

“Superman and Me” Sherman Alexie

Born in 1966 in Spokane, Washington, Sherman Alexie is a poet, writer, critic, and filmmaker. Much of his writing is based on his personal experience growing up as a Native American on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Here he explores the prejudices leveled against him at young age, and how they pushed to be who he is today.

Vocabulary...

Indian reservation (n)	distinct (adj)	arrogant (adj)
surplus (adj)	prodigy (n)	desperation (n)
avid (adj)	oddity (n)	sullen (adj)
devotion (n)	subverted (v)	
clarity (n)	monosyllabic (adj)	

Note: Although the reading uses the term Indian, it has been replaced with Native American in the supplementary materials.

Reading Questions...

1. What expectations did people have for Alexie as a child living on a Native American reservation? How did he feel about them?
2. Who inspired Alexie’s love of reading? How?

Discussion Questions...

1. How does Alexie’s story of learning to read compare to Malcolm X’s? Why have both chosen to share their stories?
2. What does Alexie mean when he talks about saving his life as a child, and now saving the lives of other Native American children? What does this have to do with his decision to become a professional writer?

Activities and Assignments...

1. In the text, Alexie describes how he imagined his life divided into paragraphs. Write a short essay where you try to imagine your own life divided into sentences, paragraphs, and chapters. How do you decide where the divisions are? What does it mean to separate things by paragraphs or chapters?
2. In this text, Alexie gives a small glimpse at life on a Native American reservation, but it is not a complete picture. Do you know anything else about Native American reservations? Research how the reservations were formed, how they are governed, how they are (or are not) like a state, and how the population that lives on them compares to the rest of the country. Are you surprised by your findings?

