

## SHERMAN ALEXIE'S "THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN" A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Sherman Alexie's saga, "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," emerges the pitiable narrative of Arnold Spirit Jr., or Junior, a Native American teenager going through the difficulties of life on the Spokane reservation. The first-person point of view gives an intense view in to Junior's scuffle, goal, and his double life existence in two dissimilar worlds. The story, plunged in self-effacing humor paints a clear picture of the challenges faced by Junior's community—poverty, alcoholism, and limited opportunities. As Junior goes beyond the shackles of his reservation to continue education at Reardan, the novel burrow's into themes of identity, community spirit, and the heartfelt influence of the cultural heritage on a single person's journey. Through satirical elucidations and a special mixture of tragedy and laughter, Alexie inspects the plasticity of the human spirit among change. The juxtaposition of Junior's experiences underscores the intricate interplay between community, personal growth, and the pursuit of a better life. This research report abstract encapsulates the multidimensional narrative of "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," offering a glimpse into the rich tapestry of themes woven into Alexie's masterful storytelling.

**Keywords:** Junior Reservation, Community, Identity, Poverty, Humor, Ambition, Struggles, Transition, Cultural Identity, Social Dynamics, Basketball, Cartooning, Two Worlds, Challenges, Self-Discovery, Alcoholism, Social Privileges, Family.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Historical Background

In ancient Greece, philosophers like Aristotle and Plato used textual analysis for elucidating and evaluating literary works. For example, Aristotle's "Poetics" is a foundational work that analyzes the structure and elements of drama, giving the inside view that would lead to storytelling, character growth and the motivation of literature

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, hermeneutics (the theory and methodology of interpretation) became an important part of textual analysis. Scholars like St. Augustine and famous personalities that came later on like Martin Luther contributed to the enlargement of interpretive methods.

The formalist approach came in to existence in the 18th and 19th centuries, focusing attention on the investigation of text's form, structure, and congenial qualities. Russian formalists, such as Viktor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson, focused on

defamiliarization—the idea that art exists to make the familiar seem unfamiliar, prodding deeper analysis. Structuralism, became famous due to scholars like Ferdinand de Saussure, scrutinize the cardinal structures of language and literature. Claude Lévi-Strauss petitioned structuralism to anthropology, Roland Barthes to semiotics, and Northrop Frye to literary criticism.

Post structuralism, influenced by thinkers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, interrogated the solidity of language and meaning. Derrida's deconstruction worked to reveal hidden disagreements and convolutions in texts, demanding that interpretations should not be conventional.

Textual analysis went beyond the boundaries of literature to include cultural assets and instrumentality. Cultural studies, that had been influenced to a great deal by Stuart Hall and others, made a even much greater effort to find out how texts came up with the construction of meaning and

identity that was present in the society social. Analyzation of digital texts and social media discourse due to technological advancement started being done by textual analysis. Sentiment analysis, natural language processing, and data mining were the tools that the researchers had started using. The reason behind this was that these tools helped to understand text in a much better perspective.

How does the process of textual analysis works is a very important question. We have all heard of textual analysis but since it belongs to linguistics most of us do not have a practical idea as to how it is done so it is important to familiarize ourselves with the technique first. For textual analysis we first select a text for analysis, which could be literary work, a speech, a film, or a social media conversation. After the text has been selected we engage in a close reading of the text, examining its language, structure, and themes.

For this term we have to see the patterns, symbols, motifs, or linguistic elements that are repeating and are presenting to the overall meaning. Another principal that we have to keep in mind is that we also need to take in to consideration the historical, cultural, and social context in which the text was created.

