

**CYRM Resource Book
Young Adult Nominees
(Grades 9-12)
2009-2010**

***The Absolutely True Diary of
a Part-Time Indian***

by Sherman Alexie

illustrated by Ellen Forney

Little Brown and Co., 2007

Saint Leggy

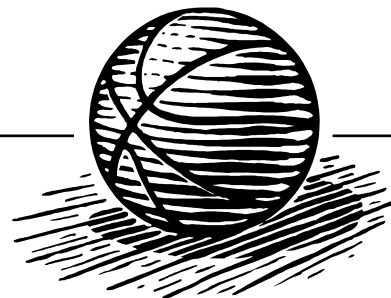
by R. L. Going

Harcourt, 2006

Story of a Girl

by Sara Zarr

Little Brown and Co., 2007



California Young Reader Medal
**Young Adult
Ballot**
2009-2010

_____ *The Absolutely True
Diary of a Part-Time
Indian*

_____ *Saint Iggy*

_____ *Story of a Girl*

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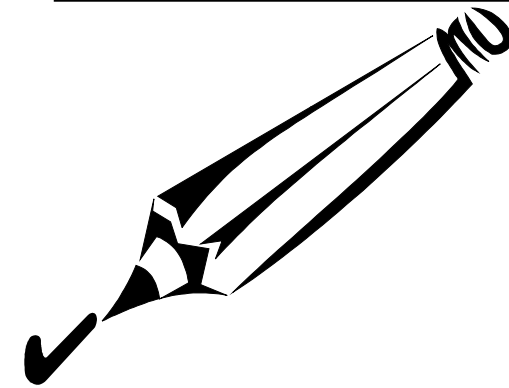
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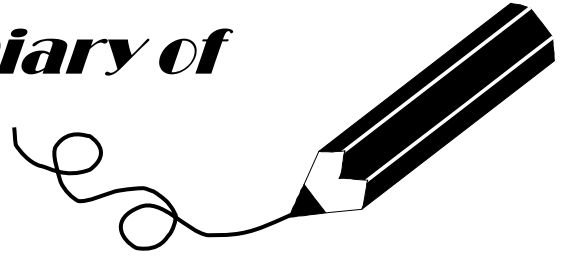
_____ *Story of a Girl*



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

by Sherman Alexie

illustrated by Ellen Forney



Synopsis

Arnold Spirit, better known as Junior, is the main character in Sherman Alexie's semi-autobiographical novel about life for a teenager growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Afraid that his life will not amount to anything, Junior makes the difficult decision to attend the all-white high school, Reardon. Despite his successes academically and on the basketball court, he must continually deal with bullying, both at school and on the reservation, as well as the racism and stereotyping at Reardon. Through the wise counseling of his Grandmother, Junior learns tolerance and the importance of getting to know others before passing judgment. In spite of the tragic death of his grandmother and later his sister, Junior is able to remain focused upon his goal to overcome the poverty and hopelessness of life on the reservation.



Hooks

- You have always lived on a reservation, but you make the decision to transfer to an all white school. What will your life be like? How will you make new friends? How will you overcome racism and Native American stereotypes?
- You are constantly being bullied by students at your new school. The teachers see this happening and do nothing to help you. What do you do?
- Junior uses pictures throughout the book as he feels that, "If you speak and write in English, or Spanish, or Chinese, or any other language, then only a certain percentage of human beings will get your meaning. But when you draw a picture, everyone can understand it." Do you agree with Junior? Why or why not?

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Meet the Author—Sherman Alexie



Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., was born in October, 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington. Like his character, Junior, Alexie made the difficult decision to attend an all white high school. He graduated from Reardon High School in 1985, went on to attend Gonzaga University and Washington State University.

To learn more about Sherman Alexie visit his website at:

<http://www.fallsapart.com>

Meet the Artist—Ellen Forney



Ellen Forney has been a professional cartoonist/illustrator since 1992. She teaches comics at Seattle's Cornish College of the Arts, paints large-scale acrylic work for solo and group shows, and is an avid swimmer and yoga practitioner. Ellen grew up in Philadelphia and currently lives in Seattle.

