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**Creating a Love of Reading Through Young Adult Fiction in Norwegian
Lower Secondary Schools**

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ENG-3983 Masteroppgave i engelsk litteratur ved lektorutdanningen trinn 8-13. June 2021

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Emelie Jonsson, who has helped me from the very beginning with brilliant insight and suggestions. Without you I would never have it this far, and for that I will be forever grateful.

Secondly, I would like to thank my mother, Linn Malmin, for always being there for me during the process of writing and for being the person who inspired me to become a teacher.

Finally, special thanks to all the wonderful people I have met in Tromsø who have made these five years into something truly special that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Tromsø, June 2021

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Abstract

Creating a love of reading is important for students to develop early to prepare them for academia and their work life is also mentioned by UDIR. With the concept love of reading there is an implied intrinsic motivation to read, which is why the thesis will look at motivational factors that impede or facilitate motivation to read. The introduction of the new curriculum in 2020, also brought with it updates to the competency aims, which made Young Adult fiction a concrete part of the curriculum for lower secondary school students. For that reason, the thesis will look at YAF as a genre and how *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, a YAF novel by Sherman Alexie, through pedagogical means can motivate students to read and create a love of reading for lower secondary schools students.

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List of abbreviations

UDIR: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet)

YAF: Young Adult Fiction

1 Introduction

“This is boring, why can’t we do something else?”. This is a question that many teachers probably have been asked by their students. School work for many students may seem like just that, work, however how does one as a teacher instil in them a sense of fun and aid them in developing positive relations to activities they otherwise would avoid? Reading in the English is one of the four basic skills that makes up the essence of the subject and according to PISA 2018, only half of Norwegian 15-year olds read in their spare time (Frønes & Jensen, 2020). In response to the amount of students who read willingly, the English subject has adopted a goal of instilling a love of reading or “reading pleasure” as UDIR calls it (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 4) as a goal for English instruction that deals with reading, but how can one go about fulfilling UDIR’s criteria?

This thesis will aim to investigate how one can didactically develop a love of reading in a student through the lens of motivation in order to understand the processes that either improves or serves as a detriment to the students’ willingness to engage with reading material. By examining other scholars’ work on the topic of reading motivation, one will be better able to implement instruction that benefits students’ intrinsic motivation and aids them in developing a strong sense of self-concept and a value of reading. In addition to these concepts, reading motivation in general will be understood through Schaffner et al.’s seven dimensions of reading motivation as to which different factors impact motivation to read. I will then use concepts from the scholarship on reading motivation to envision a specific example of reading instruction.

My example of reading instruction will focus on the use of Young Adult Fiction (YAF), which is a new specific addition to the English curriculum for lower secondary school students (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 9). I connect YAF to research about the factors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and discuss how the genre has been used pedagogically in different countries. I will also discuss the genre’s advantages and disadvantages compared to other kinds of literature. YAF contains characters and themes that are relevant to students and is therefore useful for improving reading motivation and inducing a love of reading. With that in mind, my example of reading instruction will use the novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. I will suggest tasks that can help students engage with the novel in ways that maximize motivation. I will then analyse the novel through four different themes: friendship, poverty, school life and identity. I discuss how these themes can

be relevant to students and how the novel fulfil UDIR's stipulations of the new competency aim of: "read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people's literature" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 9), along with the novel can be an asset in developing the core values of English in the students. Through research on dimensions of motivation, discussions of the use of YAF, and a specific plan for pedagogical implementations, I suggest ways to achieve a student base that has a love of reading.

The thesis itself is structured into three parts. The first chapter will talk about motivation and reading motivation, because it is important to have the motivational aspect established prior to introducing the novel and pedagogical aspects. The second chapter will deal with YAF as a genre and leads into specific tasks of using *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* during English instruction. It will be focused on working with the YAF novel in different ways for students with different interests being able to work with a topic they enjoy. The final chapter will be focused on the novel itself and why it is a good choice for English instruction in Norway, especially with the updated competency aim.

2 Chapter 1: Motivation

Motivation as a factor for learning cannot be understated. As Malloy et.al notes, “motivation can be described as a willingness to engage in an activity and a willingness to persist in that activity, even when it becomes difficult” (2013, p. 273). This paper will explore in what ways Young Adult Fiction can be used as a tool to inspire motivation within students, and which facets of the genre correlates to motivational theories like Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation. According to studies mentioned later in the chapter, motivation is a fundamental factor that governs students’ willingness to engage with reading material, and consequently improve their reading abilities (Melekoglu, 2011, p. 249). Accordingly, the question of what reading material to use is of the essence in increasing motivation among students, which is why I will produce the argument as to why YAF is an appropriate means to capture reading interest within students in Norwegian lower secondary schools. The chapter will explain key terms such that are relevant in understanding the psychological factors that lead students to want to read, and what processes contribute to decreasing a love of reading. Due to the importance of reading as a skill, being motivated for is crucial for students to engage and gain from reading instruction to prepare them for their work lives. The goal is to increase their self concept and value of reading (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 279-280) through being aware of motivational factors that impact the reading experience in order for the students to productively work with reading in school and develop a love of reading.

2.1 Motivation in General

The topic of motivation is a multi-faceted area of research, consequently the area of research that will be central to this thesis will be that of motivation related to educational practices and how they affect students’ mentality in relation to learning. Two of the different kinds of motivation that affect students’ school work are *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation. The desired motivational profile among students is intrinsic motivation, “Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence.” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 56). Deci & Ryan (2000, p. 56) also explains why this kind of motivation is preferred amongst people, “This natural motivational tendency is a critical element in cognitive, social and physical development because it is through acting on

one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills." The reasoning also rings true in the case of an educational setting, as the students' development benefits from dealing with subject matter that is inherently interesting to them, which in turn makes it easier for them to learn and notice nuances surrounding the subject matter. On the other hand, there is extrinsic motivation, which differs from intrinsic motivation in a few key aspects. "Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself." (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 60). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation both belong to the Self-Determination Theory or SDT for short which can be explained as such, "In SDT we distinguish between different types of motivations based on the different reasons or goals that give rise to an action." (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 55). SDT proposes a valuable lens to view students' different motivational profiles and makes it easier to adapt the English instruction according to what best suits the students' motivation.

2.2 Motivation for Reading

Motivation is an important aspect in relation to education. It is self-explanatory that a student who is motivated to improve at school will have an easier time focusing, with working and yield more success academically than a student who barely has the motivation to take a seat on the school bus. However, the reasons behind differing levels of motivation will be an important focus in order to understand how Young Adult Fiction can lead to increased motivation for reading. The understanding of the different student personalities that exist in a classroom also influences in which ways it is appropriate to engage with literature in the classroom, in order to create a love of reading for every single student. As such, the levels of motivation for reading vary depending on factors related to each individual student. The reasoning behind why increased motivation for reading is important, stems from the benefits the students' receive by improving their reading abilities, such as "vocabulary repertoire, knowledge of specific academic contents, coordinating and recalling meanings of words, understand construction of simple and advanced sentences" as examples presented by Melekoglu (2011, p. 249). Reading in English is a significant skill to have when faced with

the coming work life of students and also the abundance of English texts that are now available on the internet in various forms that students are exposed to daily. Reading is a skill that does not inherently appear among intelligent students, as students who frequently read outperform similarly intellectually gifted students who do not have the same reading habits (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 369). As a part of reading being a skill, it is something which can be trained and honed, in which motivation plays a role to what extent a student is willing to improve his or her reading.

The differences in proficiency among a student group is also a point to take into consideration. According to the results presented by Melekoglu (2011), students with learning disabilities did not achieve an increase in motivation after an 18-week reading project, whereas students without learning disabilities achieved an increase in motivation. However, both of the groups achieved an increase in their reading proficiency by the end of the project, despite the motivational gains being different. These results indicate that there should be a differentiated approach depending on how proficient the students in the class are. Since the Norwegian government expresses that a “reading pleasure” or a love of reading is the goal for English reading instruction, the teacher needs to be able to create differentiated instruction that motivates every student in a way that develops a love of reading and an appreciation for the benefits reading allows. An aspect regarding motivation for reading is the kind of texts that are being used for reading instruction: “Students’ motivation to read and their positive attitudes toward reading steadily decline as they start middle school and proceed to the upper grades because of the disparity between students’ reading interest and the types of reading that children are introduced to in school” (Melekoglu, 2011, p. 249). For this reason I will focus on Young Adult Fiction as a genre that can help increase motivation among students. In accordance with Melekoglu’s findings regarding the readers without learning disabilities in his 18-week reading project, Malloy et.al. also states: “The research literature provides strong support for the tie between reading motivation and reading achievement” also including a definition for motivation as a general concept: “Motivation can be described as a willingness to engage in an activity and a willingness to persist in that activity, even when it becomes difficult” (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 273) and also a definition for reading motivation as presented by Guthrie & Wigfield in Becker et al., “Reading motivation can be defined as “the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading” (Becker et al., 2010, p. 774). The two terms *value of reading* and *self-*

concept are recurring themes in the discussion regarding motivation to read, with both Melekoglu and Malloy et al. performing studies in which they are measured items that motivation can be deciphered from. Self-concept as a part of reading motivation can be defined as: “Self-concept as a reader arises from students’ task-specific perceptions of being able to successfully negotiate the various aspects and processes of reading, such as decoding new words, using comprehension strategies effectively, and expressing their thoughts about what they have read” (Malloy et.al., 2013, p. 279). Self-concept influences readers’ preconception regarding the task they are asked to do and to what degree they are enthused to initiate said task, believe they will succeed in the task and if they are interested in sharing their thoughts with others. Having a low sense of self-concept as a reader detracts from the experience as it is not as easy to process the text at hand. In this vein, it could be seen as important to have explicit instruction regarding comprehension strategies in order to foster self-concept among students. It is for this reason self-concept is a key aspect of understanding motivation to read among students. The other key term, value of reading, can be defined as: “The idea of reading as something that is valued, either an activity or as a goal, stems from the work of Eccles (1983) in developing the expectancy-value theory of motivation. The value of participating in a reading task is related to how personally interesting it is, how important the task is deemed to be, and how successful completion of the task serves future needs” (Malloy et. al., 2013, p. 280). Having a positive relationship with the act of reading itself is a benefactor in the students’ willingness and interest in reading and leads to them being open to instruction on the subject and engaged in reading in school and in their spare time. Difficulties arise due to the personal nature of value of reading and does not lend itself to a generalized solution that can be imposed on an entire class in order to increase value of reading. Malloy et al. proposes a solution for the problem of codifying motivational levels through the Motivation to Read Profile - Revised or MRP-R for short.

2.3 MRP-R

Based on an older version called the Motivation to Read Profile from 1996, the MRP-R is a reading survey that is designed as a tool for teachers to codify students’ perceived value of reading and self-concept and is used in order to measure motivational levels within students.