### **Introduction and Frame work**

Now after this we need to chose on the approach and depending on the chosen approach (formalism, structuralism, post structuralism, etc.),we will apply a appropriate theoretical frameworks to understand the text. After choosing a theoretical framework we have to put together elucidation based on the analysis, exploring the text's validity and its applications in a broader contexts. This is a process that is not rigid but a flexible process and can be selected based on the goals we have specified and we also need to focus on the analysis as well, whether it's literary, linguistic, cultural, or media-oriented. To clarify the above points let us support it with an example: "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost after the poem is read carefully, paying attention to words, images, and literary devices used by the author. We note the repetition of certain words or phrases and consider their significance. We also observe the central theme of choices and the metaphor of roads separating in a yellow wood. Henceforth we identify the use of first-person

viewpoint and the speaker's mirroring on a past decision.

Consider the historical and biographical context of Robert Frost's life, knowing that he frequently wrote about rural New England and the complexities of human decisions. When we apply a formalist approach by analyzing the poem's structure, rhyme scheme, and use of language. It is observed how Frost's choices in form add to the poem's meaning. When a psychological interpretation is applied to explore the speaker's mind and spiritual state when faced with choices in interpretation of the poem, reflection on life choices and the unavoidability of facing decisions with uncertain outcomes. Further we can also discuss how the use of the metaphor of roads symbolizes the different paths people take in life, and how Frost captures the difficulties of decision-making.

For textual analysis I will be applying the Text World Theory which is a framework used to understand how readers or listeners create mental representations of fictional worlds while engaging with a text or narrative. It was developed by linguist and cognitive scientist Alan J. Firth. The theory suggests that readers construct mental "text worlds" based on the information provided in the text, and these worlds serve as the backdrop for their understanding of the story. Think that you're reading a story about a character named Sarah who is walking through a dense forest. In Text World Theory this is the real world where you, as the reader, exist. It's where you're physically sitting and reading the story. This is the fictional world created by the text. In this case, it's the forest where Sarah is walking. As you read, you start forming mental images of the forest based on the informations given in the text. As you read about Sarah's voyage through the forest, you create mental representations of the trees, the sounds, the atmosphere, and Sarah herself. These mental images make up your understanding of the story world. Text World Theory also considers "shifts" between different parts of the story world or between the story world and the actual world. For instance, if the narrative suddenly shifts to a flashback where Sarah remembers something from her past, your mental focus shifts to a different part of the story world or even to a different time. In simple words or simplified version Text World Theory helps explain how readers mentally build and navigate the worlds presented in a text. It emphasizes the dynamic nature of these mental representations as readers

continuously update and adjust their understanding based on the unfolding narrative.

### **Textual Analysis**

Sherman Alexie's "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian," is a novel that is masquerading events that are either real or seems to close to reality these events open as a moving and saddening chronicle interwoven with themes of community, self awareness, and suppleness. The novels essence increases as it is being narrated by the protagonist Arnold Spirit Jr., or Junior, which makes it feel more of a reality than a fiction the story totally mesmerizes readers in all the difficulties and the challenges the hero at such a tender age and the people of his locality have to face. The Native American teenager everyday navigates the complex landscapes of the Spokane reservation and Reardan High School.

So I draw because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me. I feel important with a pen in my hand. I feel like I might grow up to be somebody important. An artist. Maybe a famous artist. Maybe a rich artist. I feel like it might be my only real chance to escape the reservation. In this dialogue we see a true essence of what does the poor want momentousness(I want the world to pay attention to me. I feel like I might grow up to be somebody important.) be recognized (I feel important with a pen in my hand). A poor person's thoughts are being presented he is invariably looking for an escape from his current life and is trying and hoping for a better one. Junior says only real chance to escape the reservation; the use of the word reservation is when discussed with the word escape it is evident escape is from the place where you are either captive or you are living against your will.

The Father's line you've got to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope reinforces the external pressures pushing Junior toward a new path. Here also we see that hope is being connected with the escape from the reservation. The dialogue between Junior's parents further reveals the socio-economic challenges within the reservation. His father's acknowledgment of their own unfulfilled dreams due to poverty and sheds light on the generational struggles the community faces. The father's line you need to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope underscores the idea of seeking opportunities beyond the reservation. We can see that writer here tell us to find hope somewhere else meaning that are they are not content with the place they reside.

