

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

Annexe 4 – Group Discussion on the blog

Libellé du billet du blog:

After reading *The absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* from page 54 to page 99 discuss Arnold's arrival at Reardan and the problems he is faced with there. Post your comments below.

Commentaires des élèves :

Hi to you all ,

To introduce the subject, we could talk about the way that Arnold arrived at Reardan.

So , when Arnold decided to go to Reardan, the day after he actually goes to school there . Knowing that Reardan is located twenty-two miles from the rez I find it weird that Arnold succeeded in going there as quickly (without forgetting that Arnold's parents can't afford to drive their son there because we've said they were penniless) .Furthermore , I was disappointed about the size of Reardan High School: only about hundred students! It makes it like it wasn't a prestigious school.

Well, what are your opinions about these points?

Farid

2. Le 02 mars 2011, 17:04 par Jérôme

We learn that Arnold isn't very well integrated at first, he has a hard time adjusting to Reardan at the beginning. He doesn't know anybody and it's hard for him to make friends. We also learn that Arnold has to follow Spokane rules. After being insulted by a group of Reardan pupils, he punches the leader, Roger, (in the face). Then, he goes to see his grandmother for some advice, he doesn't understand why Roger didn't hit him back. His grandmother thinks that Roger might respect him because he has done that. Arnold becomes friends with Gordy at the end of the part we had to read.

3. Le 02 mars 2011, 17:15 par Margaux

When he arrived at Reardan, Arnold was the odd-one-out and being the centre of attention made him feel quite uncomfortable, "They stared at me like I was BigFoot or a UFO", "Everyone giggled at me". Most of the students rejected him, they called him names like "Redskin" "Squaw boy" "Sitting bull"... For example, one day, Arnold went to speak with a kid who didn't want to answer because he was afraid to be killed by Junior! Then came racist remarks. Roger (a student) insulted him, and his tribe, saying "Did you know that proof niggers fuck buffalo?", then Arnold refused it, and beat Roger. Racist remarks affect him, so Arnold, uses physical violence. Another day, more precisely, for Halloween, Arnold went home and there somebody closed the door on his face, just before, a group of children, attacked Junior. But teachers didn't behave well with him either. Mr Dodge didn't believe Arnold when he explained the story about "petrified wood isn't wood" whereas, Arnold was absolutely right ! In conclusion, I can say that, Arnold wasn't welcome at Reardan, everybody was against, him. (except for one person....)

4. Le 03 mars 2011, 10:49 par Sophie

I agree with Farid that he went there very quickly but as he said if he hadn't left quickly he would never have left the rez'. I believe like you Margaux and Jerome that it's very difficult for Arnold to arrive in a new school where everybody thinks he's different. But on the Rez, except for his family and maybe Rowdy everybody thought he was different as well and he was scared by everybody. At Reardan he seems less scared since he punched someone in the face. I think that the harder for him is to lose Rowdy because maybe Arnold felt a bit less odd on the rez' thanks to Rowdy. Now he's sure he belongs neither to the rez nor to Reardan.

5. Le 03 mars 2011, 17:35 par Alice

When Arnold arrived at Reardan he was scared but he didn't know what's going to happen with the other students, he was wondering what he was doing in a racist white school.

We learn that all the students stared at him and that he was mocked. Then he was confronted to verbal violence with Roger who told him a bad joke about Indians, and Arnold, who only knows the Spokanes' rules, punched him back (in the face).

This incident shows us that Reardan and the rez are two completely different worlds and that Arnold will have to adapt if he wants to "survive" in this school.

6. Le 03 mars 2011, 18:25 par Anaïs

I agree with Margaux because when Arnold arrived into Reardan, everybody was laughing at him or was scared of him. But when some guy named Roger and his friends insulted him and his indian origins, Arnold couldn't let that happen. so he punched Roger in the face, following the "code" of the rez. Roger, instead of punching him back, just walked away! Arnold just earned his respect and the respect of the rest of the group. He thinks that because he has now the respect of the boys, he's accepted in the school, but Penelope totally ignores him, reminding him that he's not welcome in this school and that he is an outsider...

7. Le 03 mars 2011, 18:32 par Alexia

Before arriving at Reardan, Arnold is scared but he can't change his mind. Other kids stare at him and surround him. In class a girl, Penelope, asks some questions about him but a few days after she ignores him. The teachers don't care about him. The fact that he is new and might have problems adapting does not seem to matter much. Roger, a big guy, calls him Chief and tells stupid jokes about Indians, so Arnold respects the Spokane Indian rules and punches Roger in the face. Everybody is shocked. The next day Roger just says 'Hi' but does not punch him back. According to Roger there aren't any rules in Reardan. Then Arnold becomes friends with Gordy, the genius of the class and they start to study together.

