

**FLIGHT**



**SHERMAN ALEXIE**

# FLIGHT

by Sherman Alexie

## Novel Summary:

It's tough enough to be an orphan and a ward of the state, let alone a so-called half-breed. Heck, being 15 years old is no freaking picnic, especially if your face is so badly marred by acne your nickname is Zits. Add to that a devastating history of abuse, and no wonder Zits, a gun in each hand, is about to exact revenge on strangers in a bank.

*Flight* is a time-travel fable about the legacy of prejudice and pain. Zits is inexplicably catapulted back to 1975, where he inhabits the body of a white FBI agent confronting radical Indian activists, the first episode in an out-of-body odyssey. Smart, funny, and resilient, Zits is profoundly transformed, as the hero in a tale of ordeals is supposed to be, by his shape-shifting experiences as an Indian boy at Little Big Horn, an Indian tracker, a homeless Indian drunk, and a pilot in unnerving proximity to a Muslim terrorist.

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## About the author:

**Sherman J. Alexie, Jr.**, was born in October 1966. A Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian, he grew up on the [Spokane Indian Reservation](#) in Wellpinit, WA, about 50 miles northwest of Spokane, WA. Approximately 1,100 Spokane Tribal members live there.

Born hydrocephalic, which means with water on the brain, Alexie underwent a brain operation at the age of 6 months and was not expected to survive. When he did beat the odds, doctors predicted he would live with severe mental retardation. Though he showed no signs of this, he suffered severe side effects, such as seizures and uncontrollable bed-wetting, throughout his childhood. In spite of all he had to overcome, Alexie learned to read by age three, and devoured novels, such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, by age five. All these things ostracized him from his peers, though, and he was often the brunt of other kids' jokes on the reservation.

As a teenager, after finding his mother's name written in a textbook assigned to him at the Wellpinit school, Alexie made a conscious decision to attend high school off the reservation in Reardan, WA, about 20 miles south of Wellpinit, where he knew he would get a better education. At [Reardan High](#) he was the only Indian, except for the school mascot. There he excelled academically and became a star player on the basketball team.

In 1985 Alexie graduated Reardan High and went on to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane on scholarship. After two years at Gonzaga, he transferred to Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, WA.

Alexie planned to be a doctor and enrolled in pre-med courses at WSU, but after fainting numerous times in human anatomy class realized he needed to change his career path. That change was fueled when he stumbled into a poetry workshop at WSU. Encouraged by poetry teacher [Alex Kuo](#), Alexie excelled at writing and realized he'd found his new path.

Biography excerpt from [www.fallsapart.com/biography.html](http://www.fallsapart.com/biography.html)

### **Thematic areas:**

- \* war / vengeance / power
- \* family
- \* redemption
- \* belonging / trust

### **Special considerations / areas of controversy:**

1. **Language:** Alexie's writing is edgy and powerful, and he accurately depicts the vocabulary of a troubled, rebellious foster teenager. The writing would be artificial were the language of street youth not portrayed. However appropriate in context, the use of obscenity is startling, and teachers will likely need to discuss its use with students.

2. **Stereotypes:** teachers will be required to handle particular portrayals of characters with sensitivity. The protagonist meets his father, who is a homeless, alcoholic First Nations man. As well, a Muslim character directly challenges the assumptions of terrorism, but he eventually deliberately crashes a plane into downtown Chicago. The author forces examination of stereotypes by pursuing character motivation, but it will be important to monitor students' reactions to and interpretation of the issues presented. Finally, the conclusion of the novel is also controversial because of the way the young man's security is achieved - can't say any more about that without spoiling the end!

3. **Violence:** the novel explores vengeance, against both enemies and strangers, and some of the scenes are disturbing. Certain passages invite discussion about the causes of violence, and the resolution of the novel includes the protagonist's refusal to continue a cycle of violence.

## PREREADING ACTIVITIES

### 1. Anticipation guide

**Directions:** For each of the following statements decide whether you tend to agree or disagree. In the left column, write agree or disagree. Choose only one. If you can answer both, select the one that you feel the strongest about. Look for evidence in *Flight* that either supports (agree) or doesn't support (disagree) each statement. Place the appropriate mark under the third column. In the far right column record the page numbers to back up your findings.