The dialogue But how will the people in the reservation react? Especially Rowdy captures the tension surrounding Junior's decision. The dialogue here has a very peculiar helplessness when we read it we see that the father is thinking about the future but at the sametime father is also thinking how it will affect the place and the people among which they live. We see that the poor people do not have the luxury of making a simple decision of shifting their son's school. In the next dialogue we see how father is selling the hope of better future to his wife and himself also so that they would not be as frightened as we see they are in the previous dialogue. One feels pity as to how constrain their smallest of decisions are that they have to tell each other the incentives they can get from this. On the surface it seems as something that everyone does but it is not so because when it is done by the suppressed they are not independent in even making the basic decisions of their life. Later Junior could have a good job; He won't be poor, like we are; and he won't become a drunk; we could never make our dreams come true because we were poor and had no good education. This dialogue exposes the generational struggle within Junior's family and the broader reservation community. It emphasizes the limitations imposed by poverty and a lack of quality education, reinforcing the cycle of unfulfilled dreams. Their vulnerability can be seen here too. Then the mother add agrees with the father and says okay and maybe Junior finds new friends in Reardan again trying fortify that they have made the right selection for their son. She further adds that I think it is the best for him to go there. This next dialogue also helps prove my point that; life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community. The emphasis on finding new friends indicates the importance of social pressures in Junior's journey. Another aspect that is highlighted in the that of "Being poor" the hate and flee away attitude that comes with it. We see that the basic goal of everyone or the basis of any sort of effort was to make their life better than it was.

Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance; No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor. This dialogue tells us that the main purpose for detestation of poverty is that it is attached to weakness and helplessness. Additionally it condemns all the positivities that are connected to a life of deprivation. Behind this sentence we see the agitation and anxiety that is felt with such enormity

that it truly seems that poverty is a curse and such a curse during which no good can come. It conveys the message that when you are poverty-stricken you yourself and everyone around you will only see you that you are poor nothing else. If you are kind, honest or have million other qualities poverty will come over all those qualities and poverty will shine among those qualities like the lead on a stage does where the light moves where it moves and nothing else on the stage can be seen.

All my white friends can count their deaths on one hand. I can count my fingers, toes, arms, legs, eyes, ears, nose, penis, butt cheeks, and nipples, and still not get close to my deaths. It is another heart touching sentence that we come across in the novel where on one side it is a comparison between the rich and the poor in a very ingenious manner we that junior says that his white friends can count the dead of their family on fingers this means that the white which in the novel is insignia of being rich have very few deaths. The reason behind this can be several first and far most is that they are rich and being rich means that they have the best of everything that life has to offer. They live in a clean, healthy and germ free environment so there chance of getting sick are almost close to non. The food they intake must also be fresh and hygienic carrying all the vitamins required for having a strong immune system. They are choosy about what they eat; they eat to gain strength and health. They regularly exercise to keep themselves fit. They are the members of the best gyms and health spas. Above although there might be a rare chance that they might get sick but even if they do they have the best health facilities available for them from the finest doctors in the elite health care institutes so full recovery will be bound to happen. Due to all these factors the rate of death among them is very less and the live a long carefree life. On the other hand we see people who don't have enough to eat some of them eat what is left by the rich. The priority of these people who belong to the junior's class is of filling their stomach to sort out their hunger issues. They don't have the luxury of choice as to what they should eat and what they cannot eat. sometimes the don't have the choice of cooked or uncooked because when the stomach is empty for a while it makes the human insane and at that moment his concerns, his morals all are set aside what remains is the hunger. They eat to extinguish the fire that burns in their stomach due to lack of food.