The reason for the revision of the MRP is the need for a cultural and linguistic update that reflects the contemporary educational situation (Malloy et al., 2013, 274). In addition, educational factors such as school setting, classroom contexts, teaching practices and relations between students are included to better fit the educational use that MRP-R is meant for. This was done by having four classroom teachers review the researchers' proposed items and perform a trait assessment to determine which ones were best in terms of gauging self-concept and value of reading in an educational setting (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 274). The theoretical framework that is used for the MRP-R is that of Eccles' *expectancy-value theory*, which draws inspiration from Bandura's work on self-efficacy in which motivation is believed to come from an individual's feeling that they will achieve success when performing a task and that there is a value in completing the task (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 274). It is through this theoretical framework that the MRP-R assesses 20 different items in order to codify self-concept and value of reading, 10 items for each of them. MRP-R consists of two different components- The first one is the reading survey which is administered to a group in order to measure value of reading and self concept. The second one is a *conversational interview* which is administered to an individual in order to further explore student perceptions regarding the value of reading and self concept. The conversational interview is subsequently administered following the reading survey (Malloy et. al., 2013, p. 274). The divided perspective between a group based profile and an individualistic profile means that MRP-R has the ability to present a large scale picture of the motivational profiles in a classroom, while simultaneously being able to further investigate outliers within the class in order to best accommodate differentiated needs. The importance of intrinsic reading motivation for reading comprehension creates a necessity for instruction that best promotes an increase in intrinsic reading motivation (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 369). The benefit of MRP-R is thus that it can assess the motivational temperature of a class in order to show the motivational differences that exist within the student group. This in turn will assist the creation of differentiated instruction that meets the needs of all the students in the classroom which in turn will lead to increased levels of motivation and a greater love of reading (Malloy et. al., 2013, p. 278-279).

Malloy et al. do not propose a concrete plan for using the information gathered through MRP-R to increase motivation. It may be difficult for teachers to implement vague solutions like

finding books at a “just-right reading level” (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 280) and validity of the scores from individual students’ can be questionable in some cases. The conversational interview may aid in clarifying the scores and increasing awareness of each students’ interests, however the 15-20 minutes (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 275) it takes to perform a singular interview creates a problem of being able to find the time in a subject that already is starved for time due to the multitudes of competency aims that the Norwegian government has created to prepare the students for exams. Consequently, being able to perform 5-6 of these conversational interviews would have an impact on the progression of class in other areas of the subject, although it might prove beneficial for the reading and written aspect of the English subject. The MRP-R conversational interviews shine a light on how important time is as a resource in an educational setting, and it provides indications of motivational profiles in a classroom which in turn helps with achieving the goal of “. contributing to reading pleasure and language acquisition.” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 2) which is a part of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training’s basic skills for reading. The survey in its entirety lends itself to have a positive impact in a classroom, however the time aspect might make the MRP-R hard to implement if conversational interviews are required.

2.4 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Reading Motivation

As with Deci & Ryan’s definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 56, 60) that refers to a general state of motivation that can be applied to numerous activities and situations, there also exists a more specific version of the terms that directly relates to the topic of reading motivation. In concordance with Deci & Ryan, the definitions borrow the terms intrinsic and extrinsic in order to create *intrinsic reading motivation* and *extrinsic reading motivation* (Becker et al., 2010, p. 774). Intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation follows the same concept as regular intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic reading motivation referring to a motivation to read for the enjoyment of reading, or wanting to learn more about a subject and the act of reading itself is the reward. Extrinsic reading motivation on the other hand is defined by a motivation for external recognition, a reward of some kind or some other separable outcome, where the act of reading is used as a means to gain those rewards (Becker et al., 2010, p. 774). The importance of intrinsic and extrinsic reading

motivation comes from the relationship with reading amount and reading comprehension and how they impact each other. According to Schaffner et al.: “A number of studies have provided evidence that intrinsic reading motivation positively predicts reading amount and reading comprehension, whereas extrinsic reading motivation was found to be a nonsignificant or negative predictor” (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 369). Schaffner et al. looked at how reading amount had a mediating effect on intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation: “The authors explained the mediating effect of reading amount on comprehension by an increase of knowledge, self-competence beliefs, and reading fluency through frequent reading” (Schaffner et. al., 2013, p. 369). Similarly to the term self-concept (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 279), reading amount is directly correlated to knowledge, self-competence beliefs, and reading fluency. A student who possesses these traits will be better suited to engage with a reading task and will either consciously or subconsciously be aware that those traits will aid in the completion of the task and add enjoyment to performance of it. Schaffner et al. also proposes a definition for reading motivation, although it differs from Becker et al.’s definition due to the addition of dimensions that influence the degree of motivation: “Reading motivation denotes the enduring readiness of a person to initiate reading activities and involves several dimensions” (Schaffner et.al., 2013, p. 370). The mentioned “dimensions” correlate to degrees of motivation to read and are related to various incentives that motivate students to engage in reading activities. The motivations are segmented into seven different core dimensions that are based on various qualitative research.

These seven core dimensions are as follows (Schaffner et.al., 2013, p. 370):

1. Curiosity: To learn more about topics of one’s interest
2. Involvement: To get lost in a story or experience imaginative actions
3. Competition: To reach higher levels of school achievement, particularly in reading, than other students
4. Recognition: To get praise for good reading performance
5. Grades: To improve one’s grades in school
6. Compliance: Reading because of external pressure
7. Work avoidance: Trying to avoid reading-related work

The dimensions help with providing a framework for what determines a student's motivation, and use the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation. Numbers 1-3 are influenced by intrinsic reading motivation and numbers 4-7 are influenced by extrinsic motivation. The dimensions serve as a useful tool for teachers given how intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation influences reading comprehension. Intrinsic reading motivation has a positive effect on reading comprehension. This could be attributed to an increased willingness to understand and process the text at hand. On the other hand, extrinsic reading motivation had a negative or not significant impact on reading comprehension which could be seen as a response to reading something the reader is not interested in and is not willing to put further effort into comprehending (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 372). With the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation and their effects on reading comprehension in mind, the dimensions can be used in an educational setting as attitudes to look out for, either in terms of nurturing the ones that complement intrinsic reading motivation or step in to try to change the behaviour of those who exhibit extrinsic reading motivation. According to their findings, at least some amount of pedagogical intervention is needed in order for the students to not experience the detrimental effects of extrinsic reading motivation: "Whereas the findings support interventions that foster intrinsic reading motivation as it is related to higher reading amount and better reading comprehension, extrinsic reading motivation should not be emphasized when low frequency readers are to be motivated to read more" (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 382). Thus, the MRP-R can also help to codify motivational profiles and having conversational interviews in order to investigate what is necessary for the student to have an intrinsically motivated attitude in relation to reading. Despite the mention of MRP-R being a time investment, it should still be seen as a tool that can guide students towards a love of reading. Another point brought up by Schaffner et al. is the topic of challenging texts and their impact on reading comprehension. Challenging texts increase the reading competence in students. However, in a varied student group in a regular classroom, not every student performs at the same level which makes it difficult to provide challenging texts for every student to increase reading comprehension. However, according to Schaffner's study it seems as if intrinsic reading motivation paired with reading amount will lead to increased reading comprehension. Therefore, a mix of challenging texts and easier ones will lead to increased comprehension.

2.5 Different Student Personalities and Their Impact on Motivation

In a classroom of 15-30 students there will inevitably be 15-30 different personalities, with different needs and different attitudes in relation to reading. Despite the inherently diverse nature of a classroom, there are similarities between students' and how they respond to different tasks and how they fit into different motivational profiles. Jill E. Cole presents a framework consisting of three different factors that influence a student's intrinsic motivation to read, those three being *readers' beliefs*, *readers' affective reactions* and *readers' reasons and purposes* (Cole, 2002, p. 328).

2.5.1 Readers' Beliefs

The first factor of *readers' beliefs* consists of self-efficacy, attitudes and values and are usually formed by the environment the student is in, both at school and at home, or by previous experiences with learning. Self-efficacy is based on Bandura and describes a student's preconception regarding a task they are supposed to do (Cole, 2002, p. 328). Self-efficacy serves as the important initial mental reaction when faced with a task, and a student who reacts positively will have a better starting point in terms of motivation than a student who reacts negatively. It is crucial to have an idea of the students' self-efficacies in order for them to be able to have a positive response which in turn will lead them to having greater chances of increasing their skillset and confidence. The second term included in readers' beliefs, is attitudes, which Cole provides a definition for: "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object" (Cole, 2002, p. 328). Lastly there are values, which stems from the values students show in a school setting which usually is indicative of the values they are taught at home. This means that a student who grows up in a home with respect for reading will be able to correlate that to their reading in school (Cole, 2002, p. 328)

2.5.2 Readers' Reasons and Purposes

The second factor, readers' reasons and purposes, consists of goals, meaning construction and interest. This factor explains the why behind students' intrinsic motivation and what guides the students to read. Goals are, according to Cole, separated into performance goals and learning goals, which depend on feedback in order to make the students be able to set new

goals for themselves (Cole, 2002, p. 328-329). Meaning construction is related to social constructivism that is presented by Piaget and Vygotsky and means: “In order for students to construct meaning and become learners their social interactions need to be taken into account” (Cole, 2002, p. 329). Social interaction is valuable when dealing with reading, despite the fact that it is mostly an activity that is performed alone and in silence, due to the fact that students appreciate variety during English instruction, and being presented with different ways of reading that include their fellow students can lead to increased motivation. Finally, there is the concept of interest, materials used need to pique the interest of the students in order for them to want to engage in a reading activity. This is one of the reasons that Young Adult Fiction will be a main topic in the following chapter, as it is categorised by themes that are relatable and interesting to teens.

2.5.3 Readers’ Affective Reactions

The final factor, readers’ affective reactions, refers to “affective reactions to reading events occur in response to readers’ beliefs combined with the success or failure of their reasons and purposes for reading” (Cole, 2002, p. 329). This factor again draws from the concept of self-efficacy as the readers’ feelings and beliefs will vary wildly depending on how the previous reading assignment was perceived by the reader. Consequently, reading assignments that contribute to creating positive affections reactions will lead to a better starting point whenever the next reading assignment comes around. In terms of a pedagogical application to affective reactions would be to create tasks or situations focused on reading which every student will be able to master. Furthermore, these tasks and situations would gradually increase in difficulty which will then instil in the students a positive sense of self concept which aids the students’ affective reactions.

2.5.4 Literacy Personalities

The framework presented by Cole leads into the topic of literacy personalities. The definition of a literacy personality is related to intrinsic reading motivation and is dependent on what parts of reading in an educational setting creates a sense of motivation (Cole, 2002, p. 330). Due to every student being different, there will be different motivators for every student. However, the three-factor framework of the *readers’ beliefs, readers’ reasons and purposes* and *readers’ affective reactions* helps identify motivators. Schaffner et al.’s seven dimensions

for reading motivation as mentioned earlier can be used in a similar fashion. It is unclear how students' actual personalities affect reading motivation. As Medford & McGeown indicates: "Currently, there is a lack of research examining the relationship between children's personality traits and motivation" (Medford & McGeown, 2012, p. 787). For that reason, it is an easier task to make use of already existing research that indicates what parts of the reading skill that affects motivation and how to recognise the patterns of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within students.

3 Chapter 2 - Young Adult Fiction

3.1 What is Young Adult Fiction?

Young Adult Fiction (YAF) as a term is relatively new and unestablished. Chris Crowe says, “I define literature for young adults as all genres of literature since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults” (1998, p. 121). He chose 1967 because it is the publication year of *The Outsiders*, which in his opinion established a market for novels that deal with realistic themes focused on teenagers (Crowe, 1998, p. 121). YAF mirrors other types of literature in the sense that it contains a wide array of genres from comedies to tragedies. However, the characters and content of the texts are written in a way that makes them more readable and understandable to teenagers. Crowe also notes that YAF is not a term that is used simply for the literature teenagers read, since teenagers may also enjoy classics, but that YAF excludes the classics and other forms of literature that are not intended primarily for young adults (Crowe, 1998, p. 121). A more recent definition of YAF from 2013 comes from Marci Glaus, “YA literature can be described as texts in which teenagers are the main characters dealing with issues to which teens can relate, outcomes usually depend on the decisions and choices of main characters, and oftentimes ““all traditional literary elements typical of classical literature” can be found” (Glaus, 2013, p. 408). This definition mirrors Crowe’s ideas about YAF, but focuses more on the complexity that may exist within young adult literature. However, what is clear from multiple definitions of YAF is that they do not include any figurative language that defines the genre, but the traits of the youth focused language, characters and themes are the central elements of what YAF consists of. These traits are one of the reasons why YAF is beginning to gain credibility within the educational context, due to relevancy the genre has when it comes to the students’ own lives (Gibbons, 2006, p .56).