Me	<b>General statement</b>	<u>Flight</u>	Text Evidence
	Children are best placed with foster or adoptive parents from the same culture.		
	Like most of society, the RCMP discriminates against teenagers.		
	All First Nations people identify strongly with their culture.		
	Troubled youth have had a poor upbringing or a deprived environment.		
	War is part of humanity.		
	People can always change.		
	Justice and revenge are the same thing.		

**Follow-up:** Choose three of the previous statements. Write a paragraph for each statement that explains whether Flight supports or doesn't support it. Use quotations from the text to back up the argument in each paragraph.

## 2. Gallery Walk

**Materials required:** large chart paper, felt pens, gallery materials supplied in zip-loc bag (photos and headlines related to Flight).

**Pre-walk:** Attach a gallery material, image, page or headline to a large chart. Use all or as many as you feel will be productive for your class. Arrange the charts with felt markers around the room. Sort students into groups at each chart.

**Walk:** Ask the students to move from chart to chart, recording what the image or page or headline makes them think of. Write any questions they have and as many related ideas as they can. Continue this process until each group has seen and contributed to each chart, and ends back where they started.

**Summary:** Post the charts where all students can see them and refer back to them later. Discuss in their groups and as a class how they think these topics might relate to the novel. Have them record in a quick-write or journal entry the topics that had the most connections for them, and how they felt those connections.

## 3. Chapter 1 pre-reading assignment

Form pairs: use the clock-partner activity to establish groupings: ie find your 3:00 partner for this activity.

Predicting: With your partner, write a list of issues affecting teens, including personal issues, social issues, everything you can think of. Write all your ideas down on a sheet of lined paper. Put both names on the paper.

Connecting: Join two groups of pairs with their lists. Make a chart with everyone's name across the top.

Eg:

Bob	Mary	Sam	Joe

Choose issues from the lists that you feel are a part of **your** experience/life (others can claim the same issue if it fits for them) and list them under your name.

Eg:

Bob	Mary	Sam	Joe
Suicide	Friends	Money	Friends

Summary: Check your original lists of issues. Are there any issues that are 'unclaimed'? How do you explain this? Which issues do all members of your group claim?

Report: Share your charts and summaries with other groups.

**Post-reading:** Which issues from your charts were raised in this chapter? Were there any issues raised in the chapter that were not on your charts? Add new ones.



## ACTIVITIES DURING READING

### 1. Take a Stand – opening activity or energizer

This activity has been adapted from the NESAs Activities Handbook for Native and Multicultural Classrooms, Volume 3, p. 39-42.

Procedure:

- a) Tell students that they will hear a series of statements. For each pair of statements, they must choose one answer or the other; there is no middle ground, and they must take a stand on the issue presented (It is important to keep the pace fast. Students may quickly state the reasons for their choices, but do not be slowed by in-depth discussions of the statements).
- b) Designate one side of the classroom as A and the other side as B. Students must choose either option provided in each statement and move to the side of the room assigned to that option.
- c) Read each statement slowly and clearly. Students move to the chosen area quickly. Choose one or two students per side to quickly explain their choice.
- d) Debrief after the activity. See p. 40 of the NESAs handbook for possible questions. Were there right or wrong choices in the values statements? Which statements were most likely to cause controversy or conflict? Were any of their choices influenced by their cultural backgrounds?

POSSIBLE STATEMENTS:

1. The most important thing is
  - a. family unity.
  - b. the happiness of the individual.
2. It is more important to
  - a. conform to society's norms.
  - b. be oneself.
3. It is more important to get
  - a. a formal university education.
  - b. experience in the real world.
4. Children are happier
  - a. with their birth parents, regardless of their situation.
  - b. in the secure home of someone with financial stability.
5. It is more important for a country to have
  - a. military security.
  - b. an extensive social welfare system.
6. In a confrontational situation, it is better to
  - a. compromise.
  - b. fight.
7. When we are wronged or insulted, revenge is
  - a. always justified.
  - b. never justified.



## ACTIVITIES DURING READING – continued

### 3. Dialectical/dual-entry response journals.

Most students and teachers are quite familiar with response journals. Our goal in senior classes is to promote further development of critical analysis through the journal, rather than simply personal. While this connection is still important, we are encouraging students to intensify the depth of their response, pursuing an understanding of the novel's themes as well as the writer's craft.

