

"Tales of an Urban Indian": The Trickster of Third Avenue East

Sherman Alexie's acclaimed novel, "Tales of an Urban Indian," presents a poignant and often humorous coming-of-age story set in the heart of the Spokane Indian Reservation and the urban sprawl of Spokane, Washington.



Darrell Dennis: Two Plays: Tales of An Urban Indian / The Trickster of Third Avenue East by Nicole Gulotta

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1910 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 132 pages
Lending : Enabled



At the center of this narrative is Arnold Spirit, Jr., known as Junior, a complex and enigmatic protagonist who embodies the spirit of a traditional Native American trickster. Throughout the novel, Junior employs his wit, cunning, and storytelling abilities to navigate the challenges and absurdities of both worlds.

The Trickster in Native American Folklore

The trickster is a common figure in Native American folklore, often depicted as a mischievous and playful character who challenges norms and disrupts

established order. Tricksters are known for their ability to outsmart their opponents, often using humor and deception to achieve their goals.

In "Tales of an Urban Indian," Junior embodies many of the classic characteristics of the trickster. He is a master of language, using it to manipulate situations and subvert expectations. He is also a skilled observer of human nature, able to identify and exploit the weaknesses of others.

Junior's Trickster Tactics

Throughout the novel, Junior employs a variety of trickster tactics, including:

- **Deception:** Junior often uses misdirection and lies to achieve his goals. In one instance, he pretends to be a famous author to gain access to a literary event he is not invited to.
- **Humor:** Junior uses humor as a weapon, both to disarm his opponents and to highlight the absurdity of his situation. His jokes and stories often serve to expose the hypocrisy and racism he encounters as an urban Indian.
- **Outwitting:** Junior's intelligence and quick wit allow him to outsmart those who underestimate him. In one scene, he uses his knowledge of the reservation's history to outmaneuver a land developer who wants to exploit his people.

The Purpose of the Trickster

While tricksters can be disruptive and chaotic, they also play an important role in Native American tradition. They are often seen as agents of change,

challenging the status quo and revealing the flaws in society.

In "Tales of an Urban Indian," Junior's trickster persona serves a similar purpose. He exposes the racism and discrimination faced by urban Indians, while also highlighting the resilience and humor of his people. Through his actions, Junior becomes a symbol of resistance and hope, demonstrating the power of the individual to overcome adversity.

Sherman Alexie's "Tales of an Urban Indian" is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that explores the complexities of urban Indian identity through the lens of the trickster figure. By embodying the spirit of traditional Native American folklore, Junior becomes a compelling and relatable protagonist, whose experiences resonate with readers from all walks of life.

Through his humor, deception, and outwitting, Junior exposes the injustices faced by his people while also celebrating their resilience and determination. In ng so, "Tales of an Urban Indian" becomes a timeless and essential read, offering valuable insights into the human condition and the power of storytelling.



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