What Do Images Say
Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
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Resources
McCloud, Scott. 1993. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: First Harper Perennial.

I.   **Hook**
"I draw cartoons…I take them seriously. I use them to understand the world. I use them to make fun of the world. To make fun of people. And sometimes I draw people because they're my friends and family. And I want to honor them" (95).

Think of a cartoon in the book and consider how it's used by Arnold to understand the world. Describe the cartoon and then discuss how it interprets the world. Does it fit one of Arnold's own categories of uses, or does it function in a different way?

Share out ideas as a large class as a warm-up.

II.   **Connecting to larger textual skills**
   A.   In *Understanding Comics* (1993), Scott McCloud discusses different ways that images can relate to words on a page (153-155).

   a.   **Word specific combinations** pictures illustrate, but *don't significantly add* to a largely complete text.
   b.   **Picture specific combinations** words do little more than *add a soundtrack* to a visually told sequence
   c.   **Duo-specific combinations** both words and pictures *send the same message*
   d.   **Additive combination** words amplify or *elaborate* on an image or vice versa.
   e.   **Parallel combinations** words and pictures seem to *follow very different courses*, without intersecting
   f.   **Montage** words are treated as *integral* parts of the picture
   g.   **Interdependent combinations** words and pictures go *hand in hand* to convey an idea than neither could convey alone (most common)
        i.   **Not always an equal balance**
        ii. **More words say, more the pictures "can be freed to go exploring and vice versa"**

   B.   How do words and images work in relation to each other in Alexie's text? What do images say? How do words describe?

   C.   **Independently** Counting off 1-10, focus on one of the following scenes and closely examine the images featured in relation to the words describing all or part of the image and respond to the questions above. You will join a group of 3-4 students to exchange ideas.

   a.   Mary Runs Away and Gets Married (89-91)
   b.   My Grandmother (67-70)
   c.   White/Indian (54-58)
   d.   Rowdy and Me Like We Used to Be (102)
   e.   Penelope in her dad's old hat (114)
   f.   How to Pretend You're Not Poor (120-121)
   g.   "Are You Poor?" (129-130)
   h.   My Sister Sends Me a Letter (135-136)
   i.   Ted (163-167)
   j.   Heaven Welcomes Grandma (169)

   D.   **Small Groups** Joining your interpretations consider how images work in Alexie in relation to words. Work out joint interpretations of individual images in relation to language, and then collectively to establish an interpretation, or an "argument" for a paper or interpretative "thesis." You'll be sharing this thesis to the large class for us to work out some working theses about this interpretive point together.

   E.   **Large-class share out and collective meaning making**. Use the board to collect groups' ideas.

   F.   **Extension** What is the role of "imagery" in the novel? Do the cartoons encompass "imagery" and its role in the novel, or do some images exceed those offered in "image" form?

   G.   **Meta-analysis** How might our work today offer teachers a way to teach skills like imagery or images in relation to text in graphic novels or mixed genre texts? How might our work together help to teach students how to build interpretive arguments of texts that could be built towards analytic essays? How might it offer a means of differentiated instruction for visual learners? *What do images say? To whom might they speak more loudly than words?*