According to Schaffner et al. (2013, p. 382) complexity is a factor that contributes to increased reading comprehension. Separated from the supporters of YAF are those who believe that youth-targeted material to not contain the same amount of literary sophistication and merit as the classics of literature. This viewpoint is assumed by English Arts teachers

who prefer exposing students to materials that may be beyond their levels, because the classics are believed to best fulfil the requirements of the curriculum (Gibbons, 2006, p. 56). Although the argument may have some merit, as it may be hard to produce literary sophistication on par with the authors of the great classics, YAF may serve as a gateway for young students to enjoy the classics at a later stage when they have developed a love of reading. This is especially important to consider when teaching English as a second language, since teenaged second-language learners often have not yet developed sufficient vocabularies and literacy skills to enjoy reading classical novels. The teacher's union Norsk Lektorlag are partly in disagreement with the recent addition of youth literature to the new curriculum for English that was introduced in 2020 (Norsk Lektorlag, 2019, p. 11). The disagreement stems from the cultural heritage of English classics. That cultural heritage is an important part of what students of English should learn, in order to better understand contemporary English-speaking culture. However, the new curriculum does not exclude the classics. The competency aim which includes YAF from UDIR, "read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people's literature" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 9), exists only in the curriculum for lower secondary school pupils and is omitted from the upper secondary school curriculum. With this in mind, it seems as if UDIR has added YAF in earlier grades in order for students to be introduced to texts that are by nature targeted towards them in order for them to find books more interesting by the time they reach the more academically demanding level of upper secondary school. UDIR does not include a detailed description of why certain elements are included in the curriculum, but it makes sense to assume that they intended literary progression from lower secondary to upper secondary school. Since YAF is targeted towards youths, its themes and issues become easier for young students to understand. In Diana Mitchell's words, "because young adult fiction novels make very complex issues concrete and understandable, students can connect them to their lives" (quoted in Santoli & Wagner, 2004, p. 68). This concretization of themes and issues in order to make them entertaining and interesting is an impressive skill that YAF authors possess. For example, Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie illustrates how poverty and inequality would manifest in a school setting, as the story's protagonist has just begun high school.

Literature is such a necessary and constant factor of human society in part because of human curiosity. Humans have the ability to create stories that move and produce a sense of excitement, while simultaneously encouraging in self-reflection. Readers may be interested in a novel because it mirrors the reader's own experience leading to an empathetic response to the characters. But even if the issues presented in the novel reflect issues the reader has encountered; the response of the characters may vary from that of the reader. This in turn is an avenue for the reader to stroll down and experience different solutions and reactions to familiar or unfamiliar situations. As a teacher, one is in a position to aid the students in appreciating literature. However, it makes sense not to expose lower secondary school students to the great classics as one of their first experiences with English literature in school. The gap from children's books to adult fiction is quite substantial in terms of language complexity, character types, themes and issues presented. Therefore, YAF may serve as a bridge to prepare students for more demanding texts. YAF can lead students to dip into two of Schaffner et al.'s seven dimensions of *involvement* and *curiosity*, that in turn nurtures an intrinsically motivated attitude towards reading (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 370). Establishing a good relationship to reading, and a basic motivation to work with more difficult books, is important as the students move forward academically and with life in general.

Why is the YAF-novel included in the new curriculum for the lower secondary school, whereas it is nowhere to be found in the upper secondary? Pupils attending the lower secondary classes are typically between the ages of 12-16. The level of maturity will inevitably vary immensely within the groups, and even between the sexes, since girls are often found to adapt better to academic settings than boys (Jones & Myhill, 2004, p. 548). But the persons inhabiting lower secondary classrooms are not as competent, as they will be three years later when they move to the upper secondary school. During those three years an immense cerebral development is taking place, and in order to keep them reading, or indeed start them reading, YAF has been included in the curriculum. In this transition period between childhood and adulthood, YAF serves as a steppingstone for their thoughts, reflections about the world around them and more importantly perhaps; their own place in it, and why they are who they are. Reading about others your own age, across cultures or within the same culture,

will help the young person relate novels to his or her own experiences and reactions to the world surrounding them.

However, at some point, one has to start, expecting a higher level of maturity and move on to more demanding challenges. This is perhaps the most obvious reason that YAF is not implemented in the English curriculum for the upper secondary school (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 12). It makes sense that one would naturally demand more from the older students. The vast majority of them will have undergone an intellectual journey during the last three years, preparing them for new vistas to be conquered. It is also a fact that upper secondary is the last three year-period before they embark on their higher degrees in universities. Certainly, some of them find the transition from lower to upper level ridden with hurdles, but still we find that the majority of them are thrilled to move on, and that the teachers expect them to move on to the new level. To be in a process where one learns and grows in age as well as wisdom, and where the next stage follows logically is certainly what makes most of us happy. The teacher's role will always be to explain and help the students explore, using their former knowledge of literature, making new tools available and interesting.

This is not to say that we live in a perfect world where everybody is ready to grapple with new and more difficult matters. Teachers at upper secondary school will be wise to secure YAF-texts for those of their students who still might find adult fiction too complex and overwhelming. Teachers always have to make available the means by which each of our students can understand and appreciate literature. The most important thing that happens in schools of any level is the transfer of knowledge, which means that teachers use their personal expertise to decide how best to achieve this end. In pursuing this goal, teachers use the curriculum, but when necessary, we lower the list for some of our students, while we raise it for others in order to keep them challenged each at their own level of performance. This adaptation of the level of complexity is also important in terms of the students' self concept, due to personalised instruction being necessary for them to develop a sense of motivation when facing new tasks (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 279).

3.2 Pedagogical implementations of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

When starting a long-term reading project in a class, it is important to have knowledge of the students: how they work, what they enjoy, to what degree they can cooperate with others, and how comfortable they feel about talking in class. Such a project will therefore be impeded if it is started at the beginning of a semester, with a brand-new class you barely know as a teacher or a class where the students do not know each other. Knowledge of the class will improve the teacher's ability to differentiate the instruction in order to set each student up for success when engaging with a novel. Although there is not a time frame on how long it takes for everyone within a classroom to get to know each other, it makes sense to start a school year with a focus sociocultural instruction. This way, the students can work with and get to know each other to develop a feeling of security when working with others. Small group projects are also useful for the teacher to walk around the classroom to interact with the different groups, so the teacher also gets to know the students.

The following section will propose a reading project with the novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to have a concrete idea of how the novel can be used in English instruction. The students are to read the entire novel within 6 weeks, in which there are three English classes every week. This leaves a total of 18 hours to work with the novel. The evaluation will take the form of a written assignment which is a book review or an oral review for those students who prefer not to write. Due to the English subject containing multiple ways of assessing the work students produce, it is important to tailor the assessments in a way that the students feel comfortable with in order for them to perform to their best level. At the beginning of the 6 weeks the students are presented with the assessment criteria for both tasks, in order for them to understand why the novel was chosen and how their work will be assessed by the teacher. The assessment criteria will be presented alongside the different tasks they are to work with, which identify which key aspects that are to be included in their work. Each student will preferably receive their own physical copy of *The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* alongside the audiobook version, which is available online. However, the students are free to choose whichever version they feel the most comfortable with. Some students may prefer reading a physical copy, whereas others may be intimidated by it and perceive the digital version to be more manageable. According to Naomi S. Baron research proves that middle school students have a larger sense of comprehension when reading in

print, whereas with digital media they are bound to be distracted or multitask. However, the caveat to these findings is that digital media makes the students more engaged (Baron, 2017, p. 16). Engagement from the students is paramount in order for them to want to read the novel and also showing the class that there are multiple ways to read literature might lead them to discover that they prefer to read in print or on a screen. Having a physical copy, a digital copy and an audiobook means that the student can receive both visual input and aural input. Combining these two methods of working with a text leads to the students developing both listening and reading skills, which both are basic skills within the English subject in Norway (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 4).

There are multiple ways to work with the novel. Certainly, students can read the book on their own in silence at their own pace. However, this can lead to different levels of progress, as aptitude levels are sure to differ from student to student. Therefore, it is important to adjust instruction in order to increase the students' sense of self-concept. This may be done through either having the students read in groups and listening together to the audiobook in order to negate the pressure of facing a task alone and having fellow students to aid and discuss the novel's themes, characters and vocabulary. On the other side of reading in groups, there will be students who prefer to read alone and in silence. These students may already be proficient in reading, so this option will be preferable to them as it will be their own perceived way of enjoying the book to its fullest. Therefore, it is important to keep an open mind for various suggestions the student may come up with for working with the novel. A teacher working to increase the students' love of reading must of course listen to the students. The reading groups themselves should not be predetermined by the teacher as to not force the students who may want to read individually into a group. By having the autonomy to choose the manner of reading, students will be more willing to engage in the activity, which in turn increases their motivation due to the readers' beliefs going into the project having a more positive tone (Cole, 2002, p. 328). Another way to increase autonomy could be to allow students the use of conference rooms, the library or other empty rooms as an alternative to sitting in the classroom. Classrooms can have a detrimental impact on some students as they can be associated with topics that the students find boring. Therefore having the option to free the students from these connotations can have an exciting effect garnering more interest for working with the novel.

3.2.1 Pre-reading:

The pre-reading phase of working with a novel is important as it serves as the sales pitch for students. For *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the perfect starting point might be ask students about their understanding of Native American society. What do they already know if anything? What is the current situation for Native Americans today, and why is that so? When you hear the word “Indian”, what do you see with your inner eye? Can you draw what you see? Why do you think you come up with that picture? Who has created that image? Questions like these combined serve as a nice introduction to the topics and themes which are presented in the novel. Having students create their own picture of what a Native American looks like can lead to introspection as they encounter the illustrations in the novel. Their own idea of a Native American may or may not coincide with the novel’s images. If the teacher collects their drawings and has them perform the same drawing task after the students have finished reading the novel, the possible differences in their perception of a Native American will serve as a teachable moment for them regarding stereotypes as they compare the drawings from prior to reading and after reading the novel.

After having completed the drawing task the teacher will introduce several topics to be on the lookout for during reading, such as poverty, racism and school life. The teacher will also reveal to them that the main character of the book is a young boy, their own age. This much having been said, they are released from the confines of the classroom, to find their quiet place to start reading the book.

3.2.2 While-reading

The class has settled down with their books and have decided in which manner they would like to work. The teacher’s role is to be a resource for the students while they are reading and make sure they do not get distracted. As with all group work, there is a risk of the students engaging in activities that are irrelevant to or distracting from the task. Since the novel is available to the students online, they may choose to read on their PC along with the audiobook, which means that computer games, social media and other websites are easily accessible. Due to other distractions being plentiful while using online resources, there is an argument to be made that the benefits of an audiobook are exceeded by the negative implications of these distractions. However, since society is becoming increasingly digital,

learning to focus on a task despite the proximity of diversions is a vital skill for students to acquire and also mandated by the Norwegian government (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 1). To create an environment that leads the students to read, it will be important to instil in them a clear sense of goals and expectations for success.

