

September 18, 2008

Dear Ms. Stockton,

This summer I read a wonderful novel by Sherman Alexie. The book is *An Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. I had many thoughts going through my head when I heard the title of this book, such as, "Is it about an Indian tribe?" "Why would someone title their book that?" and various other thoughts. I found out about this book because it won the National Book Award for Best Book for Young Adults in 2007. I figured the novel would be good because of the award, so I started reading it without even knowing what the book was about.

I was shocked when I opened the book and read the first sentence; it read, "I was born with water on the brain." Junior, the main character, was born with too much cerebral spinal fluid in his brain. This affected his body in many ways. He has to live with being nearsighted and farsighted, and since his family is extremely poor they could only afford those hideous big, dorky, black glasses. He started having seizures when he was younger, re-damaging his already damaged brain, but they stopped when he was seven. Growing up, Junior was teased to no end, about his glasses, about his giant head, about **anything**. "My head was so big little Indian skulls orbited around it. Some of the kids called me Orbit. And the other kids just called me globe. The bullies would pick me up, spin me in circles, put their finger down on my skull, and say 'I want to go there.'"

As the story progressed I realized my life is amazing compared to his. A luxury dinner for Junior is Kentucky Fried Chicken. His parents are both drunks and don't really care about Junior. When he decided to go to a more "educated" school his best, and only friend, Rowdy, becomes his worst enemy. Rowdy is the toughest person on the rez and could beat up anyone. I felt terribly sorry for Junior because my friends would never do that to me. I thought about my life and realized how I take simple things for granted, like being able to eat dinner every night. These simple things I take for granted would make the world for Junior.

When he starts his new school, Junior is an outsider. He is the only Indian at his school, except the school mascot. When he is teased and beat up, he follows the "codes" from his rez. There are about twenty, but they are all saying, "If you are

insulted in anyway, beat up the person that insulted you.” Since Rowdy was no longer on his side, he knew how to do only one thing. Punch the person in the face. The first person to tease him at his new school was a jock named Roger. He was so shell-shocked when he was punched that Roger just walked away. The next day Roger waved. They ended up being friends and both made varsity basketball, which at this school, is a very big deal. I was so sure that when Junior started the new school he would be smothered by insults, but in the end he was popular and going out with the girl of his dreams, Penelope.

Junior really progressed through the book. At first he hated his life beyond no compare, but by the end he was happy with who he was. It is one of the best character changes I have ever read.

I would recommend this book to anyone, especially guys because I think they would be able to relate to the book better than girls could. Anyone that gets easily offended I probably would wait to recommend this book until they were older. It is a very easy read and captivating so it would be good for people that don't even like to read.

This book reminds me of *Freak the Mighty* in a few ways. One of them being that they both have crazy chapter titles, such as “Don't Trust Your Computer” and “The Black-Eye-of-the-Month Club.” Both books also revolve around character change. To me Junior is just like Freak, and Rowdy is just like Max. When we started reading *Freak the Mighty*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* popped into my head.

This book is *absolutely* fantastic and I highly recommend it for you and the class. I would even recommend it to be a whole classroom read, except that the book has crude humor and some language that wouldn't be appropriate. I hope you get a chance to read this novel in the near future!

Sincerely,

Taylor Milne