

**ENGL 50: Unit #4—Writing about Literature: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian***

**Assignment:** Based on what you've read of Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, write an organized, well-developed essay that offers a clear, direct, and focused response to this question: "**What does the novel teach us or suggest about dealing with challenges?**"

**More specifically, what does the novel suggest about the kinds of challenges Native Americans, such as Arnold Spirit, face?**—in other words, think about what circumstances make life especially hard for many Native Americans. What, for example, are Arnold's challenges? Consider, for instance, historical, cultural, economic, and personal factors that make his life especially difficult. **In addition**, tell what the novel implies is necessary for people such as Arnold to move ahead.

**In short**, write about what the book suggests holds one back and moves one forward. To do so, imagine a thesis along these lines: "Alexie implicitly argues that many Native Americans face serious challenges, such as A, B, & C, and that the best way to overcome them is D."

**Moreover**, to give added force to your thoughts about the book's message, include factual data from "Soul Wound" and *Broken Promises*, two documents introduced in class that provide good background information about historical hardships and current dilemmas faced by many Native Americans.

**Furthermore**, also refer to the PBS interview of Sherman Alexie and include some biographical facts about him to add interest to your essay, showing some instances where Arnold Spirit's life mirrors the author's own experiences.

**NOTE:** Your main focus is on the novel and what it suggests about challenges faced by many Native Americans. This means that we are thinking about an implied argument in the novel (for example, a thesis might use the phrase "Alexie implicitly argues that..."). This also means that the supporting evidence in your essay will not be drawn from your personal experiences but from the novel and other sources we are studying. Be sure to include quotations, then, as evidence to support the points of your essay.

**Main Objectives:** For this assignment, your key goals are to:

- Present a clear overall claim (thesis) in your introduction.
- Underline your thesis and topic sentences (suggested but not required).
- Provide interesting claims by looking at the topic from various angles.
- Support claims and develop paragraphs effectively by providing sufficient examples, explanation, and commentary to back up your main claims.
- Supply sufficient quotations and handle them smoothly and correctly.
- Provide clear organization (with focused, unified paragraphs) and smooth transitions.
- Use formal diction, avoiding slang and "you" and "I" where such words are not appropriate.
- Follow MLA format (such as including a Work Cited pg) and literary conventions (such as using literary present tense).

**Grading Criteria:** Papers will be evaluated upon the effectiveness and clarity with which they address the tasks of the assignment and meet its stated objectives. Specific grading criteria is online under the Essay #4 Grading Rubric, which is based on the more generic *Literature and Language Arts Division Grading Rubric for English 50* (posted on our class website under "Resources").

**Due Date:** See the Course Reading & Assignment Schedule

**Percentage of Course Grade:** 15%

**Format:** MLA style, typed, edited and proofread

**Page Length:**

- For Peer Review & Editing, bring two copies of a typed, 3-page draft.
  - The draft needs to reach *at least the top of page 3* to avoid a 3.5 point deduction.
- The final draft should be 4-5 pages.
  - It must *complete the 4<sup>th</sup> page* to fulfill the essay's minimum length requirement.