

The relationship  
between storytelling  
and storyteller in  
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Sherman Alexie composed “ The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven” as a series of digressions that shed light on the inner demons of the narrator. The story clearly demonstrates elements of Native American folklore, which are appropriate for both Alexie and the narrator. The method of storytelling gives us a glimpse into the life of the narrator and allows us to see the world through his eyes, a world whose heavy weight is carried on his shoulders. Whether in Seattle or Spokane, the narrator always feels out of place. The narrator grew up on an Indian reservation and eventually left because of his aspirations. He explains, “ I was special, a former college student, a smart kid. I was one of those Indians who was supposed to make it, to rise above the rest of the reservation like a fucking eagle or something. I was the new kind of warrior” (18). Ultimately he finds no happiness out in this new world as he resorts to alcohol and violence to cope with his feelings of displacement; “ And I always had crazy dreams. I always have had them, but it seemed they became nightmares more often in Seattle” (17). He returns to his reservation, quits drinking and eventually finds a steady job. However, he still is uneasy with life as he “... [He] wished [he] lived closer to the river, to the falls where ghosts of salmon jump” (19). Even after returning to his reservation he still feels out of place and wants something more, something that was taken from his elders many years ago. The narrator’s state of mind is bothersome and marked with anger towards the white race. The digressions in the story present explanations for his tainted view and faithlessness in white people. The story portrays the narrator’s relationship with his white girlfriend as destructive, marked with a lack of trust and commitment. The narrator explains, “ In Seattle I broke lamps. She and I would argue and I’d break a lamp, just pick it up and throw it down” (16). <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-storytelling-and-storyteller-in-sherman-alexies-the-lone-ranger-and-tonto-fistfight-in-heaven/>

Further in the story we find out about a dream that drives the narrator to leave his white girlfriend, in which he dreamed “ three mounted soldiers play polo with a dead Indian woman’s head” (17). These morbid dreams clearly show his issues with white people and inability to forget the past injustices against his kind. The digressions are utilized to express the mental anguish of the narrator, someone who is always haunted of his ancestors past as well as the oppression of today’s generations. Furthermore, these digressions let us tap into the mind of a depressed and lost narrator who is so haunted by his demons that he proclaims, “ I wish I could sleep. I put down my paper or book and turn off all the lights, lie quietly in the dark. It may take hours, even years, for me to sleep again” (19). The unconventional structure of this story presents to us someone who is clearly disturbed and always thinking of the past, both his and his ancestors, and the failures they entailed. For example, his stint in Seattle ultimately concluded with a dead-end job and a dead-end relationship. Looking back on his failed attempt at city life, the narrator proclaims “ There’s an old Indian poet who said that Indians can reside in the city, but they can never live there. That’s as close to truth as any of us can get” (18). Throughout the story we never learn the name of the narrator, which signifies identity issues. He runs into some complications with authorities one night while trying to drive off some steam from a heated fight with his girlfriend. He was told by the police that he didn’t fit the profile of the neighborhood he was driving through, however he “...wanted to tell him that [he] didn’t really fit the profile of the country...” (15). The narrator never feels at home or a peace because of these identity problems. He reinforces this idea when he says, “ Seems like I’d spend my whole life that way, looking for anything I recognized” (15). The narrator is a lost individual

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who searches for any familiarity to comfort him as he struggles with living by the standards of today. Sherman Alexie's style of storytelling is essential in this piece for us to truly understand the trials and tribulations of the narrator. The story is unconventional and sporadic, quite frankly it is all over the place. However, this is appropriate for the narrator's state of mind which is haunted by the fate of his ancestors and lacking a feeling of belonging. The story changes directions many times because the narrator is a lost individual. He has no real direction in life and seems to have given up on discovering who he really is. The real significance of this story is not within the plot, however it is carefully handed to us, little by little, within the story's many digressions.