In order to avoid falling into the trap where only the most proficient students are able to reach the assigned chapters, it might be an idea to initiate the lessons by having an oral summary of the chapters which is based on what they have read since last time. Since there are three sessions of English every week, having this summary at the start of the first session every week, and at the end of the third might be a good solution. The summary would be led by the teacher by going over plot points and having a plenary discussion about them with the students. This would help the students get started every week and keep them invested. Having a summary towards the end of the week's last session would follow up on the progress as well as become a guideline for their own reading at home. Thus, one might be able to control the class' progression as well as aiding them in developing a love of reading due to the class working and learning together (Cole, 2002, p. 329).

Another aspect of the reading process is the ability to take notes and being able to reflect upon what they have read. The reading project is supposed to end in an assessment for the students which is based on what they have read and in which way they understood the content of the novel. Consequently, it will help their assessment if they take notes during the reading process and engage in discussions with their classmates. In order to be successful at this, they will need guidance when it comes to marking sections of the text, singling out words and other elements they might find interesting. Left alone with this, they will have a hard time understanding how to take fruitful notes. Being able to convey to them good methods of studying, is a side benefit of working on a long-term project and is a useful tool for students to keep track of what they are reading. A potential side effect of taking notes and discussing texts is the improved reading comprehension that comes along with it, and the ability to reflect upon reading material to a greater degree which in turn may lead to increased appreciation for other texts as well as an improved general reading proficiency.

The proficiency levels among the students in any classroom will differ. Some of them may struggle with reading, whereas others are burdened with a variety of learning disabilities and others may not have any difficulties at all when engaging with literature. The goal of instruction is to include every single student in a way that will lead them to increased proficiency in the subject, and since every student is different, they require different options in order to improve. However, a factor that is constant for every one of us as per Schaffner et al. (2013, p. 382), is that students need to be challenged academically in order to move to the next level

As the class has reached the final week of the reading project, the teacher will have to make sure the students are where they are supposed to be at this point. Is everybody ready to hand in their assignment next week or is it necessary to make adjustments of any kind? More often than not, the situation will probably call for a general overview. Will it be necessary to postpone the written hand in for some of the students? If so, how does one go about this change, without raising aggravation among those who finished on time? This obstacle can be handled in a predictable manner, by having made it clear from the start, and thereby creating a mood of predictability. By engaging in conversations with the students who are lagging behind early in the reading process and discussing various options of assessment, as for example roleplay, or filming along with handing in their notes from the time they have been working on the project. These notes may consist of text, words and drawings, as this may be students performing below average. By giving them this opportunity, one may be lucky enough to get them through, and see them happy on the other side, after having finished what is perhaps their first novel. Having the students finishing the reading project with a feeling of success will increase their sense of self-concept and will instil a sense of pride which will motivate them to engage with future novels or texts with a positive attitude. However, by choosing to grades would have to be adjusted for students who hand in their notes, or the teacher and the students in question could agree to have a conversation about the novel instead. This way the teacher will be able to gauge the students' understanding of the novel and would be better able to give them a fitting grade for their work.

3.2.3 Post-reading

The deadline for the hand in arrives, and prior to this day, there will probably have been numerous appeals to the teacher, various ways of expressing the famous and classic line of “the dog ate my homework”. The majority may have honoured the time of delivery, whereas other elements in the class will find it insurmountable and try to find ways to make the whole situation go away. Which we, of course, are not going to let them.

The post-reading period will inevitably consist of a dance with these individuals or groups, until one finally arrives at a point where they have all handed in their hand ins, had their tests, and answered the questions necessary for the teacher to have gathered enough material to be able to give them a fair evaluation of their work. The significance of the students handing in assignments comes not only from the teacher grading their work, but also the fact that the students need to get a sense that they completed the reading project with a result. By guiding them during the reading process and helping them with their product in the post-reading phase, teachers will hopefully leave them knowing that they have worked hard and succeeded at something they might have found difficult prior to starting. Letting students who have the idea that they cannot succeed or cannot produce anything of significance sit with the feeling will have an extremely negative impact on their future encounters with reading, and life in general. That is why it is important to set them up for success through differentiated instruction and guide them by setting reasonable goals which aid them in avoiding giving up.

The majority will feel most comfortable handing in a written text on the novel, which will be graded by the teacher with a focus on how the students understood and noticed the major themes of the novel. These students will typically be the ones who perform well academically, and they are often lexically and verbally strong. It is important to make sure that no one gets only negative comments in return, as there must be some joy and positive expectation of what their final grade will be, and a feeling that “the teacher sees me”. It is also crucial due to the importance of the students being left with a feeling of mastery when they read the teacher’s comments.

Students who want to hand in their work in groups by of an oral evaluation have been given a time and place for this to happen. This can be solved in the form of having a conversation with the teacher in which every student has the responsibility to discuss a part of the novel in order to show that they have understood of the novel. The teacher will act as a moderator in the conversation and ask guiding questions in order to make the conversation flow and to make sure every student has the opportunity to speak and reveal their competence.

In any class there will be a handful of students who, for a number of reasons, are not comfortable with the thought of academic performance or even the notion of them being a part of class. As this lack of self confidence in most matters related to school life, they might indeed have other sides that will help them towards a feeling of self-concept alongside their fellow classmates. They will often be leaning more towards the arts than academics, mastering the arts more than the written word. Having had the class for a sufficient amount of time, one might be able to single them out, thereby being able to tailor a task specifically for their benefit.

The students who fall within this category may be encouraged to form a group together, and their job will be to hand in a film or a live performance. They may let the other students see their contribution or decide that it is for the teacher's eyes only. The idea behind opening up for this type of activity is, to avoid negativity in the classroom, as well as letting these individuals see that their skills are desirable alongside their peers leaning more towards the traditional academic performance. In this task one might expect them to find a suitable location, mirroring what to them was important in the novel. It will be up to them how they will solve the task, and obviously there has to be contact between them and the teacher, to make sure their ideas hold water, and will work as a bridge between the primary text and the beholder. It is an assumption that their field of interest leans more towards the visual and the artistic, and there will be ample possibility to have field day looking for costumes, make up, props and other gadgets necessary in order to get their meaning across. The evaluation of this product will consist of a discussion of the film, a reflection of what they intended and reasonings around this. And if they are willing, a class viewing of the product.

3.3 Assignment Tasks:

1. “Arnold’s Quest”

What does he want to achieve? What motivates him? What obstacles must he conquer? Use examples from the text to substantiate your point of view.

Comments: This task opens up to their general understanding and knowledge of the quest-myth as they undoubtedly will have met it in films and stories through childhood. It will provide them with a base they find familiar to some degree, thus hopefully letting them approach it more open minded. It is also a classic task, and persons leaning towards classics might enjoy knowing this.

2. “Retell Arnold’s Story”

In your own words, rewrite Arnold’s story. In the end, include your own thoughts on what he has told us. If you wish, you may include your own life, if you found anything that resembles your own experiences.

Comments: This is perhaps the easiest task to write and will let the students who are not too fluent in English be able to produce a text. There is also the risk that it opens up to personal confessions of a more sombre nature, so the teacher should be aware of this possibility.

3. “Retell Arnold’s Story”

Make an animated film of what you think are the most important moments in the novel. This film will be your hand in, and it will be followed by a discussion with your teacher.

Comments: Like #2, this one will let students who are not verbally strong and who yet lack the ability to form texts that are sufficiently long. The curriculum does not tie reading exclusively to writing, therefore other options are available when working with reading, such as the competency aim: “use different digital resources and other aids in language learning, text creation and interaction” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 8). It will give them a chance to participate in the class project, and it will draw on their artistic sides, letting them shine.

Hopefully, it will make them think that perhaps next time, they can opt for a text of a more regular nature.

4. “Ten Memorable Moments”

Select the ten most lovable or interesting moments in the novel, present them in the order you find appropriate and discuss why you think they are important. Pick a suitable headline.

Comments: This task will be demanding on the students, and will typically be picked by persons showing a high grade of reflection, and who are verbally strong. It will also be challenging when it comes to mastering a nuanced, precise language.

5. “Arnold’s Story: The Illustrations”

Write a text where you discuss the relevance and importance of Arnold’s illustrations. Why do you think he has included them and what do they tell us about him? Are they necessary for the reader? Why/ why not?

Comments: Presumably this task will be appealing to the artistic part of the class, people who might enjoy comics and Manga. These are more often verbally strong, high performing students, who will be allowed to draw on their interest for the arts while at the same time producing a meaningful text on an interesting subject. Could also perhaps be seen in cooperation with the subject, Arts and Crafts

6. “Arnold’s Story Seen Through the Eyes of....”

Write a text where you choose to be either Arnold’s sister, his mother or father or his best friend, Rowdy. Retell the story through the eyes of your chosen character. What does this do to the novel and your understanding of it?

Comments: This task is divided into two, where the final lets the student reflect on the original text and the meta text. It is also in accordance with what is suggested by Hipple, to try and see what happens to a text once the point of view is altered. (Hipple, 1984, p. 52)

7. “No Social Media”

The novel is particular in the sense that there is no reference to or use of social media of any kind. In this literary universe we move about in a community totally void of social media, whereas we ourselves, in the real world of 2021 depend on it. Write a text where you comment on the absence of social media. Would it be better if it was included? What is lost and what is gained by omitting it from the story? Did you miss it while reading the story?

Comments: To contemporary young people, a world without social media will seem like a fairy tale of the sort their parents and grandparents are describing growing up in. This is a challenging and deep task, but it might still be answered by individuals who are not verbally strong. It is a subject on which we all have formed an opinion, and it will presumably be quite easy to write a little or a lot on the topic.

8. Comment on the use of slang or “young” language. Compare what you know about your own language and give examples. Do the adults around you understand your language, or do they try to make you talk differently?

Comments: This task will allow students to focus on language, sociolect and the generation gap between them and their parents, grandparents and other adults with whom they might socialize. It is inevitable that each generation tries to create a language barrier between them and their elders as part of a need to belong to their own crowd, and indeed as a rite of passage, so to speak. This task will let those who do not feel too comfortable or keen on literature focus on an element which is ever present in their own lives, and therefore ought to catch their interest more easily.

It will also go well with Norwegian, as a part of interdisciplinary work.

There is something for everyone here, one might think. The reason why there are so many tasks is to accommodate many tastes, making it easier for students to believe that they can have something to share, and that they can do so in written English. English is a “cool” language, and most students even sprinkle their idiomatic Norwegian with it, but they are of course aware of the difference between this idiolectic manner and a formal English class. Hopefully this menu will leave them salivating for one of the entries.

4 Chapter 3 - The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie is a YAF-novel that in definition fits UDIR's competency aim regarding the use of literature in a Norwegian English lower secondary classroom: "read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people's literature" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 9). Included in the competency aim is the goal of having the students interpret and reflect upon what they are reading regardless of whether it is YAF or regular fiction, which requires a certain depth of the material chosen to fulfil the competency aim. Alexie's novel brings up multiple themes that are noticeable to students, but also lend themselves to further discussion, such as poverty, friendship, school life and identity. As Diana Mitchell mentioned in "Promoting Young Adult Literature: The Other "Real" Literature", YAF can help students understand complex themes and issues through them being concretized and presented in a relatable manner (Santoli & Wagner, 2004, p. 68). *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* does not draw heavily on figurative language to present its issues, which makes them noticeable to students. The characters, like the main character Junior, are mostly teenagers as well which gives the cast of the novel a young a relatable feel with a wide variety of personalities that the students can relate to. These features produce what Schaffner et. al's call "involvement" (Schaffner et. al, 2013, p. 370). Students are likely to want to read on to figure out how issues like poverty impact the characters.

