

Reading and writing



**ASSIGN
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Essay: Reading and writing Sherman Alexie, a celebrated Native American writer, best known for his fictions, shares his journey of learning to read and write in the essay *The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me*. However, what started off as a leisure read turns into a tale of Native Americans' struggle for literacy in contemporary times. Throughout the essay, Alexie's narrative tone gradually tenses up, from calm and patient to slightly agitated. In masterfully manipulating his words and phrases, Alexie successfully conveys the hardship he experienced growing up as a Native American while fighting to alter his life path through reading and writing, and his genuine concern for the younger generation of his ethnic group (2006). This essay aims to analyze Alexie's word crafts, through which he expresses, explains and appeals to his readers, and to grasp the purpose and intentions of particular words choices and sentence and paragraph structures. In consideration of the intimacy of the topic, Alexie introduces his essay with a clear personal touch by taking his readers to the time when he was a toddler, who had gotten his hands on a copy of the Superman comic books for the very first time. The experience depicted by Alexie is one that many readers, if not shared, must have acquired in a similar fashion.

Immediately, the author skillfully connects with his readership, closing the gap of age, ethnicity, social background difference or differences of any kind. Upon establishing such connection, Alexie goes on telling his part of the story, in which he grew up in a big family constantly survived on minimum-wages and could barely support themselves. Introducing his family's economic condition laid the foundation to contrast his father's profound love for reading. Even when the family had to rely on government supplies,

Alexie™s father did not give up on reading. And inspired by his father, Alexie began to read everything he could reach as well. Despite the description of the family™s unfortunate living condition, this part of the essay does not aim to invite sympathy. The author™s stream of thought progresses naturally through narration in a calming tone, engaging the readers to join him along his journey of learning to read. Alexie begins to recall the process through which he taught himself to read in the following paragraphs.

He patiently walks through how he understood the concept and purpose of dividing texts into paragraphs, and how he was overly excited and began to see his surroundings in paragraphs at the same time. Furthermore, he also explains the procedure of him learning to read, that he would describe the picture in his own words and pretend the narrative alongside the picture was telling the same content. The reasons that Alexie goes through the trouble to reminisce his childhood discovery are: first, that he wants to share with his readers the delirious joy of grasping the techniques of reading; and second, that he believes that his exponential learning curve was astounding considering he was self-taught, yet he did not receive the necessary recognition for his talents due to his ethnicity and social standing. In establishing such belief, the author cleverly corresponds with his main topic, while building up his argument leading to the next portion of his essay.

Indians are expected to underperform academically, as explained by the author, who listed three examples of Indian children forced to live up to the expectation submissively in social occasions, while they are, in fact, intelligent and high-achieving individuals within their own communities. Contrasting to those Indian youngsters who succumb to social norms, Alexie

describes his personal battle against convention, which was also his struggle to steer his life path through reading aggressively. In the next paragraph, Alexie repeats the word read fourteen times, claiming that he was reading everything at anytime and anywhere, with the sole purpose of emphasizing his desperation to change his life by absorbing as much knowledge as he could. Breaking down the boundaries was no easy task, and this is what Alexie tries to inform his readers through his deliberate repetition.

Interestingly, the example Alexie chose to showcase how he taught himself to read in the prior paragraph bears metaphorical indication. The image, as Alexie describes, showed Superman heroically breaking down a door, which is much likely to reflect the author™s acquiring the skills of reading is breaking down the doors of limitations stemmed from social stereotypes and unfair expectations. The career choice of becoming a writer may seem viable to the most, yet it is hardly imaginable to Native Americans as they were, in a way, robbed of such possibilities as children. To eventually become an accomplished writer is a breakthrough, not only for Sherman Alexie as an individual, but for his entire community as well. His achievement lights up the prospects for younger generations, while he continues to push further for the struggles of his ethnicity™s social standing by teaching Indian children to read and write. At the end of his essay, Alexie refers to the Indian kids already defeated by social expectations and reiterates his analogy of doors as stereotypes and limitations.

Once again, he throws himself against the doors, in attempt to shatter the deeply rooted conventional beliefs. As the metaphors resonated with the prior parts of the essay, Alexie fights on his battle for literacy and unlimited

possibilities in life, only not for himself this time, but for his community. It is evident that the Native Americans suffer from unfair disadvantages in the course of personal development due to ethnicity and long-established social barriers. With ingenious text construction that shares his personal struggles against social norms, Alexie accentuates, reflects, and resonates, creating an inerasable impression on his readers of the importance of literacy, especially to contemporary Native Americans. ?-Z?