it won't magically turn Randy's life completely around. No doubt Randy needs more than just a book. Even so, in your essay, focus on what benefits reading *ATD* could possibly bring to Randy. How might it motivate him to change—to re-engage and become a better person? You might, for example, consider what *ATD* could teach him about responsibility, self-confidence, taking risks, maturity, growing up, getting involved, and being kind and compassionate towards other people.
- In your opening paragraph, you'll be introducing this character, Randy,—or some alternative character if you decide to invent one—and you'll be making a claim about how reading *ATD* might possibly help that person.
- This also means that your essay will not focus on your personal experiences but on the novel. Be sure to include quotations, then, as evidence to support the points of your essay.
- To add more depth and interest to your essay, please include some biographical facts about Alexie and refer to the PBS interview of him, identifying some instances where Arnold Spirit's life mirrors the author's own experiences.