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# Flight: A Novel



## Synopsis

The best-selling author of multiple award-winning books returns with his first novel in ten years, a powerful, fast and timely story of a troubled foster teenager—a boy who is not a legal Indian because he was never claimed by his father—who learns the true meaning of terror. About to commit a devastating act, the young man finds himself shot back through time on a shocking sojourn through moments of violence in American history. He resurfaces in the form of an FBI agent during the civil rights era, inhabits the body of an Indian child during the battle at Little Big Horn, and then rides with an Indian tracker in the 19th Century before materializing as an airline pilot jetting through the skies today. When finally, blessedly, our young warrior comes to rest again in his own contemporary body, he is mightily transformed by all he's seen. This is Sherman Alexie at his most brilliant—making us laugh while breaking our hearts. Simultaneously wrenching and deeply humorous, wholly contemporary yet steeped in American history, *Flight* is irrepressible, fearless, and again, groundbreaking Alexie.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A deadpan "Call Me Zits" opens the first novel in 10 years from Alexie (*Smoke Signals*, etc.), narrated by a self-described "time-traveling mass murderer" whose name and deeds unravel as this captivating bildungsroman progresses. Half-Indian, half-Irish, acne-beset Zits is 15: he never knew his alcoholic father; his mother died when he was six; his aunt kicked him out when he was 10 (after he set her sleeping boyfriend on fire because the boyfriend had been forcing Zits to have sex).

Running away from his 20th foster home, Zits ends up, briefly, in jail; soon after, he enters a bank, shoots several people and is shot dead himself. Zits then commences time-traveling via the bodies of others, finding himself variously lodged in an FBI agent in the '70s (helping to assassinate radical Indian activists); a mute Indian boy at the Battle of Little Big Horn; an Indian tracker named Gus; an airplane pilot instructor (one of whose pupils commits a terrorist act); and his own father. Zits eventually comes back to himself and to an unexpected redemption. While the plot is wisp-thin, one quickly surrenders to Zits's voice, which elegantly mixes free-floating young adult cynicism with a charged, idiosyncratic view of American history. Alexie plunges the book into bracing depths. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

His first novel in over a decade, Sherman Alexie's *Flight* winds themes of alienation, revenge, and forgiveness through its narrator's time-traveling adventures. Critics were impressed with the clever Zits: his thoughts and actions are both humorous and painfully genuine, the essence of troubled adolescence. However, reviewers complained about the lack of depth, of fully developed secondary characters, and of historical detail. Many critics also noted that the plot's swift pace and tidy ending were more appropriate for juvenile fiction. The *New York Times*, on the other hand, considered these elements part of the novel's charm. Though Alexie's latest effort may disappoint some readers, many will still find snatches of his trademark humor and moving prose. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc.

This is a wonderful example of contemporary urban young adult American Indian fiction --it crosses a lot of categories! I absolutely love the way that Alexie is able to weave in several examples of historical trauma throughout, thus showing the plight of the urban Indian today. There is a lot of material here, even though you could read this book in one sitting if you want (I did). There are some dark undertones here and not everyone has a happy ending. But this is an engaging novel that will get you thinking. I highly recommend it to those like Alexie, are interested in contemporary Indian issues, and to pretty much everyone. It is worth a try to read this. If you want some information about the plot: This is the story of a boy named Zits. He does not know his Native father (and thus has trouble connecting to his Native identity) and his mother dies when he is young, so he finds himself in many foster homes. Not all of these foster families have been kind to him. He becomes a bit of a juvenile delinquent and experiments with drugs and alcohol. When he decides to react violently, fate has another plan for him, and he ends up traveling back and forth in time to visit significant instances in American Indian history. Other instances are not Native-specific (one

revolves around the aftermath of 9/11). When he returns to his body, he must decide if he wants to change his life for the better, or continue down the same road. I was pleased with the outcome.

“Santayana says there is no cure for birth and death so you better enjoy the interval.” (pp. 24-25) WHAT WAS THAT I just read? Practically everything Alexie writes reads like it’s an autobiography. But, in *Flight: A Novel*, the autobiography takes some new and strange twists. With flights of fancy into the minds, bodies, times, and places of others, Zits, our protagonist, lives a life of wonder and despair. With Alexie, there’s always wonder and despair. Recommendation: Still, *Flight* is an engaging piece of storytelling. Now I can’t wait to read Sherman Alexie’s memoir: *You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me*. “HAPPINESS NEVER LASTS LONG, does it?” (p. 66) “I feel like a carton of eggs holding up an elephant.” (p. 168) Open Road Media. Kindle Edition 182 pages

Ever wondered what’s it like to really walk in the shoes of others? In this book, Zits (an angry, lonely, 15 year-old half Native American, half Irish orphan), did. Influenced by his new-found friend, whose name is, coincidentally, JusTice, Zits set out to rob a bank, with the intention to hurt and kill, to pay back for all the pain and disappointment the society put him through. This incident literally changed his life. As soon as he pulled the trigger at the bank, he went on an unexpected time-traveling journey. He walked in the shoes of an FBI agent during the civil rights movement, a mute Indian boy during the Battle of Little Bighorn, an Indian tracker, an airplane pilot. This journey, while baffled him at times, also allowed him to find himself; to see and experience the love and kindness, hate and anger, and the choices made and what became of them, at the same time battling with his own thoughts and emotions. Did they make the right choices? What would he do if he were the one having to make those choices? My thoughts! I felt Zits’ angst, sadness and confusion all at the same time. I find his journey of discovery, of God showing him there’s hope, there’s love, there’s kindness amidst all these chaos in the world, was so surreal that he somehow came to terms with his life. He surrendered to the fact that he needed help; that he can’t continue to find love with hate, that he’ll keep hurting if he hurts, that he is what he makes of himself. The story has a beautiful ending. A powerful one I must say. I cried a pool of tears. I sobbed. And sobbed. Mr Alexis writes so simply yet beautifully, with so few words that pack a punch. Looking forward to reading more of his books!

Sherman Alexie is my favorite contemporary author and has been since college. It’s a short read,

but it is lovely. I would give readers a head's up that if you have a childhood history of abuse and abandonment, this would be a story best read when you have someone with whom you can trust. I downloaded this on my mom's Kindle in print as well in the audio form. My mom is now disabled and cannot quite read, but she loves to be read to and follow along on the screen. It is difficult for her to talk, but she spoke with me at length about this book as best she could. It was excellent for her as a former tribal therapist. I love listening to her stories of the boys and girls she loved from the schools where she worked with kids in tribes in Wyoming, Arizona and Montana.

Overall, Flight was a good book. The setting of the book is in 2007 Seattle, Washington. Zits a troubled teen whose lost his mother to breast cancer and whose father ran out on him very young. After having another run in with the police, Zits meets a kid named Justice in "kid jail". Zits and Justice have a very deep conversation about life and learn to "love" each other. When released Zits decides to meet up with Justice so they can become closer friends. Little does Zits know that Justice will persuade Zits to shoot down a bank. So, because of Justice's persuasion, Zits goes into a bank and shoots it down killing many people; including himself. When Zits wakes up he find himself in a different body. This happens 6 times as he goes through 6 different characters. He becomes an FBI agent gone bad, a cavalry soldier, a cheating husband, his runaway father, a little Native American boy under U.S army attack, and obviously, himself. When Zits wakes up from his "dream" he realizes he is in the bank with no one dead. After leaving the bank, Zits goes to turn himself in because he had the idea of shooting the bank down. Finally, after later being declared no longer a threat to society Zits gets put in a foster family with his parole officer's brother. He quickly grows to love them and earns his real name back, Michael.

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