The novel also succeeds in shedding light on Native American culture and the struggles that come with living on a reservation. Learning about Native American culture through a diary-style novel will perhaps be preferable to reading a textbook on the same topic. The narrative does not exclusively focus on Native Americans, but rather expands the horizon by including the previously mentioned themes to tell a compelling story. The novel's connection to indigenous culture also makes it a good source of achieving parts of the English subject's central values, "The subject shall develop the pupils' understanding that their views of the world are culture-dependent. This can open for new ways to interpret the world, promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice." (Utdanningsdirektoratet,

2020, p. 2). Exposing students to different corners of the world is a responsibility the English subject holds, and Alexie's novel is an example of how this responsibility can be achieved through interesting and fun means.

A challenge of using the novel for instruction is making each student interested in learning about Junior's journey. Due to students having different interests and experiences with reading, it is unreasonable to expect every student to be able to work in the same manner and have an equally easy or hard time reading the novel. This is one of the reasons that the previous chapter presented multiple different tasks in order to point out specific aspects of the novel that students may have a positive reaction to, and in turn play on their self-efficacy in order to motivate them to engage with the material.

Another aspect is the length of the novel: 230 pages. This length can be intimidating to some students, and it might be challenging for teachers to plan for the different speeds at which students read. However, the novel is filled with drawings which tie into the story itself and engaging dialogue which gives the students breaks from large chunks of texts. This creates multiple ways of interacting with Junior's journey as the drawings build on what is happening in the book and giving the students an image of how Junior views his world and himself.

The main pedagogical value of the novel is its relatability. Students get to follow the journey of a teenager who faces common problems like acne and not feeling good enough, but also larger problems like dealing with friendship, the effects of poverty, and adapting to a new school. These issues to some degree affect lower secondary students and makes it easier for the students to empathise with Junior and his struggles and successes.

4.1 The Novel and Poverty

“There is another world, but it is in this one” - W.B. Yeats.

The novel opens with this classic quote from an outstanding poet from the Romantic period. To some extent, most of us will probably have housed that thought at some point in time. However, to our protagonist, being born into the Native American community, thus having to live his life split between Native American culture and America at large; the inner world and the outer world. Over the course of a life, what constitutes the inner world might vary depending on age, mentality, desire or necessity.

Junior spent the start of his life on “the rez”, as he calls the Indian reservation in Spokane. He differs from the other Native Americans on the reservation from the onset of life, as he suffers from a condition called hydrocephalus (Alexie, 2007, p. 1). In addition, he has ten teeth too many. His ailments set him apart from his peers, as he cannot lead a carefree life as he is always reminded of his physical differences by the others on the reservation. He is self-conscious about the way he looks: skinny, wearing glasses from the age of three, huge hands and feet, coupled with an enormous skull (Alexie, 2007, p. 3). He gets bullied because of his lisp and stuttering. The list seems endless. His identity is formed by him growing up on the reservation, alienated by his peers who call him a “retard” and he is getting beaten up on a regular basis. Naturally, this leads to him withdrawing to his reading and drawing. Reading and reflecting sets him further apart from his peers. There simply is nothing cool about Junior, which he accepts and leads to his self-esteem being lowered. At the end of chapter one, he refers to a plan of his which is about escaping the negative environment of the reservation as he does not conform to societal expectations. He wants to become famous and rich by drawing because it is what he loves to do “So I draw because I feel like it might be my only real chance to escape the reservation” (Alexie, 2007, p. 6)

Junior’s identity is forged in a number of ways, and there is little that is uplifting in his life. He laments: “I wish I were magical, but I am really just a poor-ass reservation kid living with his poor-ass family on the poor-ass Spokane Indian Reservation” (Alexie, 2007, p.7). The poverty accompanying his existence seeps into every facet of his life. He realises how poor his family are, when they do not have the money it takes to take his dog, his best and most reliable friend to the veterinarian (Alexie, 2007, p. 13). Despite his anger towards the poverty he is experiencing, he does not blame it on his parents, but rather the environment he lives in. Junior understands that they are doing their best to give him a good life and this insight leads to his unconditional love for his family which is present throughout the novel: “Seriously, I

know my mother and father had their dreams when they were kids. They dreamed about being something other than poor, but they never got the chance to be anything because nobody paid attention to their dreams.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 11).

Central to Junior’s train of thought, is that poverty is the thief of dreams. An adult will have to lay his juvenile dream aside in order to put dinner on the table. Being born poor in a poor community is inherently going to drag you down. What might end up saving Junior from ending up as yet another victim of the cycle of poverty is his constant reflection about himself and those around him and the outside world. He is a mature youngster who sees cause and effect. This serves as fuel for his own dream of making the world pay attention to him and the money that follows in the wake of fame and acceptance by the bigger crowd. He sees poverty as the biggest hurdle in his path and does not romanticise the idea of being poor. There is nothing romantic about poverty as it robs you of dignity and self-actualisation. Being this adamant about poverty, he appears to the reader as the generation in his family to not accept the cycle of poverty within the Native American community and change what seems to be his destiny. He refuses to continue the path he sees.

4.2 Chasing Hope

Junior’s journey bears similarity to Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” due to how he is split between his life on the reservation and his life at the all-white high school, Reardan. The last three lines of the poem are particularly relevant to Junior’s situation:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference. (Frost, 1916)

Junior’s two roads in a wood appear on his first day of high school, which turns into a point of no return as he realises that the “new” book he receives used to belong to his mother (Alexie, 2007, p. 30). Enraged by the discovery that he is handed a book that is at least thirty

years old, he throws the book at Mr. P, his teacher, and is expelled. Like the narrator in Robert Frost's poem, Junior realises that there are two paths ahead of him. His mother stayed on the same road, leading to her own child being given the same old school book she once had. Junior has already plotted to boldly go where no Spokanean has gone before, so he elects to change schools, to a "white" school called Reardan where he will be the only Native American. He raises his ambitions above those on the reservation and chooses to not be content with continuing the path he is on. The metaphor of the crossroads he is at, will lend itself wonderfully to be handled in class. The students are of such a young age that they will probably not know or reflect on the importance of such choices of direction. It will be interesting to talk to them about this and illustrate the point with situations closer to their own life. For instance, what will happen if you go to one school but not the other? You will meet other people and these people are likely to end up making a big difference in your life, thus impacting further on the next choice you make, spreading like rings on the water. Once you have put one circle in motion it will be almost impossible to break off its consequences and "knowing how way leads on to way / I doubted if I should ever come back." (Frost, 1916) Once they fathom the depth of a choice of this calibre, it will be interesting to discuss with them what other choices in life may alter their lives without them knowing it in advance. It may be choices you make, and it may also be situations beyond your control which end up having the power to alter the course of your life. Young people ought to have this idea in the back of their minds, to better be able to navigate wisely.

His teacher makes him repeat "I deserve better" and tells Junior that he, "is a good kid who deserves the world" (Alexie, 2007, p. 41). Mr. P goes on to lecture Junior about the good and bad and that, "You have to leave this reservation" (Alexie, 2007, p. 43). On page 43 in the novel, Junior's drawing shows himself at a crossroads where the signpost points in two directions, with one pointing towards the rez and home, whereas the other direction points towards hope and the unknown.

you kept your hope. And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope.

I was starting to understand he was a math teacher. I had to add my hope to somebody else's hope. I had to multiply hope by hope

“Where is hope?” I asked. “Who has hope?”

“Son,” Mr. P said. “You’re going to find more and more hope the farther and farther you walk away from this sad, sad, sad reservation.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 43)

Staying on the reservation is certain defeat, whilst setting out for the unknown is accepting responsibility for his own fate. The future and the unknown for Junior is called “hope”, thus suggesting a brighter future like the one he envisioned, when he first dreamed of the possibility of a world paying attention to him.

Mr. P is a character that reinforces Junior's ideas and helps him realise the path he has to choose. Despite Mr. P having spent his career trying to “kill” the hopes and dreams of Native Americans, he chooses to be a positive influence in Junior's life by guiding him to make the right choice. Mr. P holds a position of authority, and Junior gains enough confidence to tell his parents about his wish to switch schools. Drawing parallels to a real-life classroom, a teacher should always try to help students in realising their dreams and find ways for them to use their talents to better themselves. In any classroom, there will be as many dreams as there are people, and it will be interesting to the teacher as well as the fellow members of the class, to learn about them. It could be that not everybody would feel comfortable sharing their dream, but it could also be that they will be encouraged listening to the ones who never seem to mind putting words to their thoughts. Sharing our dreams may open up for a more intimate and trusting environment in the classroom, and it will be an asset for the teacher when it comes to how to best guide his students in order to achieve their goals. Or, to try to influence them to work on them, shifting them to better suit the individual linked to their abilities,

Mr. P shows this aptitude when he breaks character from his usual “Indian killing” self in regards to Junior. But he says he will return to his old ways, and end up “killing” Junior: “If you stay on this rez,” Mr. P said, “they’re going to kill you. I’m going to kill you. We’re all going to kill you. You can’t fight us forever.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 43). This morbid aspect of the novel exemplifies why following your dreams is a necessity, even if it does not

lead to poverty, death and alcoholism, it leads to dissatisfaction and unhappiness which is illustrated clearly to the reader. Mr. P creates a physical representation of hope for Junior, and encourages him to dare to be different in order to escape the destiny of alcoholism and death which so many Native Americans have suffered.

The novel indicates that change has to happen when one is young, to avoid being a victim to the culture and society that tries to mold you as Mary, Junior's sister, also leaves the reservation after Junior does, but she ends up dying. After ending high school, she spends several years being left on her own, down in the basement in her parents' house. She has no ambition, no compass, nothing to push her out of the deadlock situation. Mary also tries to follow her dreams, and live out her fantasy of a romance novel, but dies due to a fire while she is drunk. Junior's friend Rowdy blames this on Junior: "Your sister is dead because you left us. You killed her." (Alexie, 2007, p. 205, 211). It seems harsh, blaming his sister's death on Junior, but there might be some truth to it. Had she left the basement and Spokane if Junior had stayed in line? Had there been any reason for her to change anything if everything and everybody else stayed static? The answer is probably no, she would have remained static too, living out her life underground. A question that arises itself naturally in this context is, would it have been a good life? Or did she in fact benefit from latching on to a parallel to Junior's dynamic endeavour? At least she got to experience other places and people, and she fell in love. How wise her decisions were, can be discussed in the classroom among the students and the teacher, but at least she did something, and this constitutes the difference between a life and an existence.

4.3 The Part-Time Indian

When Junior decides to leave Spokane, the most important change is that he will no longer be surrounded by people looking like him and talking like him. He will be on a going to and from-schedule for some years, no matter which of the two directions he is heading to, never more resting in one place solely, but having to shift his time and efforts between the two worlds. Junior is courageous in all his endeavours in his newfound life at Reardan. He dares to fall in love with Penelope, the prettiest girl in the school. He dares to play for Reardan's

basketball team and dares to speak up in his class of corn-fed golden Americans. His transition to Reardan coincides with his childhood coming to an end. He is starting high school and he starts his life living as a part-time Indian, struggling with balancing his Indian culture and conforming to his new school and friends. It is almost like a rite of passage, his passing from one stage to another. It is an attempt at a conquest, a leap at a better future and the self-assertion that needs to learn more, be more and get ahead.

