

The ATD

Looking back at the novel

Judging after reading

‘The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is about the search for personal and cultural identity.’ Do you agree?

In my opinion that is “absolutely” true. Junior starts as a person who is discriminated by everyone except one friend. Because of his physical damage he looks different but for humanity it is normal to want to belong to a group. That includes physical appearance. At this point people normally come across the question why they are so much different and what could be “wrong” with them. The conflict really grows as he leaves Wellpint and goes to Reardan: The first shock is to lose the best but also only friend. From now on it is the keyword “cultural identity”. Junior finds good friends at Reardan, but they are “white”. He often asks himself whether he belongs to the “white” or “red” group. He intensively thinks about what he is called: At the reservation people often call him a “white lover” or think that he is a traitor because he left the reservation. That really causes self-doubt in Junior. Rowdy also blames Junior for the death of his sister and accuses him that she wouldn’t have left the reservation if he had stayed.

From these examples you can clearly see that Junior really has to find out about his “identity”. What he is, why things happened and where he belongs to.

The structure of the novel

The style of writing (namely the first-person perspective) causes the reader to look through Junior’s eyes and feel as they would exactly experience what Junior experiences during his journey at high school. The cartoons clearly show what Junior thinks and visualises Junior’s thoughts. The reader really wants Junior to succeed and as a result wants to know whether he will or not. That is what keeps the readers turning the pages till the end.

What is left at the end? - An evaluation

For me, the main message is to risk something and not only stay in your comfort zone your whole life. But it is more: Junior really shows use to be extremely self-reflected. As a result, he can better understand the people around him and clearly respond to them. He has never given up somebody and that is why Rowdy and he could play there incredibly game as the last scene in the novel without keeping scores.