8. Le 03 mars 2011, 18:46 par Madeleine

I agree with everyone when you say that Arnold is not well integrated and that he has to face racism (even with his teachers, like for example M. Dodge, like Margaux said.). He tries to protect himself when he hits Roger, and he doesn't understand why Roger doesn't try to hit him back. He also thinks that he can become friends with Penelope, but Reardan students (even Penelope) don't want him in their school. He feels really lonely.

I agree with Farid and I don't understand neither how Arnold gets so fast in the school, it's kind of weird that he does not have to convince the school to take him in or anything like this before ... But unlike Farid I'm not surprised by the size of Reardan. For an Indian kid, one hundred students might be a lot ...

9. Le 03 mars 2011, 18:47 par Agathe

I agree with you Farid when you say that you find weird that Arnold succeeded in going as quickly to Reardan. I think it might not be right, but lots of things in the book are exaggerated (for example : Arnold's forty-two teeth).

Although I totally agree with Margaux when she says that Arnold wasn't welcome at Reardan, something seems to me more important (Indeed, we all already knew that Arnold would not belong.).

To my mind, the most important thing in this part of the book is the way Arnold discovers that white people do not have the same rules as Indians. Indeed, we can feel how shocked Arnold is when Roger says "What rules?". I think he didn't know that people could be so different. After this part, Arnold's grandmother tried to explain why Roger didn't hurt Arnold. She said that Roger now respects him, but he couldn't believe it. The day after, he understood that his grandmother was right. Indeed, Roger spoke to Arnold nicely and in a friendly manner.

After those stories, Arnold and Gordy became friends, and he understood that his friend and he are not so different, and that they have much in common.

10. Le 03 mars 2011, 19:13 par Marion

As Farid said, I was a little disappointed by the size of Reardan school. The way Arnold spoke about it made us think that it was a rich and big and prestigious school, but we learn here that there are only a hundred students and that some teachers don't teach the subject they are supposed to teach. I also thought that he didn't have to face as many problems as we expected to : he is bullied but when he hit Roger, the others guys stopped harassing him. Actually, I think loneliness was the biggest problem he had.

11. Le 03 mars 2011, 20:55 par Noé

Hello !

Farid, Arnold says that when he goes to school without his parents, he doesn't walk the whole distance, he hitchhikes most of the times. He says that sometimes he has to walk the whole distance but it's rare... It's weird because the distance is 32 miles ... and Reardan is maybe not a prestigious school, but it's a more prestigious school than the rez school. Reardan school is a little school because it's located in the countryside!!!

12. Le 03 mars 2011, 21:19 par Dominique

I think we can all agree that Arnold really wasn't welcome at Reardan.

But on the first day, he saw a "totally, absolutely gorgeous!" girl named Penelope, he was emotionally erect. But finally, nothing happened between them, except for a moment when they protested together against the unfair treatment of homeless people in the USA (for Halloween) where Arnold was living a dream.

Like Margaux said, everybody was against Arnold except for one person.... who is actually Gordy, the little genius. Remember, the one who confirmed that Arnold's answer to Mr.Dodge was right (about petrified wood). Later, they share moments, speaking about books and cartoons, about having a boner with books.... that's weird.....

Arnold is starting to find his place in this scary and racist school. We also learn what happened to Mary's life, his sister who gave up her dream.....

13. Le 03 mars 2011, 21:22 par Quentin

Step by step Junior meets new people like Gordy or Penelope or Roger who respect him since Arnold punched his face. Junior admires Gordy : "He was an extremely weird dude. But he was the smartest person I've ever known. He would always be the smartest person I'd ever known." They have a lot of common points and they laugh together. The problem is not Reardan school but the rez ; everybody on the rez points at him as the odd-one-out. In Reardan

no teacher pays much attention to him, they consider him as an idiot. It seems that his showing that Mr Dodge was false just made things worse between him and Mr Dodge, of course - "Mr.Dodge thanked Gordy but he didn't say another word to me.", but also with the other teachers - "Yep, now even the teachers were treating me like an idiot".

14. Le 03 mars 2011, 21:31 par Marine

I agree with Farid about Arnold's sudden decision of going to Reardan and I find it also weird that his parents accepted so easily, although they are poor.

Arnold's arrival to Reardan is quite difficult for him because he is the only Indian boy in the school and he doesn't know anybody. He is faced with many problems: first, as Margaux said, he is the centre of attention so he feels uncomfortable. Then, he is mocked by Penelope because of his rez accent and kids laugh at him and tell him some racist joke. To top it all, Junior doesn't know the rules and how to react with white kids. For example, when he beats Roger, Junior thinks Roger will beat him back but he didn't. That's why he decides to ask his grandmother for some advice.

And even the teacher, Mr Dodge, is nasty to him. He didn't want to believe what Arnold said and he insulted the rez.

