

Gintare Radvila. Lesson Plan A. (5) Wednesday, March 23.

**Title: Wrap Up of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*:
Fishbowl Activity**

Time: 50 minutes

Setting: This classroom is an Honors Sophomore English class. The students are mature and capable of handling respectful class discussions. The demographics of this particular classroom are: 13 female, 12 male. 13 Whites, 5 African Americans, 4 Asian Americans, 2 Latinos (1 ELL Spanish), 1 Native American. One of the students has Asperger's Syndrome. The school is a high school (grades 9-12) in an urban setting.

Theory into Practice Background:

Paul C. Gorski has created a fishbowl activity to prompt students to communicate with one another. The fishbowl activity is when a group of students are selected to sit in a circle in the middle of the room, while the remaining students sit in a larger circle around them to observe and listen. Gorski writes, "Fishbowl activities force participants to actively listen to the experiences and perspectives of a specific group of people" (Gorski). By using this fishbowl activity, students who may often participate may be forced to sit aside and listen, while students who may rarely participate may be chosen to facilitate a discussion "inside" of the fishbowl. This allows the students to listen to one another well enough to potentially gain new insights.

I have chosen to complete this activity after the students have finished the book merely because the discussion questions chosen essentially wrap up the entire book. These discussion questions are not printed in every version of the book; however, they are printed at the end of many versions of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. The questions may also be found on Sherman Alexie's website, www.fallsapart.com. The students will be asked to take notes, using strategies that have previously been discussed in class because these notes may help develop their ideas and thoughts before completing the final assessment, which is a choice of projects and assessments using both *Cather in the Rye* in conjunction with *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.

Also, Jim Burke suggests creating "dense questions" that sum up the overall meanings of a text. He has written an example of a "reader question" for *Catcher in the Rye*; however, this question works perfectly for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, as well. The question is: "Have you ever felt fed up with everything and just wanted to take off, get away on your own" (Burke 302)? This question ties in very well with our overall unit plan theme as well as with this particular novel. It urges students to think about the main character of the novel and why he wanted to "escape the reservation" while thinking about their own lives and experiences.

Prior to this lesson, the students will have finished the book for homework. Therefore, a large discussion and wrap-up activity are very appropriate to get the students to reflect on

the ending of the book and the book's themes as a whole. Depending on how the discussion went the previous day on alcoholism and the effects of it, along with other previous lessons, the focus of the discussions may change. At the beginning of the class, I want the students to complete a quick-write using Burke's prompt about "getting away" that was previously discussed. Once the students have written a quick-response to this question, they will be split into groups and handed two questions from Alexie's discussion guide. The students will be given time to discuss and write down notes about these questions. Once the students have finished their small group discussions of the questions, I will choose a random group to begin "in the fishbowl." Choosing one student to facilitate a discussion, I will have the students talk about what they briefly discussed with one another in their small groups. At this point, all of the students will have a copy of ALL of the questions—allowing them to take notes. The students will rotate in and out of the fishbowl as we progress through the lesson. As a final assessment, the students will choose one of the questions from the discussion to turn into a one-page, formal response paper.

This lesson is linked to future lessons as it allows the students to think about the overall themes of the book that they will have to touch down upon in their final unit assessment project or paper that they will be receiving the following day. This lesson is more of a wrap-up and a time where the students can debrief about the book as a whole (something that students often want to do after the completion of a novel.)

Objectives:

1. During the small group discussion, the students will collaborate with one another to question or solve a particular question or topic that was presented to them.
2. During the fishbowl activity, the students will debate their viewpoints with one another inside of the fishbowl, while assessing the viewpoints of their classmates when 'outside' of the fishbowl.
3. The students will be able to organize and outline notes as they listen to the students inside of the fishbowl to engage with a variety of themes in the novel.

Materials:

- Copies of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
- Cut up discussion questions for small group discussions
- Packet with ALL discussion questions with space available for note-taking.
- Quick-write written on board
- Response HW assignment with rubric attached.