Senior students are also encouraged to consider these journals as a means of note-taking, in that the quotations selected for response journals may be useful for incorporating into a critical essay later.

Procedure:

a. Students divide their page vertically, leaving a one-third column on the left-hand side of the paper, and two-thirds of the page available for the right-hand side.

b. In the left-hand column, students record direct quotations (with page number), summaries and/or clear references to the text. In the right-hand column, students write their reactions to the selected text.

c. In the right-hand column, students may make predictions, ask questions, or draw connections between the literature and their personal experiences. They are also required to analyze the work, showing how the passage chosen demonstrates the use of a literary device such as allusion, conflict, characterization, irony, tone, etc. Finally, students are encouraged to draw a connection between the passage chosen and another literary work or piece of art, music or film.

**Note:** The novel has natural dividing points - Chapters 1 - 3 introduce Zits & lead to the moment of tension. Chapters 4 - 18 are the time travel chapters, and Chapters 19 - 21 provide the conclusion. Students will find that the novel is chunked into units of 3 chapters, and it makes most sense to ask them for one journal entry for every 3 chapters. At minimum, they should have an entry by the end of chapters 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, and 21. Students may be invited to choose the quotation for all of their entries, with the following quotations offered as **possibilities** (they should **not** be assigned en masse), or students may receive a combination of assigned and self-selected quotations.

Chapters 1 - 3:

- "When it comes to foster parents, there are only two kinds: the good but messy people who are trying to help kids or the absolute welfare vultures who like to cash government checks every month." (8)
- "I'm fighting and kicking because that's what I do. It's how I'm wired. It's my programming. I read once that if a kid has enough bad things happen to him before he turns five, he's screwed for the rest of his life." (17)
- "I recognize his voice. I know this guy. He's arrested me a few dozen times. He's always been pretty cool. I trust him not to hurt me, so I calm down a little. 'Officer Dave,' I say. 'It's good to see you again.'" (17)



### 3. Response journals - continued

- "I measure men by the content of their character, not the color of their skin, and I find all of them are assholes." (27)

#### Chapters 4 - 6:

- "I turn around to look at myself in the mirror. I expect to see me pretending to be Clint Eastwood. But instead I am looking at a face that is not my own." (40)
- "I look at Elk and Horse. They're smiling. I realize they aren't freedom fighters or anything like that. They don't care about protecting the poor and defenceless. No, man, these guys just like to hurt people." (50)
- "Art and Justice fight on opposite sides of the war but they sound exactly like each other. How can you tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys when they say the same things?" (56)

#### Chapters 7 - 9:

- "I wonder if this is Heaven. Maybe God sent me to Hell first. Maybe he made me watch Art kill Junior because I needed to learn from my mistakes." (65)
- "I am happy for the first time in my life." (65)
- "This is war." (74)
- "Is revenge a circle inside of a circle inside of a circle?" (77)

#### Chapters 10 - 12:

- "I will be punished and the dead will stay dead. And the world will keep on going like that." (81)
- "I don't kill anybody. But I ride with killers, so that makes me a killer." (90)
- "Is there really a difference between that killing and this killing? Does God approve of some killing and not other killing? If I kill these soldiers so that Small Saint and Bow Boy can escape, does that make me a hero?" (105)

#### Chapters 13 - 15:

- "Why do people hurt each other like this?" (119)
- "Flight is supposed to be beautiful. It's supposed to be pure." (128)

#### Chapters 16 - 18:

- "White people did this to Indians. You make us like this." (136)
- "Anger is never added to anger. It multiplies." (136)
- "I am my father." (150)

#### Chapters 19 - 21:

- "When I was fifteen, I met a kid named Justice who taught me how to shoot guns." (161)
- "I don't know if I'm the one in jail, or if he is." (172)
- "Trust me." (180)

The response guide attached is based on the provincial six-point scale & is taken from the Open School's aboriginal fiction module.

