

Detailed Response

Junior's drawings show us the humorous side of him, as well as giving us what the text does not say, allowing the reader(s) to see a different meaning, and often times Junior's coping method.

Humor is a big theme in the book, and one of the main ways Junior portrays his humorous side is through his drawings, whether it's comparisons, drawings of people, or little blurbs in and around the drawing. The drawing of Mr. Dodge being compared to a volcano (Alexie 85) gives us a little bit of relief or almost a release because he is being yelled at by the teacher, but instead of keeping the atmosphere tense, Junior inserts a comical drawing to lighten the mood, which can be said for a lot of his drawings. When Junior's grandma dies, a wake is held in memory of her, and a man named Ted shows up, claiming he has a powwow dance outfit of hers. Naturally, there is a drawing (Alexie 162) as this is a pretty funny moment because the dance outfit isn't hers and Ted is embarrassed in front of everyone at the wake, which is most of the reservation. The cultural appropriation could be imagined through the writing, but the drawing makes it so much better because the readers can physically see what the text says, and oftentimes when we can see something from the point of view of the memory's origin it helps us better understand what's going on. In general, the drawings make the pictures better because they add character and give a little more insight to what Junior was thinking as well as his type of humor, but they come into play in a few drawings specifically. One of these is a drawing of his sister's trailer in Montana (Alexie 134). The drawing is based off of a photo his sister sent alongside a letter about her trying to find a job, and it labels her "gorgeous new place" that "looks like a tv dinner tray". This gives us a little bit of sarcasm from Junior that the readers don't see often. While the drawings give us the humorous part of the book and Junior, they are also used as an aide to the text for the readers to see something they haven't before.

In the seminar we discussed Junior's coping methods. There is a lot of death in the book, and with the death comes grief. We talked about healthy and unhealthy methods of coping, and healthy or not, whether it's coping with grief or everyday emotions, Junior's drawings are a coping method, and they show us something the text doesn't. Using the same evidence as before, we can see the other side to the drawings in a direct comparison. In the book the story surrounding the drawing of Mr. Dodge being compared to a volcano (Alexie 85) is an important part of the story because he stands up to the teacher and meets Gordy, one of his friends at his new school. Mr. Dodge is a big guy teaching science, and when he's proved wrong, Junior can tell that he's mad. Junior is already nervous enough as it is telling the teacher what the answer actually is which you can tell by the way he's stuttering in the text. The drawing seems like a way to process the fear and anger coming from both sides into a simpler state. I think Junior feels that drawings make things easier to process because he can see them all on a paper. This can be said when looking at the drawing of Ted. Ted is walking, talking cultural appropriation and it has been normalized. Instead of feeling frustrated with Ted, they all just

laugh and Junior draws a picture of Ted. I think there are some feelings that aren't completely uncovered with that drawing because you can see it in the text when he says, "Do you know how many white strangers show up on Indian reservation every year and start telling Indians how much they love them? Thousands. It's sickening. And boring." (Alexie 162). Looking at the drawing of Junior's sister's trailer and the comments to the side of it (her "gorgeous new place" that "looks like a tv dinner tray" (Alexie 134)) there is a sense of sarcasm and anger. I believe that in this drawing he's processing the fact that his sister left their family and home to go live with her husband who she barely knows in his trailer, and I think the emotions that go with that could be in relations to anger, frustration, or feeling of worthlessness because his sister just left him without warning. Some of the drawings I think are just for humor purposes (like the drawn comparison of chickens to dancers (Alexie 19)), but there are also some drawings I think are just for processing and representing feelings like the grief circle (Alexie 160). It is a birds-eye-style view drawing of Junior in the middle of a circle of three people connected by their arms. He is crying and there are little zig zags coming from his head, which is almost always a direct representation of shock. I think the drawing speaks for itself without super deep analysis, especially beside the text which is talking about how everyone on the reservation stopped being mean to him when his grandma died, and let him grieve in peace. I believe that with what happened in his life, coping through humor and drawings was important for him.