

Description of Arnold's teeth

"But I have all sorts of physical problems that are directly the result of my brain damage.

First of all, I ended up having forty-two teeth. The typical human has thirty-two, right? But I had forty-two.

Ten more than usual.

Ten more than normal.

Ten more than human.

My teeth got so crowded that I could barely close my mouth. I went to the Indian Health Service to get some teeth pulled so I could eat normally, not like some slobbering vulture. But the Indian Health Service funded major dental work only once a year, so I had to have all ten extra teeth pulled *in one day*.

And what's more, our white dentist believed that Indians only felt half as much pain as white people did, so he only gave us half the Novocain."

Sherman Alexie, *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. (p 2)

COMMENTAIRES

SUR LE DIAPORAMA 'Arnold's teeth'

Une série de diapositives insistant sur :

- les quantifieurs / la notion de quantité : caricatural (too much / not enough) / grotesque / exaggerated / ridiculous abundance is revealing of a major lack – comparaisons et contrastes (Arnold / human beings – whites / indians) ;
- les adjectifs : **compares himself to** an ugly animal / a vulture – he is not human :
 - half human / half animal / part-time vulture – 'I' is caught in between 'human' and 'slobbering vulture' ;
 - de la comparaison à la métaphore incongrue et peu flatteuse.

☞ The narrator / Arnold **sounds self-deprecating / highly critical of himself / ironical.**

- la notion de '*problem*' lié à '*pain*' ;
- les mots de liaison:
 - 'but' repeated 3 times (= as many obstacles) ;
 - 'what's more' = accumulation, to crown it all / to top it all / the last straw – the last straw that broke the camel's back ;
 - 'so' = direct consequence of a problem – a consequence the narrator has **to deal with / to cope with / to put up with** ;
- l'appartenance à une communauté ethnique (whites and Indians – stereotypes and prejudices – unfair treatment, inequity) ;

☞ Arnold is a victim / he has no choice

As a human being he was born with physical handicaps but he also **underlines / emphasizes / insists on the fact that** being an Indian **makes things** even **worse** for him as he is prejudiced against by whites.

Arnold **portrays / depicts / describes himself as** a monster / a freak / a weirdo / a retard
He is not normal / he **is different from** normal human beings / he **departs from the normal**

- as an individual
- as an Indian

The portrait he makes of himself is **both** disgusting / scary **and** funny / hilarious / grotesque.

He **has a great sense of humor – dead pan humor** (no apparent emotion, he sounds matter-of-fact).

He **makes fun of** himself / he **laughs at** himself and he **aims at** making the reader laugh at him.

He presents himself as a victim of nature and of the prejudiced society he lives in but he is careful not to use the word 'victim'.

He was born with lots of problems and handicaps to deal with and to overcome.

He was born with **too much and too little (too little** luck / **too many** teeth / **too little** money / **too little** consideration and respect from the whites / ...).

In this short extract we can see that he directly addresses the reader :

'The typical human has thirty-two [teeth], **right?**'

It is as if he were talking to us. The tone is **casual** (≠ formal), it **reminds us of stand-up comedy** and stand-up comedians addressing their audience.

Therefore **as readers** we have **ambivalent** feelings: we both **feel like** pitying him and **laughing** at him with him.