To learn more about Ellen Forney visit her website at:

<http://www.ellenforney.com>

Connections for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



Life on a Reservation/Native Americans

Bruchac, Joseph. *Bearwalker*. Harper Collins, 2007.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Code Talker*. Dial, 2005.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Heart of a Chief*. Dial, 1998.

Bruchac, Joseph. *March Toward the Thunder*. Dial, 2008.

Olsen, Sylvia. *White Girl*. Sono Nis Press, 2004.

Race Relations

Blackman, Malorie. *Knife Edge*. Simon & Shuster Books for Young Readers, 2007.

Draper, Sharon. *Fire From the Rock*. Dutton Children's Books, 2007.

Johnston, Tony. *Bone by Bone by Bone*. Roaring Book Press, 2007.

Lester, Julius. *Guardian*. Amistad/Harper Teen, 2008.

Sharenow, Robert. *My Mother the Cheerleader: A Novel*. Laura Geringer Books, 2007.

Alcohol Abuse

Deuker, Carl. *Runner*. Graphia, 2007.

Giles, Gail. *Dead Girls Don't Write Letters*. Roding Book Press, 2003.

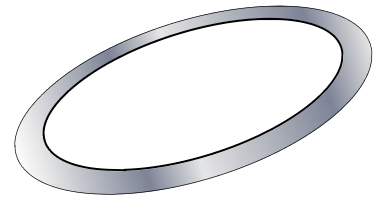
Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*



- After Junior breaks his math teacher's nose, Mr. P. tells Junior that teachers used to beat Indians with a stick. "We were supposed to kill the Indian to save the child." What was he saying to Junior about the way they used to educate Native Americans?
- On the reservation, the main character is called Junior, while at Reardon High School he is called Arnold. Discuss how this is representative of Junior's/Arnold's situation. How are Junior and Arnold different?
- Why do you think is Rowdy so angry and hostile? Why do you think Junior still wants to be friends with Rowdy? Would you?
- Bookish Gordy advises Arnold that "life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community." How does this philosophy fit into Junior's two communities?
- How is Arnold's friendship with Gordy different from his friendship with Rowdy?
- Junior says that his grandmother's greatest gift was tolerance. Explain how her attitude towards homosexuals reflects that she still embraced the old-time Indian spirit.
- Why do you think Mary hid in the basement for so many years? Discuss her obsession with Indian romances.
- Describe how Junior's cartoons counterbalanced the numerous heart-breaking tragedies on the reservation.
- What were Arnold's feelings when Reardon's basketball team defeated Wellpinit High School? What consequences did he anticipated from each community?
- Why do you think alcoholism is so prominent on the reservation?
- Junior and his parents agree that white people have the most hope. Do you agree? Does this apply to other ethnic groups in the United States? Discuss how this novel is a quest for hope.
- Junior talks a lot about racism and poverty. Discuss your feelings and opinions of these two subjects. What do you think the sources of racism and poverty are?

Saint Iggy

by K.L. Going



Synopsis

Randy Igmund Corso, Iggy, was born addicted to crack. In spite of living in the projects with a drug and alcohol addicted father and a mother who went AWOL a few weeks ago, Iggy has a pretty positive outlook on life. He is repeating his freshman year for the third time and finds himself suspended pending an expulsion hearing. The principal tells him that he should do something, make some contribution. Iggy figures that the only way that he can make a big contribution is to stay in school, but to stay in school he will need to do something really heroic, or he will surely be expelled. Iggy turns to his mentor/friend, Mo, for help in coming up with a plan to straighten out his life only to find himself deeper into the world of drugs and drug dealers than he ever imagined.

Hooks

- Iggy is suspended again. He is really not a bad kid. Do you know a good kid who gets in trouble a lot?
- What's the difference between suspension and expulsion?
- Kids with absent and/or addicted parents often repeat their parents' behavior. How can we help them learn otherwise?
- Every day hundreds of babies are born addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. They often have problems focusing and doing well academically. Is there something that our schools and/or our society can do to help?