Junior's identity is being challenged through his love and understanding for his parents, his sister and for Rowdy. He is lucky to get encouraged and approved by his family for his choice to switch schools. Switching schools is something that is familiar to students of lower secondary schools, so Junior's school switch will be a situation that is familiar to them, although the context around the school change is very different. This familiar situation can help increase the students perceived value of reading as the school switch may be personally interesting to them (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 280). When he tells them he wants to transfer, he meets no opposition at all. They simply ask to be certain they got it right. All he receives in way of questioning, is a mere "Are you sure?", giving way to a "When do you want to go?" Junior's reasoning about why they so quickly accepted this big change in his life is that he knows they always have wanted what was best for their two children, which means anything else than Spokane. When he gives voice to a wish to break out of the reservation one therefore has to expect that he fulfils some of his parents' wishes for him. They may not know *what* they want or wish for him, but at least now they see that he is initiating change. His father's first thought after having taken it all in, is the practical side to it, whereas his mother figures that: "You'll be the first one to ever leave the rez this way (...)" "The Indians around here are going to be angry with you." (Alexie, 2007, p.47)

She is proven right when it comes to his peers at the reservation, who view him as a traitor for abandoning the rez. In order to succumb to fate, to find meaning in the pointless and in deprivation, a strong sense of group identity is formed. They are a minority, living on allotted land, of course they will be sceptical and frightened at the thought that one of them is trying to escape his fate as an Indian. The sense that "we're not good enough" is the combined attitude shared by the Indians on the Spokane Reservation and leads the rez to turn against

Junior in an “us vs. them” situation during a basketball game between Wellpinit, Junior’s old school, and Reardan. The team needs a police escort and Junior gets elbowed in the face by Rowdy which sends him to the hospital, which shows the hostility the reservation now holds towards Junior (Alexie, 2007, p. 146).

The novel portrays Junior’s two faces from the time he switches schools and the title of the novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is better understood. He is a part-time Indian and a part-time white person. Despite aspects of his life improving at Reardan, such as him befriending more people, becoming popular, getting a girlfriend, and having books that are not 30 years old, and not getting beat up at school, he still misses aspects of the reservation. At the reservation they call him an apple, condescendingly commenting on the fact that he is now red on the outside, and white within. In Spokane life was predictable and he did not have to spend much effort on analysing his actions, words, or situation. The picture is of course exactly the opposite at Reardan as he is unaccustomed to the social norms, language and hierarchy. To find one’s place in a new social and academic setting is demanding and requires that one is alert to changes. No matter which situation he finds himself in, he is never more than fifty percent there, always having to filter his actions and words depending on where he is at and who he is talking to at the time. One might argue that this is at the core of growing up.

As we get older, our world expands and we cover more ground, naturally meeting more and different people. The students in a classroom will all have experienced how everything was simple early on in life and how it gradually grows in complexity, and they will have examples to illustrate their point. This complexity is translated into behaviour and language depending on where we are and with whom we interact. We do it more or less mindlessly, acting on auto pilot having internalised all these unwritten regulations. Junior differs from most of us as he spends a lot of time and effort to overcome and observe the new demands on him, as he has never before ventured beyond the boundaries of the reservation.

Junior has one friend at the reservation and one friend at Reardan. His departure from the reservation life left him friendless in the world. He is used to being a loner, so he spots a kindred soul at Reardan in Gordy who is a geeky farm boy. Gordy defends him when Junior knows better than his teacher and corrects him. Gordy, too, has the correct answer and it takes one nerd to know the other, so Junior approaches his new classmate saying: "Listen, Gordy, I said. I know you're a genius and all, but you are one weird dude." (Alexie, 2007, p. 93). Whereupon he reassures him that he thinks "weird" is a truly endearing classification, right up with Emily Dickinson and Albert Einstein, and that he wants to be Gordy's friend. Junior probably recognises himself in Gordy, as he is the odd one out in his class due to his "weird" obsessions with knowledge, books and Macintoshes.

At the reservation, Junior had a very different friend. He lets the reader in on the importance of Rowdy, a person he used to spend 8 hours every single day with, by saying "Rowdy and I are inseparable" (Alexie, 2007, p. 24). They are two sides of the same coin, where Rowdy is portrayed as a tough and strong teenager who wins fights, and Junior is the weak geek who always gets beat up. The friendship that exists between these two polar opposites is not too intuitive, however they are drawn together by their love for cartoons and end up developing an understanding of each other. The novel presents the two characters as being inseparable, but they end up falling out due to Junior's decision to leave the reservation, which Rowdy views as a betrayal (Alexie, 2007, p. 49-53). Ever since Junior left the reservation he has thought about Rowdy and how he misses him, sent him emails and even went to his house to give him a drawing. The novel previously presented the two as being inseparable, so one can imagine that Rowdy harbours the same thoughts, as he also responds to Junior's emails and acknowledges him in his own way by showing him the finger. Friendship is not always a walk on roses as Alexie's novel shows, with there being disagreements, feelings of betrayal and ups and downs. However, despite these events between Rowdy and Junior they manage to find their way back to each other, due to the bond they have. They end up reconciling after Mary's death, due to Rowdy's strong reaction at her funeral. Up until that point there was animosity between the two of them, but when Rowdy saw what happened to Junior's sister perhaps he understood Junior's choice more, despite Rowdy blaming him for Mary's death

(Alexie, 2007, p. 211). However; there is valuable, precious time lost between them and what they have now managed to patch together will never be what they once had.

Rowdy makes a point of including himself among the people Junior abandoned when he went to Reardan and breaks down crying, something which Rowdy never does. After this incident Rowdy and Junior do not have any more contact until they suddenly start spending time together again during the summer break. Rowdy has accepted that Junior is different from the other Native Americans on the reservation by calling him a nomad, “No, I’m serious. I always knew you were going to leave. I always knew you were going to leave us behind and travel the world. I had this dream about you a few months ago. You were standing on the Great Wall of China. You looked happy. And I was happy for you.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 229). Rowdy is past his initial reaction of his best friend changing schools, and has finally realised that Junior being different to him and having different aims does not mean he is not his friend, which is exemplified through the novel’s happy ending where Rowdy and Junior play basketball like nothing ever changed at all (Alexie, 2007, p. 230). This dynamic between the two characters is something students can relate to if they have ever had issues with their friends and it shows that disagreements do not have to break a friendship.

Junior does not manage to find true happiness in either of the environments he finds himself in. He is unaccustomed to the two worlds still and will probably for the rest of his life try to bring them into equilibrium. When we have to juggle two very different existences, we can never expect to ever feel truly at peace with either ourselves or our surroundings. There is a little monkey at your back, whispering into your ear that you might have forgotten something important. Something is always missing: “I realized that I might be a lonely Indian boy, but I was not alone in my loneliness. There were millions of other Americans who had left their birthplaces in search of a dream” (Alexie, 2007, p. 217). Junior lives his own “American dream” by leaving his own life behind in favour of chasing his hopes and dreams. In a classroom setting, this aspect of Junior’s life can be linked to Norwegian emigration to the US, with almost a million Norwegians leaving their country behind in order to try to live a

better life in the US, to further increase the novel's usage in interdisciplinary arenas such as history.

4.4 The Classroom Context and UDIR's Stipulations

Junior's agony will be familiar to some of the students, and the rest of the class needs to learn about it and its causes. In Norway we have the Law of Jante, an unwritten societal norm which is based on the idea that one should not think or act like one is better than anybody else, or act like one is worth anything at all. In short, The Law of Jante is the antithesis to ambition. We refer to it infrequently, but nevertheless often enough that it is necessary for the young generation to be aware of it in order to understand its implications. Philological subjects are mandated to teach us about issues that help us understand ourselves in our own time and age, but also across time and cultures. Sandemose's "Janteloven" is such a concept, and will probably make people nod in understanding and recognition at every corner of the world.

In every group, everywhere, there exists an unwritten law which you will adhere to in order to be accepted and valued as a member. It establishes itself in the way we dress, the way we do our hair, the language and words we use, body language and mimicry. This is what Junior is exhausted by when he transfers to Reardan. All that unwritten code he has to master in order to fit in, will ultimately see to it that he loses the code from his own hometown. He is not a chameleon and cannot blend in wherever he goes. He is stigmatized and more likely it will reflect on his parents who will be regarded as having fostered a traitor. In small, tight-knit communities this is invariably the way things work.

Linking to UDIR's stipulation that the novel should appeal to the student and make him or her connect to the changes the protagonist goes through in the book, one might think that this point is one that is easily recognisable. Whether you live in a rural or an urban community, you will be guided by Jante and will try to tailor your appearance in order to successfully blend into the crowd you wish to belong to. We can make use of this fact to teach students about idiolect and sociolect, thus linking it to other subjects at school bringing about a sense of universal knowledge and that a subject is never an island to itself. Connecting different subjects to each other may increase the students' awareness that learning something is useful in many different contexts. Through discussing Junior's journey and his different

appearance at the reservation and in his life beyond it, we have indeed bridged three subjects: English, Norwegian and Social Science.

Some of the young readers may be tempted to copy Junior's escape from their own small-minded communities. They may perceive the novel as a recipe for how to go about changing your life and your destiny. You can be unappealing and unattractive, zitty and handicapped and still there might be a whole brand-new world out there who will embrace you for who you are in yourself, not your appearance. The "only" thing you need is zeal and momentum and resilience. If you are smart and reflective and able to set up goals for yourself, you are going to shape your own future. You are not doomed to repeat the cycle of life of your forefathers should you find it wanting in some respect. Junior is an achiever, and as such instils hope and movement in readers susceptible to his story. However, he also tells us of the backside to this life changing experience; you will sever the bonds to all that has been familiar. Interacting with your family and former friends will not come as naturally to you anymore, you will lose the ease with which you formerly moved about in time and place when your world was smaller. In this respect the novel also serves as a warning: do not go down this road in the woods, should you fear the consequences. Only those that are dedicated to fundamental change will be adamant and stay on the road less travelled. In an ordinary class there may probably not be too many people that will feel moved by the poem and its implications. Only a minority will have the physical and mental *need* to move out of what is familiar and safe. The inner drive that makes some of us travel away from our "first worlds", so to speak, is not for the majority, but the teacher will be wise to try and look for those that fit the description, and this will reveal itself through comments in class discussion or in written assignments. Once the teacher knows more about his students, it will be easier to introduce them to other texts or in other respects talk to them about how to further their ambition; to be a Mr.P.

