



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN BY SHERMAN ALEXIE

1. How would you describe Arnold—both at the beginning of the book and at the end? In what ways does he change? What does he come to realize about being an Indian man?
2. What do you think about Arnold's comment, "I think the world is a series of broken dams and floods, and my cartoons are tiny little lifeboats"? Is his cartooning an escape that distracts him from learning how to face difficulties and disappointments in life? Or is it a necessary life saver? How would you console—or counsel—Arnold?
3. Do Ellen Forney's illustrations enhance the book for you? Did you find them enlightening, funny, endearing, or distracting?
4. Talk about life on the reservation. Consider Arnold's dental care (10 teeth pulled in a single day) and finding his mother's name in his science book. Contrast conditions at the white school off the reservation.
5. What do you think about Mr. P's remark: "The only thing you kids are being taught is how to give up"? Why does he say this to Arnold?
6. What is it about Arnold that eventually earns him the respect of the white kids in Reardon? Is their respect genuine?
7. Why do members of the tribe, even his best friend, feel Arnold is a traitor? Has he betrayed his community? What—or who—is Arnold's community?
8. Talk about Sherman Alexie's use of humor in this book. Why might he have employed it, especially in the face of grinding poverty and the tragedies that take place on the reservation?
9. What have you learned about life on a reservation after having read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*? Were you surprised by the conditions on the reservation? Or did the book confirm what you'd known (or suspected) before?

**Questions by LitLovers.**



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