

**Title:** Create your own Unofficial Rules

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Setting:** Tenth grade classroom with 25 students

### **Theory Into Practice Background**

1. At its core, this lesson is a way for students to connect the text to their lives. The text presents readers with these unofficial rules that govern a certain aspect of the character's life; the type of rules that won't be completely unfamiliar to readers. The idea is that these rules exist *everywhere* and the lesson asks students to discover and analyze these rules. Jim Burke says that it is important to connect ideas from the text to students' lives. He says, "such opportunities help students appreciate what the stories accomplish: We read these stories for the conversations they let us have" (57). During the lesson we will discuss Junior's list of rules as well as the rules that we create for our classroom. We will discuss the role that these rules play in Junior's life and the role that they play in our own lives.

Looking at these "invisible" rules is particularly important culturally, where some people "need" to act a certain way because of their race, class, etc. In an article titled *Affirmative Action for White Men?* Paul Kivel writes about the privileges he was born with simply because he was born white. In a sense, there are "unofficial rules" that say he will get certain privileges because of the color of his skin. Kivel writes, "I am not responsible for racism nor for the benefits that I have accrued through affirmative action programs for white men. But I am responsible for using those benefits to end injustice for the benefit of all people. Such action on my part is surely a responsible contribution to our society in acknowledgment of the benefits I have received from affirmative action" (Kivel). By looking at the unofficial rules that govern different aspects of students' lives, we can enter into a larger conversation about the rules that govern society, and whether or not those rules are just. We will then relate the idea back to the text and see how unwritten rules are at play in Junior's life (besides telling him how and when he should fight).

2. This lesson focuses on a very specific event in the text. Students will have read "How to Fight Monsters" which is the chapter of origin of the Unofficial rules list that Junior creates. This chapter contains most of the prior knowledge students need to have to be successful in this lesson.
3. No additional materials are used to supplement learning in this lesson. Students will create their lists of rules based on personal experience.

4. This lesson examines the “invisible” rules which govern peoples’ lives in practically any given situation. In our reading of the text we will focus on how these rules affect Junior’s life and the lives of Native Americans in general. Future lessons will continue to ask this question and we will spend some time thinking about how the rules might be changed.

**Objectives:**

- Students will recap and conclude what they learned from their persuasive writing assignment on Native American Mascots.
- Students will each create a list of unofficial rules for a scenario of their choosing, based on Junior’s “The Unofficial and Unwritten (but you better follow them or you’re going to get beaten twice as hard) Spokane Indian Rules of Fisticuffs” (61).
- Students will explore societal rules and rituals, why they occur, how they are enforced, and what makes some rules “unofficial”.

**Materials:**

- One sheet of butcher paper
- 25 blank sheets of printer paper
- 25 markers
- Unofficial Rules worksheet (see attachment 1)

**Preparation:**

- Hang a large piece of butcher paper somewhere in the room so it is viewable by all students.
- Have a marker ready for writing ideas down on the butcher paper.

**Procedure:**

1. (before the bell) Ask students to take out their copies of *Part-Time Indian*.
2. (10 min) Ask students what they thought about the online discussion forum assignment on Native American Mascots. Were there any heated arguments? Did anyone change their position on the issue? Why? Allow students to debate for a few minutes. Tie the debate back to the text. Ask, “how does Junior’s opinion of his school reflect what we have been talking about? How does the use of a Native American mascot affect Junior’s perceptions? Should the effect that Native American mascots have on students influence our decision on whether or not we will use them? After about ten minutes, try to wrap up the debate.
3. (3 min) Tell students we will be shifting gears a little. Ask them to turn to page 61 in their books. Ask for volunteers to read “The Unofficial and Unwritten Spokane Indian Rules of Fisticuffs”. Stop reading at “and I’d been in dozens since” on page 62.
4. (2 min) Ask students what they thought about Junior’s list of rules. What were their favorite rules? Most surprising? If they are not written down, how does Junior know these rules?
5. (10 min) Tell students that they are going to think about the unofficial rules of their own lives. Each person will be creating the unofficial rules of *something* but first you will

create a list of unofficial rules for the class, as a class. Ask for a volunteer to be the scribe and write down the rules on the butcher paper hanging on the wall where everyone can see it. Ask students to think about the classroom rules that are not written down anywhere. What would they be? How do we know they are rules? (responses might include: don't sit in the teacher's desk, it's okay to ask for an extension but only if you don't do it all the time, students and teacher dress differently, only tap your pencil if nobody notices, etc.). Everyone might not agree on all the rules but that is okay. Try to have some consensus about what you will put on the list and then have the scribe right the ideas down. Try to get at least ten unwritten and unofficial class rules

6. (15 min) After you are finished discussing/creating the class list of rules, pass out a blank sheet of paper, an Unofficial rules worksheet, and a marker to each student. Read over the directions on the Unofficial rules worksheet with the students. Tell them to write the unofficial rules for any scenario they choose (eating dinner with friends, using the upstairs bathrooms, walking on the sidewalk, etc.). To help them come up with rules, ask them to think about things they do or do not do automatically and write them as a rule (e.g. walk on the right side of the sidewalk).
7. (10 min) After students are finished with their lists, have them answer the questions on the Unofficial rules worksheet. Collect lists and worksheet.