## **Reader Response Scoring Guide: Dialectical / dual entry / response journals**

### **Superior**

- Demonstrates an appreciation of the text and an insightful discussion of the topic in question.
- Relevant and meaningful references and associations to the text are included.
- Essential ideas in the text are explored in depth, & an inspired and unique response is provided.
- The writing style is effective & demonstrates sophisticated language & organization.
- Well-supported critical judgements may be made on the text.
- Though language use is clear and precise, it needn't be error-free.

### **Effective**

- Communicates clear understanding of the text, using sound logical reasoning & supporting details.
- Subjects in the response are well organized, adequately explored and elaborated, and there is evident personal engagement with the text.
- The writing style demonstrates a confident writing voice, using informed judgement on the credibility of the text. Associations between the text and the reader's impressions are meaningful and relevant.
- There may be errors in the response, but they are not distracting.

### **Competent**

- A basic understanding of the text is communicated in the response.
- Treatment of the text may be quite literal, and may be limited in scope.
- A critical judgement on the text is supplied, though it may not be developed to its full potential. The response is reasonably clear with some supporting details.
- Connections to personal experience or an external point of view may be included.
- The writing style is straightforward and structurally sound.
- A number of errors in writing or content may be present, but meaning is still clear.

### **Adequate**

- The response shows some understanding of the text, though there is little evidence of personal engagement.
- A superficial use of the techniques of literary analysis may be present, and there may be gaps in understanding the text's meaning.
- References to the text may not be clearly associated to central ideas presented in the response.
- Gaps in logic and poor reasoning may be present.
- Though a sense of purpose may be identifiable, errors may negatively impact the meaning of the response.

### **Inadequate**

- There is little or no indication of engagement between the reader and the text.
- An understanding of the basic ideas and meaning present in the text may be absent from the response, or the interpretation offered may be seriously misguided.
- Errors are frequent, disrupt continuity, and are detrimental to the meaning of the response.

### **Unacceptable**

- The response is not acceptable; it is off topic or too brief.
- The response may be incomprehensible, with little or no organizational structure, and no clearly communicated purpose or meaning.

#### 4. Research / presentation

In small groups, students are given time to research the historical accuracy of the time travel sections:

For example:

- Was there such a group with the IRON acronym? Where did they exist?
- What Native Indian organization existed during the time referred to in Chapters 3 - 6?
- What incident was the FBI involved with that directly involved a First Nation/Indian organization?
- Research Custer's last Stand; find references in the story that are accurate, according to your research.
- Research acne medicines on the market and acne symptoms and treatment; compare to references in the story.
- Research learning to fly. Are there any inaccuracies in the time travel excerpt that you can find? Why do you think the author chose this particular theme for a time travel episode?
- Research the issue of foster care in Canada and, in particular, First Nations children in foster care. What policies are in place? Cite historical practices referred to in the text that are accurate.

Present your findings to the whole group:

Include a graphic representation, the questions you explored, and references to the text.

## ACTIVITIES DURING READING – continued

### 5. Question Pass

This activity is one of the most effective strategies for generating focused small-group discussion, and it's the simplest to prepare, too!

The most useful time for this activity is probably during or just after reading the time travel scenes. Ask the students to record one or two questions that they have about the novel on a sticky note, reminding them to focus on Level 2 and 3 questions rather than literal, Level 1, questions - although this may be necessary if a student has a comprehension question related to one of the historical events being depicted.

Collect and sort the sticky notes. The students will generally have similar questions, and you will find it fairly simple to choose and combine questions so that most of the students will find something of theirs represented when you use them the next day. Write the questions on the top of a blank piece of 11" by 17" paper. Choose enough questions so that you can create groups of 3 or 4.

The next day, give each small group a sheet of paper with a question. Give them a short period of time to discuss the question and record their responses on the blank page. When you call "time," the students pass their paper to the next group of students and repeat the process. They add comments to the paper they receive, recording any disagreement they may have with the previous students' response, and they add or supplement the answer, as needed. You will have plenty of time to circulate throughout the classroom, checking for depth of response and any monitoring students who may be having difficulty.

After two or three passes, this process will be quite quick, as students will generally not feel that they can add much to the incoming papers. However, the process is still valuable as they are reading and discussing each question. You continue passing until the students receive the question that they started with and have some time to read what other students added to their initial response.

At the end of the activity, ask students to create a written reflection, as a group, commenting on the efficacy of the question pass, their engagement and participation in it, etc. Although the primary purpose of this activity is to generate focused discussion, you could also have the students self-assess their initial response with a four or six point scale.