To conclude, Arnold is lost because everything in Reardan is different from the rez and he knows that it will be hard for him to find his place in this racist school...

15. Le 03 mars 2011, 22:05 par Guillaume

Hello everybody.

I just wanted to add one thing : we can read at the beginning that Arnold hesitates before entering Reardan (he finally decides to enter the school).

And I also wanted to say that I agree with Margaux when she says that Arnold hasn't got only enemies in Reardan : there is Gordy, his friend, Melinda, the secretary (we can see that she's nice with him at the beginning)...

16. Le 04 mars 2011, 16:32 par Antoine

Hello everybody !

You said a lot of things so I don't really know what I can add.

I just want to say that I do not really agree Dominique because Mary, Arnold's sister hasn't given up her dreams. She does what she wants to do : she marries the man she loves even if he is ugly and I think she keeps writing romance novels.

17. Le 04 mars 2011, 17:13 par Jérémy

Hi everybody !

For me, those passages of "The absolutely True Diary Of A Part Time Indian" are sort of lessons of life. According to Marine's note, parent's of Arnold's parents accept too easily to transfer their son, although they are POOR : we can all agree to say that's a demonstration of hope because they believe in him, despite their situation.

Then, when Arnold arrives at Reardan, other students laugh at him : it's a way to denounce racism at school or in our society.

Finally, Arnold and Penelope protest together against the unfair treatment of homeless people in the USA, like Dominique said, but we can also see a lesson of humanity ...

Among other things, I agree with Farid and his interesting comment about the size of Reardan and Noé's relevant answer.

18. Le 04 mars 2011, 18:51 par Julien

Hi everybody,

I see that you all think the same way, and so do I. Arnold is really scared when he enters Reardan's school (and even after, each time he comes!), but he made the right choice !

As Mr. P says, he will find more and more hope as he runs away from the rez. I think 'hope' stands not only just for hope : it might mean friendship, happiness...Lots of positive things! And even if now Arnold has lost Rowdy, maybe (I hope!) Rowdy will forgive him. It might just take a bit of time. What do you think about my thoughts?

19. Le 04 mars 2011, 19:33 par Maelle

When he arrived to Reardan, Arnold was anxious first, then he felt happy. He was the first at school, when the other students arrived, they looked at him as if he was Bigfoot or something like that (like Margaux said). They stared at him, they made him feel he was the odd-one-out. When he came in class, his other classmates continued to stare at him ; only a girl : Penelope, paid attention to him and asked him what his name was. After class, a boy named Roger tried to bully him. To defend himself, Arnold hit Roger in the face. After the punching, Roger and his friends went away. Arnold came back home walking and then he consulted his grandmother about Roger's reaction (he didn't want to take his revenge). His grandmother said that maybe Roger respected him now. The next day, Arnold walked all the way to school because his family hadn't got enough money to afford gas for the car. At school, Gordy spoke to him like they had been friends for a while. Arnold made a remark in class but the teacher didn't believe him because of his origins. But when another boy: Gordy, agreed with Arnold, the teacher said thank you to Gordy for his remarks but nothing for Arnold (as Quentin said). At the end, Gordy and Arnold became friends in spite of Gordy's hesitation because of Arnold's origins.

20. Le 04 mars 2011, 20:10 par Tim'

I think we can develop a few things : the problems he had to go to school, and his "friend" Gordy.

Most of the time Arnold's father drives him to Reardan, but when he's drunk he can't. We can also see that someday, there is no more gas in the car to drive him ; that's why one day he was forced to walk to school, fortunately helped by his uncle's friend : he gave him a ride to school on a beautiful motorbike (a Harley Davidson !).

In a second part, we can see that when Arnold talked about "petrified wood" and corrected his teacher, Gordy defended him. But at first, Gordy said this only for the sake of science". But later, Arnold managed to break the ice and to talk with him and they became friends.

21. Le 04 mars 2011, 20:13 par Julia

I agree with Marion when she says that Arnold feels lonely. He may have a few regrets about leaving the rez. He is bullied and Rowdy is no longer here to protect him. He misses Rowdy a lot because he was his only friend.

However, Arnold is lucky and courageous to enter Reardan. It is thanks to Mr P. If he hadn't hit him with the book, he would never have gone to Reardan. When he hits Rogers, he asks himself why Georges doesn't hit him back. He begins to understand the different social codes and rules.

22. Le 04 mars 2011, 21:08 par Victoria

I agree with you Agathe when you say that lots of things are exaggerated in this book! To transfer to another school takes time...

We also see that Indian and white teenagers don't have the same rules at all.

It's the first time Arnold has been respected by somebody!

Usually, Arnold was protected by Rowdy! He couldn't do anything against the teenagers of the rez.

Also Gordy is maybe a better influence than Rowdy was for Arnold, for his dreams, for his future...