Meet the Author—K.L. Going



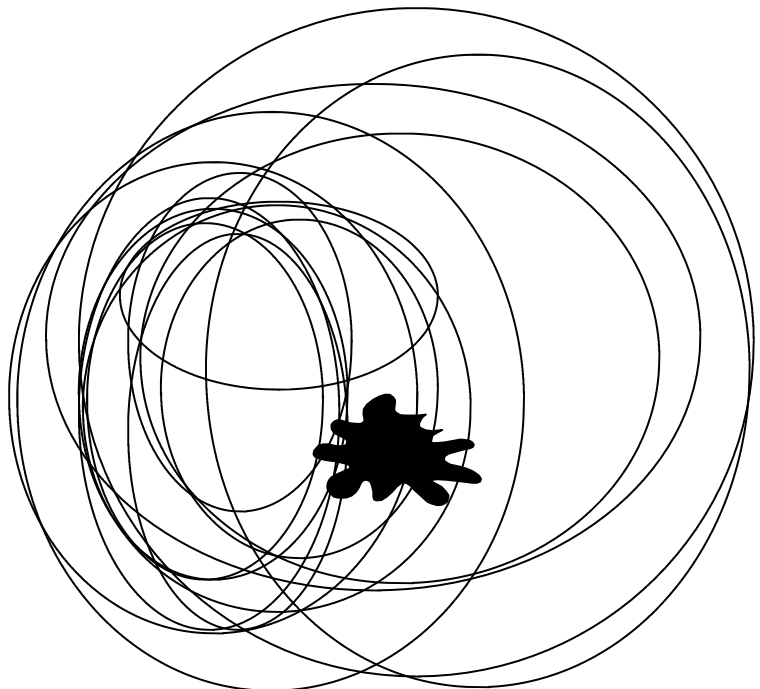
K.L. Going was born in Reinbeck, New York in 1973. She now lives in Glen Spey, New York and has worked as an adult literacy tutor, a ticket agent for an airline, a front desk clerk at a resort hotel, an assistant to two agents at a Manhattan Literary agency and as a manager of an independent book store. She has lived in Maine, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Louisiana and New York City.

To find out more about K.L. Going visit her website at:

<http://www.klgoing.com>

You can e-mail her at:

kl@klgoing.com





Conduct of Life

Carvell, Marlene. *Caught Between the Pages*. Dutton Children's Books, 2008.

Cheva, Cherry. *She's So Money*. Harper Teen, 2008.

Mikaelsen, Ben. *Ghost of Spirit Bear*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2008.

Pignat, Caroline. *Egghead : A Novel*. Red Deer Press, 2008.

Soto, Gary. *Facts of Life: Stories*. Harcourt, 2008.

Addiction

Brooks, Kevin. *Candy*. Scholastic, Inc. 2005.

Giles, Gail. *Right Behind You*. Little, Brown, 2007.

Giles, Gail. *Shattering Glass*. Roaring Book Press, 2002.

Harazin, S.A. *Blood Brothers*. Delacorte Press, 2007.

Hopkins, Ellen. *Crank*. Simon Pulse, 2004.

Hopkins, Ellen. *Glass*. Margaret K. McElderberry Books, 2007.

Lipsyte, Robert. *Raiders Night*. Harper Teen, 2006.

McCormick, Patricia. *My Brother's Keeper*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2005.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Beast*. Scholastic Press, 2003.

Wilhelm, Doug. *Falling*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007.

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Saint Iggy*



- Explain how the quotations by Mother Teresa and Adolf Hitler at the beginning relate to the theme of the novel.
- What does Principal Olmos say to Iggy as he is kicked out of school? How does this act as a catalyst to the progress of the novel?
- How does the newspaper headline HERO SAVES CHILD FROM CRACK DEALER foreshadow Iggy's future? Name three other examples of foreshadowing in the novel.
- What is the significance of the gray girl, and why does she keep appearing throughout the novel?
- *Saint Iggy* is a particularly grim novel with splashes of humor. Describe two humorous scenes and explain why they are funny and how these scenes contribute to the total novel.
- Iggy describes Mo's mother's home as shiny. How does he describe his own home?
- Mo claims to be renouncing worldly things in his conversion to Hare Krishna. Is his pursuit of a spiritual life genuine? Discuss Iggy's and Mo's attitudes on wealth and poverty.
- Iggy frequently drifts off into daydreams in which he imagines himself as a hero making a contribution. Does he have the ability to put together a realistic Plan to change his life? Why or why not?
- Name four examples of religious imagery and discuss why the author included such images throughout the novel.

