



## **Memoir, Identity and History in the Works of Sherman Alexie: An Insider's Outsider Perspective**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.01.02

by James P. Brochin

Designed for urban high-school students in U.S. History II, Civics, or Journalism, the unit's central thematic focus is Sherman Alexie's writing. Alexie is one of very few writers capable of making students laugh, cry, get angry, and gain a deeply personalized understanding of American Indian history and identity. How did he develop his identity? By choosing to leave the reservation, he became an insider's outsider. Teenagers are by nature insider outsiders, with powerful antennae capable of figuring things out. Combining a close study of his writing with at least two films, *Little Big Man* and *Smoke Signals*, along with words and images from *Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices* and other texts, students will develop some of the following skills: journalistic writing, memoir analysis and writing, film review writing, and a critical analysis of American Indian history. Students will also gain some appreciation of the varied experiences of Native communities, and will contribute to podcast recordings of class presentations and discussions.

(Recommended for Journalism, grades 9-12; English and Civics, grades 11 and 12)

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