## ACTIVITIES DURING READING – continued

### 6. Literature circles

**A.** There are several ways that literature circles can be incorporated into this novel study. While younger students need the structure of clearly defined roles such as Discussion Director, Connector, Illustrator and Vocabulary Enricher, older students who are familiar with group discussion may find the roles restrictive.

A literature circle may be held at any time, whether or not the students are reading at the same pace as long as students understand that they must not give away the story. The first student simply shares a quotation selected from his or her response journal and invites contributions from the other students. Discussion can be on any issues raised by the passage, questions, personal connections, etc. Group members are expected to participate fully by taking turns, listening respectfully, asking questions, providing elaboration and encouraging others. Discussion is intended to deepen the understanding of and appreciation for the novel.

Questions may be posted in the classroom if students struggle to maintain the flow of conversation (thank you to Lee-Ann Winters of Sullivan Heights Secondary).

#### Initial questions:

- Can someone summarize briefly?
- Is there any unfamiliar vocabulary?
- What questions did you have when you finished this section?
- What are the one or two most important ideas?
- What was going through your mind while you read this?
- Did anything in this section of the book surprise you?
- Did today's reading remind you of anything else you've heard or read or other real-life experiences?
- How did you feel when you were reading this part of the book?
- What are some things you think will be talked about next?

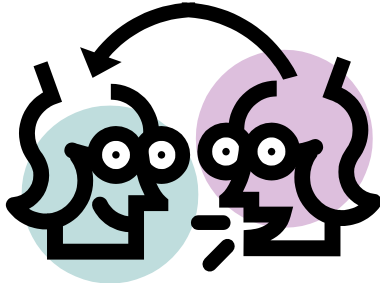
**Option:** A great way for students to consolidate their thinking is to have them return to the response journal they selected to share during the group discussion. At the bottom of the page, they write about the ways the other students enhanced their understanding, adding feedback from others that they had not previously considered.



## 6. Literature circles - continued

B. If your students are not proficient with the mature discussion of a literature circle, using the following strategy can also help promote effective participation.

### Save the Last Word for Me (thanks to Angela Stott, SD 48)



1. Find a passage from your book that you find thought provoking.
2. Write the passage on a BIG piece of paper.
3. Choose a person in your group to show the rest of the group the passage.
4. Everyone reads the passage and, taking turns, each person responds to the passage
  - guess why the passage was chosen, or
  - discuss why the passage is important to the development of the book, or
  - talk about what the significance of the passage is, or ???
5. After everyone has responded to the passage, the person who selected the passage (and has not spoken yet) tells why it was chosen, responding to the other people's comments in the group and adding anything else.
6. Repeat the process with the next person in your group.

C. Finally, if you are uncomfortable with having the students lead their own discussion, you may choose to provide the passage or quotation, or you may use one of the discussion questions found in the back of the novel (I was going to choose several to include here, but I'm tired! Therefore, if you have an edition without the book club guide at the end, email me: [cminnabarriet@gw.sd74.bc.ca](mailto:cminnabarriet@gw.sd74.bc.ca)).

A possible discussion assessment is attached (adapted from Lillooet Secondary).

