

The protagonist victor
in "this is what it
means to say
phoenix, arizona" by
sher...

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Victor In the very first sentence of Sherman Alexie's " This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona," you can assume that the main character, Victor, is facing a hard life. Not only did he lose his job, he also lost his father to a heart attack the same day. The story tells the journey of Victor and an old friend, Thomas Builds-the-Fire, traveling to Phoenix to pick up his father's ashes, pickup truck, and money from his savings account. Victor did not have any money and neither did anyone else living on the reservation, " Who does have money on a reservation, except the cigarette and fireworks sales-people? (page 275) Victor has to turn to the tribal council for money, but they are also low on funds and can only give him one-hundred dollars. Thomas is considered the town's outcast and he is the only one willing to help Victor. Victor goes on to say that he used to be friends with Thomas until they were about fifteen and then Victor turned his back on him because everyone else thought he was weird. He also talks about their childhood and the memories they share and the fact that Thomas knew about Victor's father wanting to leave before it ever happened. Once, when they were seven years old, when Victor's father still lived with the family, Thomas closed his eyes and told Victor this story: " Your father's heart is weak. He is afraid of his own family. He is afraid of you. " (page 275). Thomas ends up giving Victor the rest of the money he needs, but only if Victor allows Thomas to go along. The author never really gives any physical traits, but you know he is an Indian, does not have a lot of money, just lost his father, and lives on a reservation.

The author does not specially tell you how old Victor is. There is no mention of any other family besides his mother, "...and the rest of his family didn't

have any use at all for him. " (page 275) Even though Victor's father did not play a big part in his life, " there still was a genetic pain, which was soon to be pain as real and immediate and a broken bone. " (page 275) Victor is a dynamic and round character because he slowly begins to change throughout the story. Victor is continuously complaining about Thomas or making fun of him.

When they are on the plane and Thomas is talking to the gymnast, " Victor was ready to jump out of the plane. Thomas, that crazy Indian storyteller with ratty old braids and broken teeth..." (page 278) I think that Victor is somewhat ashamed of his Native American background because he did not want to turn out like Thomas. Throughout the course of their trip, Victor begins to accept Thomas and understand him more. When Victor agrees to listen to just one of Thomas' stories, " Just one time when I'm telling a story somewhere, why don't you stop and listen?

Thomas asked. Victor waved his arms to let Thomas know that the deal was good," (page 282) the reader begins to see the new, more accepting Victor. The old Victor would be too afraid of what others were thinking about him to stop and listen to Thomas tell a story, but now he accepts who he is and also who his cousin Thomas is. " Victor was quiet for a long time. He searched his mind for memories of his father, found the good ones, found a few bad ones, added it all up, and smiled. This is another turning point in the story because this is where Victor finally accepts his relationship with his father and is at peace. " This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona" shows the true value offriendship. In the later part of their relationship, Victor was a really bad friend to Thomas, but Thomas has been there for Victor so many times

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throughout their childhood, and even now that they are adults. Although Thomas was not physically by Victor's side, he was there the whole time waiting to come to Victor's rescue.

The story goes back and forth to show how Victor and Thomas were once friends. Thomas even made a deal with Victor's father to watch over Victor, "But he said I had to watch out for you as part of the deal." (page 279) Victor is in debt to Thomas and even gives him some of his father's ashes. By the end of the story, Victor finally realized the true meaning of friendship with his own cousin Thomas, and that all those other guys that made fun of him for being friends with Thomas when they were children were not true friends.

At the end of the story Victor realizes how hurtful he has been to Thomas when in reality; Thomas was the only one who stood by Victor's side and in return "all Thomas had ever wanted from his whole life," (page 282) was for someone to just stop and listen to him tell one of his stories. I think Victor became a man at the end of the story. He finally learned to accept Thomas, his relationship with his father, and his Native American heritage.