Preparation:

Prior to this lesson, the teacher will need to write the quick-write on the board, along with the class schedule. The teacher will also need to cut up the discussion questions into slips for the students to discuss in their small groups, and construct a packet of the full set of discussion questions with the appropriate spacing for note taking. The desks will

eventually have to be formed into the appropriate arrangement for the fishbowl activity; however, the students can do this after their small group work is complete.

Procedure:

9:00-9:05: (5 minutes): Quick-write. This quick-write question will be on the board as the students enter the room; therefore, they know to begin writing right away as to not waste time.

Quick-write: “Have you ever felt fed up with everything and just wanted to take off, get away on your own” (Burke 302)?

9:05-9:15: Students get into five small groups, and are handed two discussion questions to discuss. You must inform the students that they will be doing a fishbowl activity, where one in each group will be selected to lead the discussion.

(The teacher must circulate at this time to make sure that the students are on task and do not have any questions.)

9:15-9:45: Fish-bowl Activity. Each of the five groups of students will sit in the center of the room for 6 minutes, taking time to discuss one or both of their discussion questions. The surrounding students will take notes on these responses because they will need to turn one of them into a one-page response for homework and these may guide their final unit assessments the following day.

9:45-9:50: Move desks back into normal arrangement. Hand out the response homework. Briefly review the rubric and what the standard requirements for the assignment are. Ask if the students like the book overall. Why or why not?

Discussion Ideas:

- Did you enjoy reading the book? Why or why not?
- How do you think Junior and Rowdy’s relationship is going to be after the novel ends? Will it ever be back to what it was before Junior left? Why do you think so?
- What do you think Junior is going to do after the end of this book?
- Will Rowdy go to Reardan with Junior? Why?
- What is the one most memorable moment in the book for you and why?
- Would you recommend this book to friends and family?

Bilingual/ESL and Englishes Accommodation:

For the ESL student in the classroom, this activity works on his listening and writing skills. Giving this student the first ten minutes in a small group setting is a great way to make sure that he has an understanding of the topics before being placed in front of his classmates to discuss a specific topic. Also, I would not choose this particular student to facilitate questions for his group members when he is inside of the fishbowl merely because it would be unfair to place him ‘on the spot’ like that.

Next, if taking notes for this particular student may be too difficult, I could make a copy of another student's notes for him. However, I would make sure that he attempted to take notes during the class anyways to practice the skills.

Since the students are not evaluated on their speaking skills during the fishbowl activity, the students who speak AAE will have no pressure to speak formally. This fishbowl activity should be conducted in a manner that encourages the students to part-take in "normal" conversations with each other. Although they are being observed and are responding to set questions, they are still encouraged to stray away from the topics and discuss things of interest to them. Lastly, these students know that in the formal response paper assignment for homework, they will be required to write in formal writing.

Special Education Accommodations:

Similar to the ESL student, the pace of note taking may be too quick for a student with Asperger's Syndrome as well. Therefore, I will encourage this student to take notes on his own, but I will provide a copy of another student's notes if necessary at the end of the class period. This way, the student will practice note-taking skills, but an accommodation will be made if the task is too difficult. Also, this lesson requires the students to communicate with one another. Since social mannerisms are often difficult for a student with Asperger's Syndrome, this activity might be intimidating. Therefore, I would not have this student be chosen to facilitate the discussion when he is "inside" of the fishbowl. However, it is beneficial to this student that he gets to read which questions he will be discussing once in front of the class. For example, he will already have thought about his questions for ten minutes prior to the start of the activity. Therefore, his anxiety level about being in front of the class will be reduced as he can write some notes down about things to say when "inside" of the fishbowl.

Assessment:

I have decided to give the students a one-page response paper to complete at home for the following day to give them an opportunity to discuss a question that they might not have gotten to speak about in class. Also, the students are allowed to pick any of the questions from the discussion guide, and merely choosing one will help them reflect on all of the themes in the book. Lastly, because the students will know that this is going to be a homework assignment, they will be more inclined to take notes and actively participate during the fishbowl activity. (Response paper and rubric are attached.)

