

# **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Book Summary, by Sherman Alexie**

by Allen Cheng

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## **1-Page Summary of The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian**

Arnold Spirit Jr., better known as Junior, tells about his early life on the Spokane Indian reservation. Doctors predicted that he would die from complications of hydrocephalus—his being born with excess spinal fluid on the brain. However, Junior survived. The condition left him with a lisp and stutter and too many teeth to keep all of them in his mouth; he also had seizures when he was young. Even today, other Indians on the reservation or, as Junior calls it, "the rez," bully him and call him names like "hydrohead." His best friend Rowdy often promises to protect him but sometimes can't because of his own violent tendencies.

Junior loves drawing cartoons (many are included in this book) and thinks that proves how close he is to Rowdy even though others don't see it that way at times.

Rowdy and Junior go to a powwow in Spokane, Washington. Rowdy gets into an accident and embarrasses himself. He takes out his anger by attacking the van with a shovel, but it scares Junior away. Later, Rowdy sneaks into the triplets' camp at night and cuts off their long braids, emasculating them for hurting Junior earlier. This shows that Rowdy is just trying to do what he can to protect his brother from

harm's way. Then they start high school where Junior has trouble fitting in because of all the bullying he went through before starting high school due to being Native American on top of having learning disabilities as well as dyslexia.

After getting in trouble at school, Junior decides to go to a different school. He tells his parents that he wants to get off the reservation and they agree. His new school is called Reardan and it's twenty-two miles from home which makes it difficult for him to get there sometimes because he doesn't have any money for gas or rides. On his first day of class, Junior meets Penelope who will become his girlfriend later on. A few days later, Roger insults Junior with a racist joke but then Roger respects him when he punches him in the face as a response. After this incident, Gordy becomes friends with Junior during class time by sticking up for him against Roger's racism towards Native Americans like himself.

On the reservation, Junior feels that Mary is competing with him because he managed to get off it. He decides to raise money for homeless people while trick-or-treating. However, word gets around about his plan and three boys jump him in masks. Penelope finds out and donates money in both her and Junior's names. Then, Mary moves back home after getting married to a Montana poker player she met at the Spokane casino without saying goodbye to her family or even telling them she was leaving until she had already left. She says that she has trouble finding work but remains optimistic about everything else going on in her life.

Junior tries out for the Reardan basketball team, but he has a tough match up against Roger who is 6'6" and can dunk. He holds his own, though, and makes it on the varsity team. Junior's first game is at Wellpinit where everyone turns their backs to him when he walks into the gym. Someone throws a quarter at him which hits him in the head while he's checking in for his first time playing with them. After that happens, Junior asks Eugene to stitch up his cut on his head before going back onto court because they had just started playing again after halftime. Rowdy fouls Junior so badly that it gives him a concussion during this game too (Rowdy was an opposing player). Reardan loses badly in these games due to bad defense by both teams (but mostly by Wellpinit), but later weeks later Reardan plays Wellpinit again at home this time and wins decisively because of strong defense from Junior himself. This loss ruins Wellpinit's season, and they lose some more games early in state playoffs as well.

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