The positive aspect is that they don't need to join clubs to stay fit and smart because there is never enough to eat so there is no problem that they will have indigestion or might get fat due to over eating. This malnutrition was one of the major causes of deaths because the women were not healthy enough to give birth to healthy babies due to which either there would be miscarriages and if child would open eyes in this world it would be short lived because he would be weak and immune to all the diseases that would be waiting to overcome a weak body. So when this child would get sick the parents could afford death but not medicine just as we were told that junior's dog was put to death because it was sick. At the Spokane humans and dogs faith was not that different. The circle was eat when you get and not when you don't and die when you get sick because healing is not for the poor because healing has a cost which these poor cannot pay. However when they get sick they cannot afford healing so either they go for the home remedies that are the cheapest of medicine and when illness does not heal they silent their pains with alcohol. Alcoholism is although not a trait that is good but for the place where junior resided alcohol was a true friend it helped them dillusionize their minds for a little while. Alcohol would help them forget all the pains all the suffering they had to face every day of their life. Only alcohol would let them laugh, dance and forget the entire shortcoming that they would observe when they were not under the ascendancy of alcohol. Alcohol would also help them hope that life would change and when we walk up the next morning things would be better for them. Nevertheless what they would get the next morning would just be the headache and hangover from all the drinking. They promise that they would not drink but when the time comes the want to dream the same dreams so they cannot stop. Most of the deaths that we come across the novel are mostly due to alcohol. Either a drunk kills or a drunk is killed. So as said in the above lines junior could not count as to how many in his family died because as many reasons the rich had for living were as much as the causes poor would die of.

Another dialogue the provides us with the division in society so much do that pain which seemingly has no face and is one of the thing that equally effects all but let's see what junior has to say about it. And what's more, our white dentist believed that Indians only felt half as much pain as white people did, so he only gave us half the Novocain. As earlier we were also



talking about how the impoverished lacked in almost all the aspects that life has to offer to them when we compare them with the affluent. Junior in a very remarkable manner tells us that the division does not stop on the food, the clothing, the residence or the means of transport. It reaches so far out that even the doctors who are related to the profession of healing and it is a common view that healing is for everyone doing not treat all their patients as the same. Arnold tells us that when a person is in pain that time he is very vulnerable and he would wish that during that he could get rid of this pain as quickly as possible. Regardless of this time when a doctors first and far most priority should be to heal his patient and help eradicate his pain the doctor sees who his patient is and what is his social status. Of the patient is poverty-stricken his attitude towards them changes so much so that even if the is in pain he would give him half dose of medicine may be either wondering if he would be able to properly pay or not.

One is amazed at this cold heartedness from a Doctor a person who one would never think would be involved in such a heinous act. On one side we see that medical treatment is also done by keeping in mind the status and on the other hand we again see that although junior knew that he is not being treated properly so much so that he is in pain yet he is being given half medicine for yet he is not able say to the doctor. The reason behind this is the fear that he says something me bee he might be deprived of the medicine and the treated he is being given. Juniors fear is not just his fear alone this terror runs in all the people who reside in the Spokane. Junior has learned adopted this attitude of trepidation by seeing his elders do the same?

You threw that book in my face because somewhere inside you refuse to give up. The background behind this sentence was that Arnold was very excited to have passed school and go to high school. On the first day of his school when he went to his class he was given books by the school. When he opened his book he found that it had the name of his mother. This actually dumbfounded junior so much so that he threw the book towards his teacher. The teacher was amazed at this behavior of Arnold because he had been the teacher of his sister as well and did not expect such behavior from him. Since he knew the family he actually had understood what was the reason Junior had done what he had done that is why he did not mind this. The teacher told him that junior did not throw the book at him but what he had