## Literature Circle Rubric

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Not yet Meeting</b>	<b>Minimally meets</b>	<b>Fully Meets</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>
<u><b>PREPARATION</b></u> - reading is done - prepared with questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has not read</li> <li>• Has not chosen appropriate section</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read text</li> <li>• Minimally prepared – incomplete questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready to assume role</li> <li>• Has done the reading</li> <li>• Prepared with materials &amp; questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended beyond role</li> <li>• Depth of preparation is evident</li> <li>• Shows deep interest</li> </ul>
<u><b>LISTENING</b></u> - accepts what others say - positive body language - active listening skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking away</li> <li>• “Zoned out”</li> <li>• Interrupts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily distracted</li> <li>• No depth of thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of active listening skills</li> <li>• Open- minded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages others</li> <li>• Maintains active listening</li> <li>• Asks for elaboration</li> </ul>
<u><b>PARTICIPATION</b></u> - respects other people’s questions - lets people pass - takes turns - does not interrupt -interjects politely -builds on the ideas of others -encourages participation -asks follow-up questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not maintain focus</li> <li>• Off-task</li> <li>• Distracts others</li> <li>• Inappropriate participation</li> <li>• negative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not always respectful of others’ contributions</li> <li>• Asks questions &amp; listens to answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respectful of the contribution of others</li> <li>• Asks questions &amp; listens to others</li> <li>• Enthusiastic</li> <li>• Encourages participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asks high-level, thought-provoking questions</li> <li>• Makes worldly connections</li> <li>• Shows evidence of natural leadership</li> </ul>
<u><b>CONTENT</b></u> - supports statements with detail and description - cites evidence from text -incorporates literary elements -refers to text regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor understanding</li> <li>• Unable to connect with the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of basic concepts</li> <li>• Not connected to text</li> <li>• Unable to form opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has opinion – states it &amp; supports it</li> <li>• Understands and speaks about the text and issues raised</li> <li>• Cites the text for support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of deep level of understanding</li> <li>• Critical thinking is evident</li> <li>• Worldly connections made</li> <li>• Demonstrates empathy</li> </ul>

## 7. Socratic Seminar

Socrates believed that teaching students to think for themselves was more important than filling their heads with the 'right' answers. In a Socratic seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorously thoughtful dialogue, rather than by memorizing bits of information. There are four key elements in an effective Socratic seminar: a rich text, an effective opening question, a patient facilitator, and trusting participants. The general format of the seminar is as follows:

1. Access students' prior knowledge with a quickwrite, journal or other pre-reading strategy.
2. Give students a copy of a poem, a news clipping, or other text to read.
3. Students read the text and take notes or annotate text in other manner (see reading aid attached).
4. Students respond in writing: What was the text about (20 words or less)? What did the text make you think about (20 words or less)?
5. Students develop level 2 or level 3 questions from the text.
6. Students form an inner and outer circle (or one big circle).
  - Inner circle students speak
  - Outer circle students note behaviours, statements, etc., of the discussion within the circle
  - A "hot seat" is available for members of the outer circle to use when they have something they want to contribute to the discussion - they say their piece and leave the seat immediately
7. Students share questions.
8. The discussion begins with a question asked by the facilitator. The facilitator listens, takes notes and redirects discussion if it veers off track.
9. Students ask questions as the basis for discussion. They refer to the text throughout the discussion.
10. The facilitator debriefs the seminar. Students in the outer circle share their observations and opinions. The whole class reflects on the successes and improvements that need to be made.

**Note:** A pre-discussion task for "On Revenge" would be helpful. After students have read the article, but before beginning the seminar, ask the students to pair up and discuss the following questions:

- a. Why this text?
- b. When do you think it was written?
- c. Does it matter?

**Socratic Seminar Text  
from "About Revenge"  
by Francis Bacon**

Revenge is a kind of savage justice. The more people try to take revenge, the more the law should punish them. When a man commits a crime, he breaks the law. But when the injured person takes revenge, the person destroys law itself. In taking revenge, a person does indeed get even with his enemy. But when one refuses to take revenge, he shows that he is better than his enemy. King Solomon, I am sure, said it is glorious for a person to forget an injury.

Whatever is past is gone and can't be changed. Wise people know they have enough to do in the present and with whatever might happen in the future. They don't spend their time taking revenge. People who spend their time worrying about past injuries just waste their time. Also, no person hurts another person just to hurt him. Rather, it is done for his profit or his own pleasure or his honour or for some other reason he might have. So why should I be angry with someone for loving himself better than he loves me? Suppose someone hurts me because he is evil. Isn't that just like a thorn or briar which scratches me because it can't do anything else?

Revenge is most allowable when there is no specific law to correct an injury. However, one must then be careful that the kind of revenge one takes does not break yet another law.

Some people when they get even want their enemy to know that it will happen. This is a more generous way of acting. Not letting your enemy know you are going to get even is a cowardly thing to do. It is like killing at night from ambush.

What is certain about planning to get even is that one's own wounds remain open. If one didn't spend one's time trying to take revenge, those injuries would heal and be forgotten. Public or state revenges are, for the most part, good -- as in the case of the murderers of Julius Caesar. Private revenges are, however, not good. People who take revenge live the life of witches. They cause trouble to others and come to a bad end.

