

11th American Literature Honors
Summer Reading Assignment for The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by
Sherman Alexie

After you have read Alexie's novel, read the following excerpt from Susan Berry Brill. Do you agree with her analysis of Alexie's work as it pertains to the novel? Respond to her assertions in a one-two page essay using 3-4 examples from the text to support your opinion. Your essay should be in MLA format.

Throughout Alexie's writing, he displays a critically discursive stance against virtually anyone and anything. This is an equal opportunity anger that perceives both the weaknesses and failures of both Indian and white worlds. . . . Alexie lives and writes on the interstices between the divergent stories of both worlds, what he refers to as "the in-between / between tipi and HUD house / between magic and loss" (43). . . .

And yet, the interstice is not only a place of pain and anguish, but also a place in which lives are born and lived with joy as well as pain. When human lives come together in the loves and joys of fancydancers, basketball player, and lovers, then the conversive magic of human interrelationships transforms the interstice into the here and now as meaningful as any. . . . The reservation dreams of fancydancers and basketball players are the same dreams of all human beings trapped within the discursive lies of oppositional relations, relative (in) significance, subjective power, and objective weakness. . . . The dreams of treaties that won't be broken, the dreams of loves that will mend the torn weavings of broken relationships and families, the dreams of the conversive power of myth, all these survive even beyond the pain of loss. . . .

from Susan Berry Brill de Ramirez, *Contemporary American Indian Literatures & the Oral Tradition*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. 190-93.