Story of a Girl

by Sara Zarr



Synopsis

Deanna Lambert was 13 when her dad caught her and 17-year-old Tommy, her older brother's best friend, having sex in the back of his car. Since that time, with embellishments thrown in by Tommy, Deanna has been given the label of town slut. Three years later, her older brother Darren and his girlfriend have recently had a baby and live in the basement. Deanna's dad still will not look at her and her mother spends her days pretending that everything is OK. Deanna dreams of a life that is different from the one that she is caught in and finds an outlet in her personal journal. This insight into herself, her family and her friends allows begin making changes.



Hooks

- People often hold grudges for long periods of time. Have you ever held a grudge for a long time? What was it about?
- Have you ever struggled with forgiveness? Have you ever asked for forgiveness? Why is it so important?
- Forgiving yourself is also important. Which is harder, forgiving yourself or forgiving others?
- Mistakes; we all make them. Is there a point where a mistake is so big that it cannot be forgiven? What would constitute such a mistake?
- If a parent is unable to forgive, can they still have unconditional love for their child?

Meet the Author—Sara Zarr



Sara Zarr began writing as a child, but it was not until she was around 25 that she decided that it would be something that she would want to do full time. She has “been a file clerk, a cook, an office manager, a church secretary, an account rep with a printing firm, an indexer, a corporate trainer, a data entry cog, a receptionist ... anything to pay the bills while [she] pursued writing.”

To find out more about Sara Zarr, visit her website at:

<http://www.sarazarr.com>





Family Problems

- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999.
- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Twisted*. Viking, 2007.
- Charlton-Trujillo, e. E. *Feels Like Home*. Delacorte Press, 2007.
- Kennen, Ally. *Beast*. Scholastic, 2006.
- Purtill, Leigh. *Love, Meg*. Razorbill, 2007.
- Rettig, Liz. *My Desperate Love Diary*. Holiday House, 2005.
- Strasser, Todd. *Boot Camp*. Simon Pulse, 2008.
- Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Confessions of a Serial Kisser*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

Interpersonal Relations

- Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Ten Things I Hate About Me*. Orchard Books, 2009.
- Ferris, Jean. *Bad*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1998.
- Flinn, Alex. *Breathing Underwater*. Harper Teen, 2002.
- Knowles, Jo. *Lessons From a Dead Girl*. Candlewick Press, 2007.
- Quarles, Heather. *A Door Near Here*. Laurel Leaf, 2000.
- Ruby, Laura. *Play Me*. Harper Teen, 2008.
- Sachs, Marilyn. *The Fat Girl*. Flux, 2007.

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Story of a Girl*



- *Story of a Girl* could also have been titled *Story of a Family*. Discuss why this novel is not just about Deanna.
- Deanna's brother Darren is obviously sexually active, yet he gets a much different treatment from the father than Deanna. Why?
- Deanna's family is blue collar, and both her parents work at dead end jobs. How do you think that contributes to Deanna's sense of powerlessness?
- Why did thirteen-year-old Deanna have a sexual relationship with seventeen-year-old Tommy? What was she looking for?
- Is it important for girls to have positive male role models in their lives? Why or why not? How did both Deanna's father and older brother fail her?
- Deanna compares high school life to the savagery in the novel *Lord of the Flies*. Do you agree with this comparison? Support your opinion with examples from both books.
- How does Deanna's summer job at Picasso's Pizza represent her hope for the future? What happens on the job to make her revise those dreams?
- Explain how the poem "First Lesson" at the beginning of the book relates to the novel.
- Why does the author depict Tommy as a weak, vulnerable young man instead of as a villain?
- Discuss the importance of forgiveness, both giving and receiving, to the growth of Deanna.