Extension Ideas:

Potential extension ideas to continue the discussion of the end of his novel would be for the students to debate whether or not it should be taught to future classes. This way, they would debate which aspects were most beneficial to them as learners and which could potentially be beneficial to future learners. This lesson could also be extended into a research activity about the author and his connections to the book. After reading this type

of book, it may be interesting to listen to Sherman Alexie speak. The students could watch YouTube videos of his speaking or even write letters to him describing their favorite parts, least favorite parts, and asking questions.

Source of Activity:

I would like to thank Sylvia Radvila for this idea of a fishbowl because she has seen it work in a classroom. I would also like to thank Paul Gorski for expanding my knowledge and ideas about the fishbowl activity and how one can make it progress smoothly in a classroom. Lastly, I would like to thank Jim Burke for my quick-write question and Sherman Alexie for a phenomenal list of discussion ideas at the end of his book!

Resources and References:

Alexie, Sherman, and Ellen Forney. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and, 2009. Print.

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

"Sherman Alexie." *ShermanAlexie.com: The Official Site of Sherman Alexie*. Falls Apart Productions, 2010. Web. 12 Dec. 2010. <http://www.fallsapart.com/>

Gorski, Paul C. "Multicultural Education and the Internet." *Student Fishbowl, Intercultural Activities - McGraw-Hill Multicultural Supersite* by Paul Gorski. McGraw-Hill Companies, 2005. Web. 12 Dec. 2010. <http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/multi_new/activities/fishbowl.html>.

Illinois State English Language Arts Goals:

4.A.4a Apply listening skills as individuals and members of a group in a variety of settings (e.g., lectures, discussions, conversations, team projects, presentations, interviews).

This standard was accomplished when the students were required to listen to one another during both the small group discussion and the fishbowl activity. The students were required to listen and respond in their own groups during both activities, but were also required to respond in different ways during the larger activity.

4.A.4b Apply listening skills in practical settings (e.g., classroom note taking, interpersonal conflict situations, giving and receiving directions, evaluating persuasive messages).

This standard was accomplished when the students were required to use listening skills in the practical way of note-taking. There was no way to project where the discussions were

going to go; therefore, the students had to listen to their classmates in order to jot down ideas and thoughts of their own and their classmates.

4.B.4b Use group discussion skills to assume leadership and participant roles within an assigned project or to reach a group goal.

This standard was accomplished when the students were required to participate in a variety of roles throughout the lesson. They first were required to lead and listen in their small groups, and then leaders were chosen to facilitate discussions once “inside” of the fishbowl.

1.C.4d Summarize and make generalizations from content and relate them to the purpose of the material.

This standard was accomplished when the students were required to discuss the questions presented to them. The questions proposed a variety of topics that asked the students to relate back to the author’s purpose or personal connection to the work. The students had to summarize the work and create generalizations from the reading in order to foster an appropriate discussion of the questions.

DISCUSSION GUIDE!

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

By: Sherman Alexie

DIRECTIONS: Listen to your classmates as they discuss the questions that were not assigned to your group. You will be turning one of these questions into a one-page response for homework tonight! Also, take good notes because they will be helpful to you when you are choosing a final assessment for yourself in class tomorrow!

Response Paper Directions: Write a one-page response. Double-spaced. 12 font, Times New Roman. No heading is necessary. The first sentence of your response should be your thesis statement. You may expand on what your classmates have said about the topics or create your own analysis of an issue. This should be formally written; therefore, grammar and spelling count! The rubric is at the end of this packet!

DUE TOMORROW at the beginning of class!

(Questions from Fallsapart.com, the official Sherman Alexie Website)

1. Consider the adjectives, “absolutely true” and “part-time.” What concepts appear to be emphasized by the images and the title? Does the cover appear to reference Junior’s internal struggle, or a struggle between Junior and the white power structure, or both, or neither?

2. By drawing cartoons, Junior feels safe. He draws “because I want to talk to the world. And I want the world to pay attention to me.” How do Junior’s cartoons (for example, “Who my parents would have been if somebody had paid attention to their dreams” and “white/Indian”) show his understanding of the ways that racism has deeply impacted his and his family’s lives?