## Socratic Seminar Reading Aid

Read through the entire selection without stopping to think about any particular section. Pay attention to your first impression as to what the reading is about. Look for the main points and then go back and reread it. Briefly answer the following:

This selection is about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Key words or phrases are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

With what do you agree? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

With what do you disagree? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why is this subject important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions for marking a reading:

- Highlight any unfamiliar vocabulary.
- Underline major points or forceful statements.
- Use vertical lines in the margin to identify a passage too long to underline or to emphasize a statement already underlined.
- Put numbers in the margins to indicate sequence of points.
- Put numbers of other pages where the same point is also mentioned.
- Circle key words or phrases.
- Write questions in the margins as they come to mind.



## Socratic Seminar Self and Group Evaluation

Expectations	Did you...?	Did the participants...?
Speak loudly and clearly?		
Come to the seminar prepared?		
Cite reasons & evidence for opinions stated?		
Refer to the text to find support?		
Stay on topic?		
Talk to each other, not the leader?		
Use academic language?		
Ask for help to clear up confusion?		
Maintain eye contact while listening or speaking?		
Avoid debate or hostility?		
Listen to others respectfully?		
Question others in a civil manner?		
Avoid all side conversations?		
Refrain from interrupting?		

How many participants spoke? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the biggest success? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the biggest difficulty? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the seminar?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent (everyone participated, listened, had good ideas, did not interrupt)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good (generally, most people participated, but the seminar could use improvement)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fair (side conversations, interruptions, students distracted)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poor (rude behaviour, students were unprepared)

### Reflection:

What was the most interesting question?

What was the most interesting idea?

What do you think should be done differently in the next seminar?

## Socratic Seminar Observation Form

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partner's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Each time your partner does one of the following, put a check in the box.

**Speaks in the discussion:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Looks at the person who is speaking:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Refers to the text:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Asks a new or a clarifying question (literal, level 1 questions do not count):**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Responds to another speaker:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Interrupts another speaker:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Engages in side conversation:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**After the discussion:**

What is the most interesting thing your partner said? \_\_\_\_\_

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What would you like to have said in the discussion? \_\_\_\_\_

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## 8. Other possible links:

In an integrated unit, "The Cask of Amontillado," by Edgar Allan Poe, is a classic story of revenge and would be an interesting companion piece. Perhaps a scene from *Hamlet* would be an appropriate choice during the reading of Chapter 18.

As well, the short story "Traplines," by Eden Robinson, is in the collection by the same name (included in the book bins), and tells the story of Will, who is offered the same chance of redemption as Zits, but he doesn't take it.

The following poems might be included when examining the relationship between Zits and his father.

### **The City on the Hill**

Thomas King

My uncle savages the streets  
skates figure eights  
around the meters  
drums the cars.

He gimmes change from laughing people  
wrapped in tight, white skins  
and sheepy coats,  
round dances round the block  
in red-face  
clown-crows out the words he carries  
on his cuffs.

Until the cops come by  
and chauffeur him away  
with Marvin and the rest  
to Burger King.  
A break.  
Union rules.

Tough job, he says to Marvin  
over fries,  
but, hey,  
we got to hold the middle class  
in line,  
and keep them from the woods.

## 8. Other links - continued

### my red face hurts

Duncan Mercredi

my red face hurts  
and i walk with my head down  
to hide the tears

my red face hurts  
as i watch my brother die before me  
white bullets riddle my body  
and i hide my face to cry

my red face hurts  
as i watch my father stagger out of neon lit bars  
and crumple on piss-stained sidewalks  
as hate filled eyes step over him  
i hide my shame behind shadows

my red face hurts  
as i watch a white man hiding his white sheet  
beneath his suit and tie  
condemn me because of one man's greed  
sentencing me to an early death  
my red face hurts as he smiles

my red face hurts  
as i see my sister stand on darkened streets  
selling her gift to strangers  
that use her till she has nothing left to give  
and i cry as i pull the needles from her arms

my red face hurts  
when i hear the hate on the radio  
directed at my hopes and dreams  
and another party is born  
on the wings of a white horse  
and i scream in anger as i watch the door close on me

my red face hurts  
as i see the stirrings of a white nation  
follow blindly the words of a salesman  
with visions of a wall between us  
and i cry for my unborn brothers and sisters  
for they will feel the sting of this party's hate

my red face hurts  
but the feel of the gun  
comforts me

Please let us know any other selections you use, and we will add to this list. Thanks.

