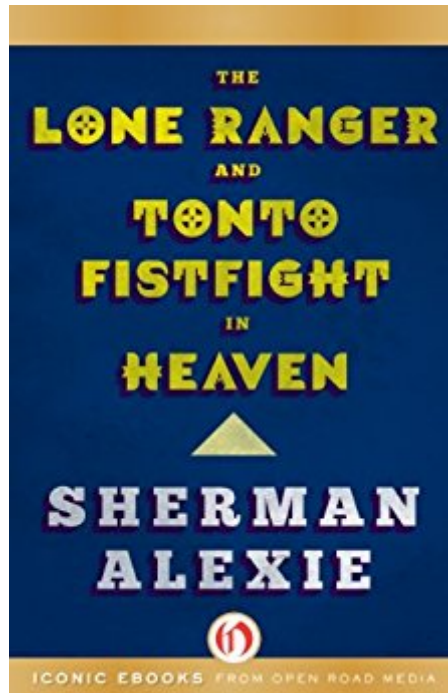


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# The Lone Ranger And Tonto Fistfight In Heaven



## Synopsis

Sherman Alexie's darkly humorous story collection weaves memory, fantasy, and stark reality to powerfully evoke life on the Spokane Indian Reservation. The twenty-four linked tales in Alexie's debut collection "an instant classic" paint an unforgettable portrait of life on and around the Spokane Indian Reservation, a place where "Survival = Anger x Imagination," where HUD houses and generations of privation intertwine with history, passion, and myth. We follow Thomas Builds-the-Fire, the longwinded storyteller no one really listens to; his half-hearted nemesis, Victor, the basketball star turned recovering alcoholic; and a wide cast of other vividly drawn characters on a haunting journey filled with humor and sorrow, resilience and resignation, dreams and reality. Alexie's unadulterated honesty and boundless compassion come together in a poetic vision of a world in which the gaps between past and present are not really gaps after all. The basis for the acclaimed 1998 feature film *Smoke Signals*, the *Chicago Tribune* noted, "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven . . . is for the American Indian what Richard Wright's *Native Son* was for the black American in 1940." The collection received a Special Citation for the PEN/Hemingway Award for Best First Fiction. This ebook edition features a new prologue from the author, as well as an illustrated biography and rare photos from Sherman Alexie's personal collection.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I should preface this book with a personal explanation. The best way to approach Sherman Alexie is to look into your own personal history regarding American Indians. For me, I grew up with the vague notion that Indians didn't exist anymore. I think a lot of kids that don't live near large Native American populations suffer from this perception. I mean, where in popular culture do you ever come across a modern day Indian? There was that movie "Smoke Signals" (based on one of the stories in this book) and possibly the television show "Northern Exposure" but that is it, ladies and gentlemen. In my own life, realization hit when I started Junior High and read "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" for the very first time. If you've read the book then you know that it dwells on the character "Chief" and his past. I read about him and found out that I knew diddly over squat about Native Americans. They show "Dances With Wolves" in high school homeroom and through that you're supposed to infer contemporary Indian culture? That's like watching "Gone With the Wind" and wondering where all the happy slaves are today. It doesn't make sense. This is why I'm nominating, "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight In Heaven" as the book that should be required in every Junior High and High School in the country immediately. We've all read our "Catcher In the Rye" and "Scarlet Letter". Now let's read something real. The book is a collection of short stories, all containing repeating characters and events. There is no single plot to the story and while the character of Victor is probably the closest thing the book has to a protagonist, he hardly hogs the spotlight for very long. In this book we witness a single Spokane Reservation. We watch personal triumphs and repeated failures and mistakes.

This is my personal measure of Sherman Alexie, the gifted young Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian writer: He caught my attention in a recently rebroadcast "60 Minutes" feature story. What appealed to me was his sardonic wit--edgy, thoughtful, ironic, challenging, and, yes, I thought, a bit sad. I told myself, Let's see if he can really write, let's see what he's got to say. So I pick up one of his books of prose; within a week, I had read three. This outstanding collection of interrelated stories was the first. Very, very impressive! I loved his writing, his crisp, bone simple and straight style. I felt for his finely etched characters, a handful of them--especially one named Victor, presumably the author's stand-in--recurring throughout. And these are all stories with bite. "Maybe hunger informs our lives,"

says the narrating voice of "Family Portrait." Roughly the first half of this book exposes us to what it means to be "Native American" today: The spoils of defeat--the tight-lipped, self-destructive despair of a once proud, historic people reduced to segregated conditions. Isolated from the white world, isolated from their own traditions. Subject to poor housing, education and food, chronic unemployment, rampant alcoholism, diabetes, blood fights and bloody ends. Alexie's sharp depictions of conflicted identity, uncertainty in the everyday and lifelong struggles for survival on the Spokane Indian reservation, the contradictory capacities for tenderness and tragedy, beauty and brutality, breaks down our detachment, jars us into realizing both the unique and common human attributes of his people. What he induces is simply called "empathy."

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