Alexie's novel is both specifically cultured as well as generic in the respect that what he describes could and would happen anywhere. A specific aspect of the novel is Junior's condition called hydrocephalus, which he spends time explaining at the beginning of the novel to underline that he is different. However, over the course of the novel, Junior stops being bullied for his condition, and is appreciated on his merits rather than shunned for his physical appearance. The behaviour of his new friends at Reardan helps promote the students'

understanding of the English curriculum central values regarding prejudice (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 2). Junior's handicaps, his hydrocephalus and stuttering can in a classroom situation be likened to other handicaps. Discussion of Junior's handicaps will teach students to respect a peer regardless of the handicap he or she suffers from. The novel might bring normalcy to an abnormal situation, letting the teacher translate one handicap into another, thus helping the young students see that what meets the eye is not necessarily what is on the inside and the class as a whole might engage in a quality discussion where they bring up any ailment, giving it normalcy and transparency. As Junior is the antithesis to a normal hero, he is an antihero but we love him and root for him and we are eager to watch his successes, providing the antiheroes and anti-heroines in the classroom with a peer that they can relate to. This is perhaps a much more important facet to the story than it would have been twenty years ago, due to the growth of social media. In our contemporary classroom, the students will be dependent on and indeed addicted to social media, placing their happiness and *raison d'être* on their number of followers and comments and likes. They will be prone to comparing themselves to influencers and filtered photos, placing great weight on their physical appearance. When the top model look is the level to which one is aspiring, it goes without saying that it is hardly achieved by many of us. The time spent on pondering how to steal the look will perhaps be considered better spent this way, than reading books or improving one's insights into a number of different issues.

4.5 Pre-Social Media Setting and Consequences

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian is set before social media made its impact on the world, and thus it is already a tale from a pre-digital past for the young people of today. It does not provide an up-to-date picture of a contemporary school day. Our students will be presented with the last generation before them who had "only" the real world to worry about. They encounter Junior and his day-to-day thoughts about things that have actually been said to his face, or that he has overheard or had people tell him. His information is not filtered through social media, and his solid self-esteem is not soiled or crippled by impossible standards set by mythical figures of the internet. His story is a golden opportunity to draw on the fact that everybody has got something going for him or her. Students can benefit from

seeing how Junior lists all his shortcomings yet still manages to grab hold of what is important and internalize the idea that he is cool and that he is going somewhere and that he has dreams for his life that he continually tries to realise. His perseverance and kindness and loyalty are all of a special calibre, and could very well be qualities needed in order to have a good life, though it might be difficult for young people to see that he is endowed with all these values. At the age of thirteen to sixteen the diversity among students in a class when it comes to maturity will be enormous. You will have mere children mixed with young adults and anything between the two poles. Some will have reached a level of reflection whereas others will need things spelled out for them, so it will be the teacher's job to point it out to them and try to have students puzzle together all Junior's good qualities.

Accepting responsibility for your own life can be frightening when one is at an age where one depends on one's parents and friends and family and nearest community. Junior is the youngest child in his family, still he is the one who is the more outgoing of the two siblings. Junior's quest for adulthood can be contrasted to that of his sister, Mary. Mary holed up in the basement of her parents' house, not accepting adulthood, burying herself underground in an existence that is undemanding. Once she surfaces, she hurries to marry the first and best man she meets, thus gaining adult points and respect of some kind by becoming somebody's wife. She has at least moved on from the dreary limbo state she was in. Through her letters and e-mails to her brother the reader learns of her doings and how her life has turned out. It gives her joy, or at least that is what is transmitted in their correspondence. Today, Mary's reason might have been another. Our students are living their lives more or less through and by the means of a screen and WiFi-connection. Who are you on your own? Are you anything if it is not in context with others? What justifies your existence, so to speak? What motivates you to initiate change in your life, is it your own design or that of others? There are many intriguing questions to play ball with in class. Which is the best time to be young in, Junior's or our own time right here and now, and why? Teenagers need to reflect on who they are and what has been the making of them. And in what ways would their options be improved by or tainted by the onset of social media. It is important to learn to know oneself and what are the boundaries of their generation in comparison to their parents' generation, both in order to make the most out of it but also to appreciate or maybe look back in remorse at what is lost?

4.6 Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Mary's journey is also something that lends itself to discussing with the class, or in groups, as it will no doubt be familiar to many of them either in their own house with a sibling or that they have heard of someone holed up in their parents' house, refusing to cut the umbilical cord, staying put in the familiar womb of the basement gaming room. Or it could even be that some students in class dread the coming of the day when they will have to leave home or to even start making preparations for it to happen. At the same time, one might experience clashes of wills at home as it is customary for the generation gap to make itself evident when teenagers are nearing adulthood. All of which is expected, explicable or even desirable. In class, we could compare Mary to Junior to see how they differ from each other and discuss what makes someone stay and another one go.

One has to test boundaries in order to find out who one is compared to one's parents. What are my rules? What are my beliefs and values and in which way do they differ from the way I was brought up? Am I loved still, even if it turns out that I want to take the other road, choosing differently from my parents? Will they support me and aid and ease my way there, or will I have to make the journey on my own, and if so; is that something I am willing and capable of doing? Discussing Junior and Mary might reveal some of the students' hopes and desires for their own future. Will they stay at home taking over the fishing boat license or the farm and animals, or do they envision something else from what they have grown up in? The wheres and hows and whys open up for vulnerability as it costs to let other people in on your dream. They may laugh at you, or they may support your plan. Therefore, this discussion should not be pursued unless one is certain that the classroom environment is safe, and a place that lends itself to setting words to our dreams. To expose oneself to vulnerability, one has to be certain that the class will not resort to ridicule.

The teacher's responsibility to make the classroom the haven it should be, has started the moment he got the class. A task as encompassing as that of reading and discussing a novel cannot be scheduled before there at least has gone some months. During that time, the teacher has to make sure every student feels at ease and name them each by name, for instance something as commonplace as saying, "Good morning, Marie!" as opposed to a mere "Good

morning!” Every little thing counts when it comes to building and maintaining human relations, and it is a delicate structure that demands looking after on a general basis. If there is a misunderstanding of some sorts, one would as a teacher be wise to try to untangle it before it grows in complexity and importance. It could be something the teacher has said or done that has been misunderstood, or it may be something relating to individuals or groups of students within the class. Where there is discontent and distrust, one cannot have a trusting and open relationship where anybody is free to engage in the discourse. Being a teacher means to be constantly to be alert to signals that the student body is doing fine, that there is no animosity of any kind and when it arises, to quench it as soon as possible and be certain the fire is out before you leave it and move on.

4.7 There is a Time for Everything

The novel’s setting in time should and ought to be discussed with our students, lingering together in a reflection on what has been lost and what has been gained in the process of the years. Who would Junior have been twenty years later? Could the life of a Norwegian teenager in the 2020s copy Junior’s, or is that a lost world to us? Which is the better society, that one or our own time? Why is this so and how can we amend some of the burdens of today, how can we turn back time if that is what we find desirable? What should we be greatly thankful for having now as opposed to teenagers in the 2000s? Having an in-depth and meaningful classroom or group discussion about this will probably help the students reflect on what they have and have not. This is a discipline that is sure to provide personal growth and understanding for our own time as well as our past.

All philological subjects are a part of the general education that is important for a human being as he or she embarks on life. Studying the full length of a novel in a classroom will provide the young readers with a sense of accomplishment and of a task overcome in fellowship, reading in silence and discussing together. Improving the self-concept of the students will prepare them subconsciously for further reading and provides them with a positive relation to the act of reading (Malloy et. al, p. 279). Developing positive reading scenarios is important for the students’ future within academics and their careers, as the reading challenges they will face later in life will be more demanding. Therefore, taking steps

to try to increase their motivation is necessary in order to set the students up for success. These accomplishments may seem small at the time, but they are in fact preparation for similar ventures later in life. All literature has a motif and humans are really not that different from each other over time and place. When we read about others meeting and overcoming problems or obstacles in their life, it will be helpful when we ourselves are met with similar situations in life. It can help us make decisions for or against something and feel more secure that we are doing what is best. This has been the agenda for literature since ancient Greece and their theatres performing for people, where the aim was catharsis. The idea of catharsis is of course that the spectator shall witness something unfold before their eyes, thus making them “experience” it on stage, saving them from going through the same thing in their personal lives. A classroom discussion prepares the individual for bigger and smaller arenas, and the more it inspires each individual, the more impact it will have. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, we find examples that students may get advice on how to talk to your parents about something, or how to patch things up with your friend as well as bigger life altering situations such as the one Junior finds himself in when he makes up his mind to transfer to Reardan. To our students there may be all sorts of similar questions arising over the course of a year. For example, whether they should change schools now that their parents are divorcing, should they move to another part of the country, and what about their friends if they do? The importance of looking for answers and support in literature is something the teacher ought to instil in his students. You are not supposed to google everything under the sun, sometimes you might benefit from reading the whole book. UDIR’s listing of reading a novel for young adults may serve a number of purposes, all of which one should be aware of and implement in the classroom.

Junior’s journey of exploring himself and placing himself within multiple and different settings will provide young readers with tools necessary for their own personal growth and their own journey. How to undergo the transformation from childhood through the teenage years and finally reaching adulthood is a quest of mythical dimensions and it may intimidate all of us at times. Having had the opportunity to read a novel in full, not merely an extract of one, will shed light on how one could act as time passes. To know oneself and have respect and tolerance for the acts or passivity of oneself as well as others is an important aspect of being human. To be respected and to show respect for others, and to know when that respect

will and should be withdrawn are also guidelines for a good life where one takes into consideration what one's actions might lead to and where inaction may leave you. In this regard, Junior can help students realise that it is necessary to take chances in life that may make a positive difference, such as him switching schools and getting know new people at Reardan. Junior tells us about his love and respect for his grandmother and how she is worthy of respect. She becomes the embodiment of tolerance, and through her words and actions she guides him towards a good life in fellowship with other people. When Mary tells him that she has married, and to whom she is married, we see Junior battling with information that he has got from his sister, telling him that her husband is a gambler moving from casino to casino and making a living off it.

“Where'd she meet this guy?” I asked my mother.

“At the casino”, she said. “Your sister said he was a good poker player. I guess he travels to all the Indian casinos in the country.”

“She married him because he plays cards?”

“She said she wasn't afraid to gamble anything and that's the kind of man she wanted to spend her life with.”

(Alexie, 2007, p.89-90)

In this quote we see Junior's respect for his sister's marriage vanish as he gets to know a little about her husband. To some extent, his sister's husband becomes a representative for the stereotypical Indian boozing and gambling his life away on the casinos established by rich white men, thus fulfilling the red man's burden.

Yet another benefit of reading the whole work of literature is that it means overcoming a huge task. This is a big reward in itself and should not be devalued. Chances are there will be several of the students in class who say that they have never read a whole book in their life.

Or they may recollect the slim children's books that they "read" when they were little, giving them a sense of something they have actually done before and are now going to do again only in a larger format. In this book too, they come across illustrations like those in their children's books. This may help some of them finish the book, as there is "air" in it, not page up and page down with nothing but writing. To others in the same class, the illustrations may initially be an impediment as they are now eager to recognise themselves as more grown up, and that they are at a higher level where illustrated books do not belong. However, the illustrations are also more or less crammed with text and they demand a different kind of reading and lead to a broader understanding of the text. The teacher would be wise to point out this fact though, to have the more intellectually orientated individuals in the class embrace the text as well. It is important to dare to read a novel. It is important not to let our subconscious tell us that it is of no use as many of the students will try to self-sabotage in order to hide their shortcomings. In short, it is important not to underestimate our students, to encouraging them to have a go at an intimidating task that "somewhere ages and ages hence (...) has made all the difference" (Frost, 1916),

4.8 Imagery

The English subject needs to provide the students with the tools necessary to recognize and feel comfortable around imagery and symbols. They will be familiar with the literary devices from Norwegian class, and the teacher's job in English is to translate the terms and freshen up their knowledge about what they already know. In this manner they will, hopefully, see the value of learning and using the terms and how they reach beyond the boundaries of each language class. The teacher may make a list of the literary devices which the class is going to identify, as well as a general lecture on what the different symbols might mean. In this way, it will be easier and less frightening to the students, when they are going to look for them on their own, as they will have been guided somewhat in what to look for, and perhaps where to look for it. It might be expected that perhaps as much as half the class will feel reluctant to undertake the task, and this makes it all the more important to create an environment where they feel challenged in a positive way, and where there will be some sort of victory, and

above all; no ridicule. Looking for symbols is not a task for wimps, and the teacher must make sure they do not feel like one.

