

## On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City

The **white** woman across the aisle from me says 'Look, look at all the history, that house on the hill there is over two hundred years old,' as she points out the window **past** me



**White:** This word is often associated with privilege. We know the author is Native American, and he is pointing out the differences between them. Connotation could be negative.

**“Past me”:** “Past me” has a negative connotation. The woman “points out the window past me.” He could have just said “pointed out the window” but by adding **“past me”** we see it as a rude and ignorant gesture, the woman not even thinking about the other passenger on the Amtrak.

into what she has been taught. I have learned little more about American history during my few days back East than what I expected and far less of what we should all know of the tribal stories

whose architecture is 15,000 years older than the corners of the house that sits museumed on the hill. 'Walden Pond,' the woman on the train asks, 'Did you see Walden Pond?'

and I don't have a cruel enough heart to break her own by telling her there are five Walden Ponds on my little reservation out West and at least a hundred more surrounding Spokane,

the city I pretended to call my home. 'Listen,' I could have told her. 'I don't give a s\*\*t about Walden. I know the Indians were living stories around that pond before Walden's grandparents were born

and before his grandparents' grandparents were born. I'm tired of hearing about Don-F\*\*\*ing-Henley saving it, too, because that's redundant. If Don Henley's brothers and sisters and mothers and father hadn't come here in the first place

then nothing would need to be saved.' But I didn't say a word to the woman about Walden Pond because she smiled so much and seemed delighted that I thought to bring her an orange juice

back from the food car. I respect elders of every color. All I really did was eat my tasteless sandwich, drink my Diet Pepsi and nod my head whenever the woman pointed out

another little piece of her country's history while I, as all Indians have done since this war began, made plans for what I would do and say the next time

somebody from the enemy thought I was one of their own.

**Sherman Alexie**

### ALLUSIONS

Thoreau (an American author, poet, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, surveyor, historian, philosopher, and leading transcendentalist. He is best known for his book *Walden*, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay *Civil Disobedience*, an argument for individual resistance to civil government in moral opposition to an unjust state) wanted to simplify his life and go back to nature, so he went to live on Walden Pond (in Concord Massachusetts, about 1 mile from town) where he built a small cabin and spent 2 years there. He wrote a book about his simple way of life away from the big city, although he did go into town regularly to visit his aunt and have hot meals. Because of the book, Walden Pond became a tourist attraction and all around beach party spot – and incidentally was polluted and ruined and has the highest urine count of any pond in New England.

Don Henley and his relation to Walden: Songwriter and founding member of *The Eagles*, Henley started the *Walden Woods Project* to protect and preserve the land there from development and pollution.