## POST-READING ACTIVITIES

### 1. Painting the Circle:

This activity has been adapted from The NESAs Activities Handbook, Vol.3, p. 26. Its purpose is to provide a group activity that builds inclusion. We think that it is a useful, non-verbal way to examine the themes and issues that arise in the novel.

Time required: 45 minutes to one hour.

Materials: space to accommodate groups of 3 – 5 students, an assortment of poster paints, brushes for each student, a sheet of flip chart paper or construction paper, music.

Procedure:

- a) Set up tables with sheets of poster paper, adequate paints and brushes.
- b) Explain to students that they will participate in interpreting the novel through painting and that they will be asked to rotate throughout the room periodically, at which time they continue working on the painting that is already in progress at that station.
- c) Students begin at one station, painting for 3 – 5 minutes. Then the teacher tells them to move to their right and add on to the next painting. Proceed until each group returns to its original painting, and students can see how their beginning artwork was continued by others.
- d) Have students display the paintings around the room and allow time for a gallery walk.
- e) Debrief the activity, asking students to discuss their personal responses to the experience – what was difficult? How were their group members helpful? Examine the finished paintings, and discuss their evolution. Do particular themes emerge? Are the initiators of each painting satisfied?

See p. 26 – 28 of the NESAs handbook for further explanations and debriefing suggestions.

Option: Assign particular themes or time travel passages to each station.



## **2. Hot Seat: Redemption or sell-out?**

One to three students are in the hot seat, working together to answer three questions posed to them by their classmates. They assume the role of a character from the novel and answer according to the way they think their character would respond. After they have answered three questions, new students take their place in the hot seat.

The focus of the discussion is whether or not Zit's/Michael's redemption is believable and the meaning of the resolution. Students examine the implications of the fact that Zits is "saved" by a non-aboriginal family (see #44, Questions for Discussion, back of book).

The teacher changes the participants after a certain period of time and the new students act as different characters. The final group assumes the role of the author and responds according to what they think Sherman Alexie's position would be.

## **3. Creative Writing options:**

- a. Using the quotations from their response journals, students write a piece of "found" poetry. They create a poem that reflects the novel's themes, using only words from the text. The words for their poem may only be selected from the quotations to which they have already responded.
- b. Students create pieces of fiction or poetry as responses throughout the unit and submit them as a compilation at the end.
- c. Students must choose a poem or a song that complements the themes in the novel and present it to the class, explaining the reasons for their choice.
- d. Students create another possible time travel episode.

## **4. Ye Old Faithful with a twist - the literary essay:**

Senior English demands a focus on theme and the literary essay. This format for a literary essay offers a fantastic way to include a formal written component that rises naturally from the response journal and the group discussion.

All the work has already been done: students bring their novels and their response journals to class. They write an in-class essay, integrating the quotations from their response journals, and using their writing as the basis for the examination of the novel's themes. By this stage, they will have analyzed theme through their response journals, and literature circle discussion will have enhanced their understanding. The timed write aspect should not be undue pressure, as all the material they need is at their fingertips: they simply choose the quotations and responses that support the evident theme.

## 5. Verbal-Visual essay

Students show their understanding of the novel and its themes by preparing a poster:

- Choose 5 - 10 images that represent the essence of the novel. These images can be hand-drawn, cut from magazines or computer-generated.
- Include 3 - 5 quotations from the text to support each visual image. The viewer should be able to understand your reason for selecting each image by reading the quotations.
- On the back of the poster, include an essay that provides an alternate title for the novel. The title you choose should reflect your understanding of the story and explain how the visual images work together to illustrate the novel's theme.

Criteria	Rating	Comments
- 5 - 10 visual images that represent essence & theme of novel	1 2 3 4	
- significant supporting quotations displayed effectively	1 2 3 4	
- alternate title reflects understanding of novel	1 2 3 4	
- essay explains how images work together to illustrate novel's theme	1 2 3 4	