3. When Junior is in Reardan (the white town), he is “half Indian,” and when he is in Wellpinit (his reservation), he is “half white.” “It was like being Indian was my job,” he says, “but it was only a part-time job. And it didn’t pay well at all.” At Reardan High, why does Junior pretend he has more money than he does, even though he knows “lies have short shelf lives”?

4. Junior describes his reservation as “located approximately one million miles north of Important and two billion miles west of Happy.” Yet when he and Rowdy look down from almost the top of an immense pine, he says, “We could see our entire world. And our entire world, at that moment, was green and golden and perfect.” What forces drive the dichotomy of Junior’s perceptions of his world and allow him to see the land in apparently disparate ways?

5. Cultural outsiders who write young adult fiction tend to romanticize the impoverishment of Indians. Junior is having none of this: “It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you’re poor because you’re stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you’re stupid and ugly because you’re Indian. And because you’re Indian you start believing that you’re destined to be poor. It’s an ugly circle and there’s nothing you can do about it. Poverty doesn’t give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor.” How does Junior’s direct language address this stereotypical portrayal of Indians? What about his language draws the teen reader into the realities of his life?

6. Junior's parents, Rowdy's father, and others in their community are addicted to alcohol, and Junior's white "friend with potential," Penelope, has bulimia. "There are all kinds of addicts, I guess," he says. "We all have pain. And we all look for ways to make the pain go away." Compared to the characters in Jon Hassler's young adult novel, *Jemmy* (Atheneum, 1980), how does Junior's understanding of addiction transcend ethnicity and class?

7. Junior refers to his home reservation as "the rez," a familiar name for the place he was born, the place his friends and relatives for many generations back were born and are buried, and the land to which he is tied that, no matter how bad things get, will now and forever be called "home." What would Junior think of a cultural outsider, such as Ian Frazier, who visits a reservation to gather material for a book and then calls his book "On the Rez"?

8. At Junior's grandmother's funeral, Junior's mother publicly gives a white billionaire his comeuppance to the delight of the whole community. "And then my mother started laughing," Junior says. "And that set us all off. It was the most glorious noise I'd ever heard. And I realized that, sure, Indians were drunk and sad and displaced and crazy and mean but, dang, we knew how to laugh. When it comes to death, we know that laughter and tears are pretty much the same thing. And so, laughing and crying, we said goodbye to my grandmother. And when we said goodbye to one grandmother, we said goodbye to all of them. Each funeral was a funeral for all of us. We lived and died together." How does this reflect a cultural insider's perspective and how does it disrupt stereotypes about stoic Indians?

9. “I’m fourteen years old and I’ve been to forty-two funerals,” Junior says. “That’s really the biggest difference between Indians and white people.” In the community of Wellpinit, everyone is related, everyone is valued, everyone lives a hardscrabble life, everyone is at risk for early death, and the loss of one person is a loss to the community. Compare Wellpinit to Reardan, whose residents have greater access to social services, health care, and wealth, and people are socially distanced from each other. How does Junior use this blunt, matter-of-fact statement to describe this vast gulf between an impoverished Indian community and a middle-class white town just a few miles away?

10. In many ways, Junior is engulfed by the emotional realities of his life and his community. Yet his spare, matter-of-fact language and his keen sense of irony help him to confront and negotiate the hurt, the rage, and the senselessness of Wellpinit’s everyday realities. How does Junior use language to lead readers, whose lives may be very different from his own, to the kind of understanding that they will not get from young adult fiction whose writers do not have this kind of lived experience?

11. Cultural markers can be defined as the behaviors, speech patterns, ways of seeing the world, ethics, and principles that identify a person as belonging to a particular culture. When Rowdy and Junior play one-on-one at the end of the book—and they don’t keep score—how is their friendship solidified by their deep knowing of who they are and what they come from?

NAME: _____
 Staple this rubric on top of your response!

RUBRIC: (adapted from Rubistar.com)

	4: Above Standards	3: Meets Standards	2: Approaching Standards	1: Below Standards
Focus on thesis statement	The thesis statement names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points to be discussed.	The thesis statement names the topic of the essay.	The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic.	The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed.
Support for position	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	Includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, examples, real-life experiences).
Grammar and spelling	Author makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.

Total: _____ x 5= _____