### **Discussion Ideas**

- Ask students what they thought about the online discussion forum assignment on Native American Mascots. Were there any heated arguments? Did anyone change their position on the issue? Why?

- Ask students what they thought about Junior's list of rules. What were their favorite rules? Most surprising? If they are not written down, how does Junior know these rules?

-Ask students to think about the classroom rules that are not written down anywhere. What would they be? How do we know they are rules?

### **BILINGUAL/ESL AND ENGLISHES ACCOMMODATIONS:** Spanish and AAVE

*Spanish: Our student who speaks Spanish and is an English Language Learner can use Spanish-English dictionaries to translate class discussion and to help him when he is creating his list of rules. We can also provide him a translator if necessary. If he does not finish creating his list by the end of class, he may have extra time to work on it at home over the weekend. The style of writing that should be used on the list is flexible so the student can have fun with how he chooses to write it (maybe he will write the unofficial rules of learning English!)*

*AAVE: We will discuss that answers to questions on the Unofficial Rules worksheet are to be written in Standard English but other forms of English can be used during class discussion and on students' lists of rules.*

### **Special Education Accommodations:**

*Autism:* “Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences” (<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>).

*Our student with asperger’s syndrome will be given accommodations throughout the lesson. Instructions for the activities in this lesson will be provided verbally and on handouts so that they are made very clear. We will begin the lesson by talking about the homework from last night so we have a chance to wrap up that topic. Creating a rules list as a class before creating personal lists will provide consistency and repetition to the lesson, which should aid with this students’ understanding of the task at hand.*

### **Assessment**

At the end of the lesson students will turn in their lists and the Unofficial Rules worksheet to be graded for completion. Students will receive two points for turning a complete list (at least ten items as specified by the assignment sheet) and completing all the questions on the Rules worksheet. They will receive one point if they turn in a less than ten item list or do not answer some questions. They will receive zero points if they do not turn in a list/worksheet.

I will also make comments on their lists and their responses to the questions on the worksheet. Lists will be returned to students after the weekend to provide relatively immediate feedback. Lists will then be hung up around the room for everyone to see.

### **Extension Ideas**

-We might discuss how society tends to follow certain unwritten rules that can either work in favor or against a certain group of people. We could tie the lesson back to the issue of Native American mascots and decide what unwritten rules are being followed that make it so difficult to stop the use of these mascots (e.g. we have used them for a long time; it’s tradition! OR as long as the mascot “honors” Native Americans, it is okay, etc.)

### **Source of Activity**

This lesson is directly based on an event in *Part-Time Indian* where Junior presents a list of rules for fighting, so I guess I’ll thank Sherman Alexie for that. Jim Burke deserves credit for providing a wealth of ideas and strategies for creating and implementing the lesson. Professor Arlette Willis’ lessons gave me the idea of using a large piece of butcher paper to be displayed for the whole class, as well as having students use markers to create their personal rules lists. I

would also like to thank Professor Lisa Monda-Amaya for her suggestions on how to accommodate students with Asperger's Syndrome.

### **Resources and References**

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: a Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3 ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

Illinois State Board of Education: Illinois Learning Standards .2010. Illinois State Board of Education. < <http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/standards.htm>>

Illinois State Board of Education: Special Education Categories.2010. Illinois State Board of Education. <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>

Kivel, Paul. "Affirmative Action for White Men? by Paul Kivel / In Defense of Affirmative Action / In Motion Magazine." *In Motion Magazine*® - A multicultural, online publication about democracy. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/pkivel4.html>>

### **Illinois State English Language Arts Goals**

STATE GOAL 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas.

**2.B.4c** Discuss and evaluate motive, resulting behavior and consequences demonstrated in literature.

Students will complete this goal by discussing the list of rules that Junior presents in the text. In fact, the rules lists are the manifestation of all these ideas (motive, resulting behavior, consequences) and by creating and analyzing their own lists, students will be better able to understand how/why the rules are created.

## ATTACHMENT 1

U n o f f i c i a l R u l e s

Now it's your turn to make a list of unofficial, unwritten rules to...anything! You may choose any scenario you like but it should be something you are familiar with (otherwise how would you know what the rules are?!) For example, you might write something as unique to you as "the Unofficial Rules of eating dinner when Uncle Marcus is in town" or you might choose something a bit more broad like "the Unofficial Rules of walking on the sidewalk". It's entirely up to you! Be creative!

Think of at least **TEN** rules to put on your list. Remember, these are rules that are not written down anywhere...yet you still know them. For example, you might say walking on the right side of the sidewalk is an unofficial rule because you do it even though it's not "official". Try to think of things you do or do not do automatically, even though you might not have been explicitly told to do so. Write your rules on the blank sheet of paper you were given.

After you write your list, answer the following questions:

I chose to write The Unofficial Rules of \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where do you have to follow these rules? Who follows them? Provide any other details an "outsider" would need to know to understand your rules.
  
2. How do you know your rules are rules if they are not "official"? What happens if you do not follow one of the rules? Choose one rule from your list and write down the consequence of breaking that rule.
  
3. What is your favorite rule on the list? Least favorite? Are there any rules you would change or get rid of if you could? What would need to happen for the rule to change?

4. What purpose do these rules serve? Why do you/others follow these rules?