In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* there is especially one episode that stands out in this respect, and that is where Junior and Rowdy find themselves at the top of the mightiest pine tree, after having dared each other to climb on and on until: “we were more than one hundred feet in the air. From our vantage point, we could see for miles. We could see our entire world. And our entire world, at that moment, was green and golden and perfect.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 226) We have to lead young minds into recognizing imagery, we have to discuss the meaning of sentences like “ And our entire world, at that moment, was green and golden and perfect” (Alexie, 2007, p. 226) In this short string of words we have the benefit of multiple literary devices such as foreshadowing, symbolism, metaphors, filmatic sequence and punctuation. The sentence is a veritable treasure when it comes to explaining all of these to our students.

The fact that the two of them are at the top of the tallest tree they have ever seen and have the oversight over “our entire world” is likewise a state to envy. The feeling that you can see clearly what is around you is typically believed to lead to wise decisions in life. This can lead to a classroom discussion of perspective and from which point we can see things and the implications of our vantage point. In order to check whether the students get the gist of the scene, the teacher might ask them if they ever have been experiencing something like this themselves. Chances are that they will recognise it from trips with friends or family. Norwegians are prone to outdoorsy behaviour, and therefore one might be lucky to get a couple of students to recount the sights they have seen, and try to get them to incorporate as many sensory connotations as possible. Through reading about it and sharing similar episodes in class, one will link the text to their own lives, facilitating their understanding of the use of imagery, and how powerful it might be.

It will also serve as a passage to refer to later on in the course as all texts will become part of a common reference list, a common reading experience. And it can later be used in order to explain something they may have misunderstood, a mistake made in their own writing or that of another's. When they are working with the written assignment and have missed slightly on the target, one could use this discussion in class and say "Remember when we talked about..." When you read something, then discuss it, then write about it, you are sure to remember more and gain a higher level of understanding both for the example in question at the time, but also on a general basis as the first example will function as a bridge to similar incidents later on.

The symbolic use of colours is probably as old as mankind. The golden hue of youth opposed to the silver lining of old age is easily explained, and one might build on that and include "a golden opportunity" as an example of something extraordinary that opens up to us, something unexpected. Something is golden or made of gold is typically what we all want to have, is it not? Its connotations are positive and its value is above that of silver. One could start by going through colours and what they traditionally symbolise, and green is often a symbol of new life, spring, youth, not knowing too much about something and so on.

Foreshadowing is of course achieved by a young adult Junior looking back and saying; "at that moment." Just like Frost would have to be a man to write his "The Road Not Taken". We need to be at a vantage point, to gain insight into matters in life, our own feelings and our own identity. The insight is rarely clear to us at a point when we experience it, but it might dawn on us later, looking back and remembering what was said or done or the ambiance we were swept up in. This is also something the students need to be taught, they cannot know it by themselves, and reflection is the key to the ability to pay attention to moods. Knowing this, it is easier to understand ourselves when we often look back in anger or remorse at something that has happened to us. Having the benefit of hindsight is a luxury not bestowed on us at the said moment, so we should be more understanding of the choice we made with the information we had at the time. As well as being an element of literary theory, foreshadowing is also a lesson of life and how to be human.

Prior to the quote, Junior says that “Boys can hold hands until they turn nine.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 218) and the episode in the pine tree unfolds the summer they turn ten, i.e. their last summer as children when they can still hold hands, they are still open to magic such as thinking that what they saw from the tree top was indeed as far as the world reaches. They are still little boys, on the brink of being old enough to start looking outside for more.

This metaphor is laden with the promise of a land of their own. Their futures are golden and green with youth and possibilities. They have the perfect overview. Everything is golden. The moment is of enormous beauty. Two young boys, the tranquility of the scene, the warm perfect summer’s day, it is almost like a poem, like a film. In the midst of all this promise and bliss, there is simultaneously an ominous sense of loss and sadness. It is too perfect, it cannot stay sacred as the world is not like this. Reality is harsh and it will taint you. Albeit, from a point further on in his life, it serves as a reminder for Junior, of a beautiful shared moment with his best friend, as well as the powerful imagery of the scene.

Perhaps we can share a memorable moment of our own with our students, to get them to open up and share their own memories, not so distant yet but nonetheless important in order to internalize the power of potent imagery like this. If the students find joy in relating to the book and using their own experiences to understand what Junior is going through, this in turn can lead to them becoming intrinsically motivated due them finding satisfaction in engaging with novel. It will also help them to have their eyes open to the device used in TV series or shows or films or books they might meet.

Of course, to the more informed scholar, the words of Robert Frost will sound in our heads, when we look at the two of them, clinging to the tree, and listen to Junior’s thoughts about how everything is “green golden and perfect” (Alexie, 2007, p. 226):

Nature’s first green is gold,

Her hardest hue to hold.

Her early leaf's a flower;

But only so an hour.

Then leaf subsides to leaf.

So Eden sank to grief,

So dawn goes down to day.

Nothing gold can stay. (Frost, 1923)

It seems evident that the two texts are linked through imagery, and Alexie's novel will serve the purpose to introduce students to the poem too, and ask if they can see anything similar and if so, what can they see? There is a great opportunity for learning present in this task; colours, seasons, the passing of time as a symbol for a human life span, the notion of childhood as our time in the garden of Eden (Paradise Lost, if you will), teaching them about allusions and how to recognize them.

The scene from the pine tree and Junior's escape to Reardan will also serve as examples to explain the American Dream. We need to believe, all across the world, that it is possible to go from rags to riches. It ties nicely in with Star Trek's "to boldly go" and with Junior's craving for something more and something else. The American Dream states that it is possible for anyone, through their own dedication and through hard work to change your life from having little to having a lot, to be the smith of your own success, to forge your own destiny, to keep in line with the imagery. Perhaps we could ask our students whether they know of anybody who fits the description, whether they are Norwegian or from other countries. The idea behind it is universal and applicable to all. Then we could go on to discuss whether they believe it is really possible to affect your own life. What does such change demand from a person, is it for everybody or do you need that special x-factor to make it happen? What about if you win the Eurojackpot, is it the same as choosing to change schools the way Junior does? Can we compare the two, and if so why or why not?

Junior is different from the others on the reservation due to his dreams and how he wants to explore the world. At Reardan he finds a likeminded soul in Penelope, who also shares his ambition for exploration. Junior singles himself out from the crowd, together with his girlfriend Penelope: “We were supposed to be happy with our limitations. But there was no way Penelope and I were going to sit still. Nope, we both wanted to fly.” (Alexie, 2007, p. 112)

Junior and Penelope discuss their dreams with each other, they put dreams into words and they share them, thus making the dream more likely to be attained. If you do not share your dream it is easier to stay in the boat without rocking it too much, it is easier letting your boat lay at bay, receiving no cargo, not having to take yourself anywhere. This is in fact what happened to Junior’s parents, and he dreads it and is going to make sure history does not repeat itself.

Junior has had the luck of meeting numerous adults who teach him to see and interpret his surroundings in order to better navigate in them. His grandmother has taught him to be curious and open-minded and tolerant. By extension, she has also taught him to avoid bigotry, jealousy, selfishness, and hatred. Through giving him the gift of tolerance and through showing him how it is lived out, she prepares him for the world outside their own, and also prepares him to understand and forgive what he sees on the reservation. The importance of tolerance and empathy is made clear in the novel through how well-liked Junior’s grandmother was on the reservation. Asking the students questions about why the grandmother was popular at the reservation will help them identify her positive qualities and perhaps aid them in integrating such ideas into their own lives. When she is herself run down and killed by a drunken driver on the reservation, her last words are to forgive the driver.

At Reardan Junior has Coach who uses his archetypical phys ed teacher’s appeal to teach him a thing or two about life:

“You can do it,” Coach said.

“I can do it.”

“You can do it.”

“I can do it.”

Do you understand how amazing it is to hear that from an adult? Do you understand how amazing it is to hear that from anybody? It's one of the simplest sentences in the world, just four words, but they're the four hugest words in the world when they're put together.

You can do it. I can do it. Let's do it."

(Alexie, 2007, p. 189)

Coach is a static character as well as a stereotypical one. He behaves like what we expect a coach to behave, giving instructions and handing out short barks of information in the way typical of a sports arena where you have to shrink your message to an absolute minimum. This passage between Junior and Coach is wonderful, and it is told in a manner that lets the reader be a fly on the wall, watching and hearing and seeing and smelling the scene. It takes the form of an incantation, like a secular liturgy, imprinting its message in Junior's mind and heart giving it to him to remember forever. One could almost be tempted to say that Coach was there at the beginning of him. To compare it to the students' world, one could ask the football players, or the handball players or the cheerleaders about what feelings they get from yelling together with their teammates, a set formula to make them win the game. Or giving them the motif of a boxer sitting in his corner awaiting the next round, his coach close to his ear passing on words meant to make him strong and victorious. When students grasp that through learning something from a book, they might recognise this happening in a film, in the lyrics of a song, thus giving them a tool for lifelong learning.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to find reading material and modes of instruction that will help students read and help them to identify which aspects of reading appeal to them. If the multitude of different tasks appeal to the students, it will have them reading in order to work with a task they find interesting. This in turn motivates them to read according to the first of Schaffner's the seven dimensions, as they can work with topics they enjoy and feel a sense of autonomy when faced with reading (Schaffner et al., 2013, p. 370). Knowledge of motivational theories and concept are useful in the planning of instruction and aids in making tasks that are more engaging to students. It also brings awareness to different motivational needs the students have that can be achieved through something like the MRP-R to facilitate their interest and learning.

The novel itself, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, fulfils the pedagogical potential of YAF, since it is relatable for the students through the characters and school setting, but also delves into more profound topics like death and poverty that can act as a segue into more demanding texts. These reasons make the book a great choice for use in lower secondary schools. Alexie's novel is not the holy grail of YAF-texts, meaning the same results can be achieved through the use of other texts, but *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is certainly a book that can be used as part of UDIR's new competency aim regarding YAF. Alexie's novel also contains interdisciplinary elements in relation to social sciences with its representation of a Native American community and those who live there. The multimodality in the form of Junior's drawings gives the reader a vision of how certain characters look and breaks the "wall of text" by having contextualised drawings that represent what the text is telling the reader.

Due to the new curriculum being introduced in lower secondary schools in 2020, the area of YAF is not yet completely explored within English classrooms in Norway. It will be interesting to see which texts and novels will become favoured by textbook companies and the ideas and tasks they recommend. This thesis however, has focused on creating instruction which will lead to the students' developing a love of reading and leading them to enjoy books later on in life. Developing a love of reading is not the only focus of the English subject in Norway and teachers are bound to a time schedule to fulfil all UDIR's requirements regarding reading. Due to this, it will be interesting to see the future of the PISA test results regarding the amount of Norwegian teens who read in their spare time, and if it will be able to give an

indication of whether the introduction of YAF has had a positive or negative impact on our future readers and their enjoyment of books.

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