

Native American Literature
Discussion Questions

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
by Sherman Alexie

Submitted by Dorothea M. Susag for OPI library project

1. Who is Arnold (Junior) Spirit in relation to the individuals he knows and comes in contact with?
2. How does Arnold's drawing function in his life? Self expression, communication?
3. What are the causes or roots of Mary or Arnold (Junior) Spirit's resistance to leave the reservation? What ultimately motivates their leaving?
4. How does the leaving impact Arnold and Mary? Rowdy and others who stay?
5. How do Arnold's relationships with individuals at Reardan change? What causes the change?
6. Where is there pain and hope on the reservation and away from the reservation?
7. What are Arnold's tools of survival?
8. Explain the metaphor or irony in the title of each chapter. What idea in the chapter does each chapter title introduce?
9. Who is your favorite character and why?
10. How does Arnold survive? Where does his hope come from? How does he rise above what he is born into?
11. How might this book support or challenge popular stereotypes of American Indians and whites?
12. Consider how federal Indian policies, such as the Allotment Act, Boarding Schools, Reorganization, Relocation, and Termination Policies have contributed to the situations in *The Absolutely True Diary*.
13. What Disturbs, Interests, Confuses, or Enlightens you the most in this autobiographical novel?
14. How can young people in both rural and urban communities identify with any of the characters or situations in this novel?