

Instructions for the essay

Read the text below and write a single response that addresses both questions. Give your essay a title. Use full sentences and paragraphs, and respond to the questions directly. You have 60 minutes to complete this essay. Your essay should be between 300-500 words. Please stay within the word limit.

Context: The author, Sherman Alexie, is a Native American writer who has written many short stories based on his experiences living on a reservation in the United States. In this excerpt from the short story “Every Little Hurricane,” a young boy remembers some of the traumas that he and his family had endured over the years...

Reading text

On Christmas Eve when he was five, Victor’s father wept because he didn’t have any money for gifts. Oh, there was a tree trimmed with ornaments, a few bulbs from the Trading Post, one string of lights, and photographs of the family with holes punched through the top, threaded with dental floss, and hung from tiny branches. But there were no gifts. Not one.

“But we’ve got each other,” Victor’s mother said, but she knew it was just a dry recitation of the old Christmas movies they watched on television. It wasn’t real. Victor watched his father cry huge, gasping tears. Indian tears.

Victor imagined that his father’s tears could have frozen solid in the severe reservation¹ winters and shattered when they hit the floor. Sent millions of icy knives through the air, each specific and beautiful. Each dangerous and random.

Victor imagined that he held an empty box beneath his father’s eyes and collected the tears, held that box until it was full. Victor would wrap it in Sunday comics and give it to his mother.

Just the week before, Victor had stood in the shadows of his father’s doorway and watched as the man opened his wallet and shook his head. Empty. Victor watched his father put the empty wallet back in his pocket for a moment, then pull it out and open it again. Still empty. Victor watched his father repeat this ceremony again and again, as if the repetition itself could guarantee change. But it was always empty.

During all these kinds of tiny storms, Victor’s mother would rise with her medicine and magic. She would pull air down from empty cupboards and make fry bread. She would shake thick blankets free from old bandannas. She would comb Victor’s braids into dreams.

1. Reservation. an area of land set aside by the U.S. government for Native American people to live on. Often very poor.

Sample Questions for IB

- Contrast the ways in which the mother and father are presented in this extract.
- How is the character of Victor developed in this extract?