

# [Good war dances literature review example](https://assignbuster.com/good-war-dances-literature-review-example/)

[Family](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/family/), [Father](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/family/father/)

In Sherman Alexie’s book War Dances, the author navigates his precarious position in between white and Native American culture, attempting to reconcile the creature comforts and medical science of Western civilization with the innate attributes of the Indian experience. In his titular story, “ War Dances,” the slow death of his father and his gradual hearing loss from a hydrocephalic tumor are greeted with the same sense of humor, Alexie attempting to hide his utter fear and his grief at the loss of his father with sardonic jokes and poetry.
The effect of white subjugation of Native Americans, and the marginalization of Natives in modern American culture takes its toll in a variety of ways throughout the story. Repeated mentions are made of the alcoholism and broken-down road-trip lifestyle that many citizens of reservations have to endure, as well as the stereotypes they must fight against (which they themselves often perpetuate). Alexie’s humorous stance on these cultural perceptions is that these stereotypes often have a grain of truth to them; when he asks another Indian in the hospital if he has another blanket, the man gets angry and says “ You’re stereotyping your own damn peopleBut damn if we don’t have a room full of Pendleton blankets” (Alexie). Indians are frequently shown to be hostile to the concept of white culture overtaking them, though they wholeheartedly embrace the technological advances of hospitals and look down on attempts at older citizens to keep a uniquely Indian identity alive: “ my dad started, like, this new Indian tradition. He says it’s a thousand years old. But that’s bullshit” (Alexie). For example, when Alexie tells the tale of a woman at a conference who argued for a separate literary identity for Indians, Alexie feels sorry for her for not getting with the times.“ She had taken nostalgia as her false idol—her thin blanket—and it was murdering her” (Alexie).
Alexie finds a certain unhappiness with both the way Indians have been subjugated over the years and the way Indians themselves react to it, including himself. When he finds out he has a tumor that, while it is said to not kill him for decades, worries him, he thinks of his father and wishes he could be with him. He thinks back on the Indian road-trips and constant “ are we there yet?” s of his youth, as well as the disappointment and disillusion that often occurred with his drunken, depressed father, feeling himself start to get the same way with his children: “ Without using the words “ man” or “ good,” can you please define what it means to be a good man?” (Alexie). At the same time, he uplifts his father as a bit of a folk hero with the poem “ Mutually Assured Destruction,” showing a complex relationship that turns its nose as the stereotypical Indian alcoholism while also yearning for the past when he and his father understood each other – the ‘ nostalgia’ that was his own thin blanket.
“ War Dances” showcases the fear and nostalgia that comes with a people that desperately want to hold onto their cultural identity while also suffocating under it. Alexie notes the complex desire of Indians to be themselves but benefit from the comforts of modern society, holding onto nostalgia as much as they can before they find themselves suffering from the sins (and ailments) of their fathers.

## Works Cited

Alexie, Sherman. “ War Dances.” In War Dances. 2009.