

Grade 7 Literacy  
Week of January 11 – January 15

**Lesson 1: Poem - Victory**

Poetry, like other types of writing, can be a way to explore and reflect on one's identity.

Read this poem by celebrated author Sherman Alexie. Then complete the following activity.

# Victory

Sherman Alexie, 1966

When I was twelve, I shoplifted a pair  
Of basketball shoes. We could not afford  
Them otherwise. But when I tied them on,  
I found that I couldn't hit a shot.

When the ball clanked off the rim, I felt  
Only guilt, guilt, guilt. O, immoral shoes!  
O, kicks made of paranoia and rue!  
Distraught but unwilling to get caught

Or confess, I threw those cursed Nikes  
Into the river and hoped that was good  
Enough for God. I played that season  
In supermarket tennis shoes that felt

The same as playing in bare feet.  
O, torn skin! O, bloody heels and toes!  
O, twisted ankles! O, blisters the size  
Of dimes and quarters! Finally, after

I couldn't take the pain anymore, I told  
My father what I had done. He wasn't angry.  
He wept out of shame. Then he cradled  
And rocked me and called me his Little

Basketball Jesus. He told me that every cry  
Of pain was part of the hoops sonata.  
Then he laughed and bandaged my wounds—  
My Indian Boy Poverty Basketball Stigmata.

## Activity

After reading the poem carefully, consider what you learn about the author's identity. Refer back to the lists of outside and inside identifiers that you used in the previous ideas.

Note that some may be directly stated but several may be inferred from his action or indirect evidence.

List five things that are part of his identity. For each, supply a line from the poem as evidence including the line number in brackets.

### Example:

Twelve year old boy – “When I was twelve, I shoplifted a pair” (1)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.