actually done was that he had wanted to change his life. Junior had refused to be the same and lead the same life his mother and sister had been living. Had he not thrown the book it would mean that he would have accepted the old traditions, the old system and the old life that his parents or their parents had been leading? Junior said stop to all this; stop to all the activities that are leading their life to nowhere. Junior declined this he wanted his life to change; he wanted his life to be better than it was then. The first step for this was guided to him by his teacher to change his school and go to an all white i.e. rich kid's school named Reardon. To all intent and purpose we see that Junior had decided to change a school but choosing Reardon means that Junior had decided that he will change the world he resides in to a new world. A world that will be the representation of the fact that he is ready to take on two tasks, two worlds that not many people around him could; even dare to think of. Junior knew that he would be labeled as a rebel by the people he has spent many years of his life with. He would have to face criticism, hate and loss of his childhood friend at the Spokane. His hurdles he knew would not just end here this was the first step that he will take out of the Spokane but the step he will put in to Reardon will also not be easy for him. He will have to make space in to the world that was not welcoming for him a place where he was truly an alien. Regardless of what would happen Junior had thrown the book and was ready to take on the new world because he knew how important it was to change his life because he was aware that had he not done this his life and the life those that would come after him i.e. the next generation would have to face the miseries, impoverishment he was facing and it would not stop; this cycle would keep on recycling just like the book junior got.

Man, I've always cried too easily. I cry when I'm happy or sad. I cry when I'm angry. I cry because I'm crying. It's weak. It's the opposite of warrior". These lines from junior additionally tell us that being on the Spokane from his birth either due to his medical history or other circumstances that he has faced he cries a lot. The reason behind Arnold crying is that he is housed at a place where there is distress every where he sees. he is lodged at a place where it seem alternatively that time has stopped for them meaning that there is no progress there people can be very easily compared to animals in the sense that they are born they live their life hunting for food and then one day get sick or they are hunted and they die. In all

these stages of life we see that just as animal he is living his days not even trying to change their life not even hoping to change their life. Here the strong bullies the weak and the weak only can cry because he has no other remedy. Arnold was bullied by all the kids in his locality because he is not strong enough so in all those moments Arnold feels weakness and when such weakness is felt when you cannot say anything when you cannot fight back you resort to crying. When you are in pain and you see that you are being given half of the medicine required for pain relief and you have to stay quiet and take it or maybe seen obliged for it so at that very moment tears just troll away from the eyes sometimes even without informing and that might have also happened sometime. When you hope on reaching the practical status of your education during which you hope that now you will learn something new and you are handed a book at least twenty years old here also you see the staticity of their life then the only resort that remains is crying. When Junior is facing the most tuff time of their life of changing his school and trying to make a mark over there while facing hatred from his old friends and neighbors; he hears that his beloved grandmother is killed by a drunk driver. Just try to feel the pain of junior who loved his grandmother very much and thought that she was a very great lady when he hears that in the morning when he left his mother was alive and later she did not die when was killed then is there any other solution but to cry to end or console his misery. Later he hears that his sister was burnt alive due to excessive drinking. She was only contact with Junior and told junior that she is also trying very hard to change her life after running away from the Spokane. Junior must have thought in the corner of his mind that someday that when he would have improved his life and his sister would have done the same. Then there will be a day when they would meet again. The family would be reunited although there would be exchange of some harsh words in the beginning but at the end the parents would be proud of both of us that we have made our life better something that none before us could have achieved. At that time they would have again become a one happy family but what he has to welcome is a corpse that is not even recognizable so at that very moment of helplessness plea could only be heard as crying.

### Conclusion

The True Diary Of A Part TIME INDIAN is a novel in which it would not be wrong to say that every single word which develops in to a lines is a masterpiece of Sherman Alexie which provides us information in a way that complain could be felt but cannot be seen. The reason is that the writer wanted his message to be delivered so that the reader should get guidance as how to lead life. What to do and what not to do. However he didn't want pity for Junior what he wants is the reader would learn from him and during this life changing novel and not in any moment would say that Arnolds has to live a very tuff life. The message he wanted to give was the end where Junior after all the hardship and all the sorrows that were there to put him down that were there to let him believe that change is inevitable would end up as the winner by his own hard work and his own state of mind. This novel is a true inspiration for everyone who dreams big and wants to turn his life around you have to make up your mind and go for it without thinking that what will happen wether you are very young or you are very old, even if you are strong or weak. The only thing that should be in your mind is that if you want then you can.

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