

Summer Reading Reflection

Mrs. Holladay's AP English 11 Summer Reading Google Classroom: **ggc4wqt**
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Your assignment for reading *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien has multiple parts:

1. Read and annotate the book, considering what the author's purpose is and how it is developed throughout the text.
2. When you encounter a particularly important, provocative, dramatic, surprising, even disturbing passage, mark it with a post-it note, piece of paper, whatever you have to use to mark the passage and page. When you have completed the novel, look at those passages and decide which **three** to analyze. Copy the passages down (including page numbers). Passages/quotes must be from throughout the entire book. Your project will be considered incomplete if you only have quotes from the first half, so think about having one from the beginning, middle, and end.
3. Then, explain how each of the **three** passages "fit" into the novel, creating one well-written paragraph for each passage. (Create a separate paragraph for each passage, so you are writing three separate paragraphs.) Discuss the importance of the passage to the book's message, meaning, or theme. Also, react to the passage as a reader. Help me understand why you have selected this passage. Incorporate text support into your analysis. To generate responses, you can consider the following as suggested prompts or questions:
 - Why does the passage impress, intrigue, horrify, or puzzle you?
 - Do you find the author's use of language appealing or powerful? Does the passage jump off the page as a great descriptive passage?
 - Does it prompt a strong response from you as you read it? Does it present itself as so well-crafted that you just love the sound of it? Is the language beautiful, descriptive, graphic?
 - Is it particularly meaningful? Is it a high point in the book?
 - Do you find yourself in agreement/disagreement with the ideas expressed?
 - Does the passage remind you of a situation you have lived as well?
 - Does the passage make you laugh out loud or make you melancholy or make you something else?
 - Does the author raise intriguing questions or issues?
 - Does the passage challenge or expand your thinking?

You are not limited to the above list, nor do I expect you to answer all of the above.

However, your responses to the passages should clearly explain to me **WHY** these passages mean something to you and **HOW** these passages propel the author's overall purpose of the novel. Also, be reasonably concise. Find a balance between quantity and quality in your writing.

4. Answer the chapter questions attached to this assignment. A digital copy will also be provided through the AP English 11 Summer Reading Google Classroom.

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5. Finally, write a reflective letter (no more than one page) about reading this book, reflecting on the passages, and creating the visual for your cover page. Be sure to clearly explain the visual choices for the cover page. Write to me about the thoughts, feelings, observations, and new insights you experienced while reading it. Some ideas to think about for your letter:
 - Show me where you were drawn into the book and where you were pulled away from the book.
 - Identify in your opinion the author's – or the story's – greatest strength and weakness
 - Explore what value, besides entertainment, this book has
 - Share your overall impressions of the book
 - Discuss if you found yourself changing your mind about the book

You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of your responses, not necessarily length of writing. I am grading to see that you are thinking about what you have read and connecting ideas to a larger context (your life, my life, the world as a whole, etc. – In other words, so what?). All passages must include the page number from which they are taken. **Cite page numbers as (235) or (16) or (105).** This assignment may be typed or handwritten. If typed, the assignment may be submitted electronically through Google Classroom. If handwritten, you may turn them in to me in person or you may scan them and submit them on Google Classroom.

Part One Review:

- Read and annotate *The Things They Carried*.
- Select and explain three significant passages.
- Answer the attached questions.
- Write a reflective letter.

The assignment will be due the first day your class meets, and following a discussion and question time, there will be a brief quiz on the second week. The first in-class essay will also be the second week your class meets. You will be given the essay prompt on the first day of class to give you time to prepare for the essay.

Reading Questions for *The Things They Carried*

Chapter 1: “The Things They Carried”

1. In the list of all the things the soldiers carried, what item was most surprising? Which item did you find most evocative of the war? Which items stay with you?
2. Why do the soldiers tell jokes about the war, about killing?
3. How is the idea of weight used and developed in the story? How do you, as a reader, feel reading those lists of weight? What effect does it have on you?

Chapter 2: “Love”

1. What could Jimmy Cross never forgive himself for?
2. What does Jimmy ask Tim to do when he writes his story? What does he tell Tim NOT to mention?
3. What does it tell us about Tim O’Brien, the narrator, that he reveals character traits of Cross’s that Cross would prefer to have remain unknown?

Chapter 3: “Spin”

1. How is this story structured? What can you say about all these short sections?
2. According to Tim, what are stories for?

Chapter 4: “On the Rainy River”

1. How do the opening sentences prepare you for the story?: “This is the one story I’ve never told before. Not to anyone.” What effect do they have on the reader?
2. Why does O’Brien relate his experience as a pig declotter? How does this information contribute to the story? Why go into such specific detail?

Chapter 5: “Enemies”

1. What was the effect of the fight on Jensen?

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2. What did Jensen finally do to resolve the conflict between them?
3. What is the irony of this chapter's title?

Chapter 6: "Friends"

1. The phrase that inspires these two chapters is normally characterized as "friends and enemies." Why does O'Brien (the author) reverse this traditional order when sequencing these chapters?
2. Using both chapters "Enemies" and "Friends," explain how war distorts the normal social codes.
3. What is the irony of this chapter's title?

Chapter 7: "How to Tell a True War Story"

1. Why does this story begin with the line: "This is true." How does that prepare you, as a reader, for the story? In what sense is "this" true?
2. Find a few of O'Brien's elements of a "true war story." (such as, "A true war story is never moral.") Why does O'Brien believe these elements are important to a "true" war story?
3. Why is the baby water buffalo scene more disturbing than the death of one of O'Brien's platoon members, Curt Lemon?

Chapter 8: "The Dentist"

1. Characterize Curt Lemon and why he behaves the way he does. How does this affect your reading of the previous chapter?
2. What is the purpose of placing this chapter directly after "How to Tell a True War Story"?

Chapter 9: "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"

1. Look up the definition of the word metamorphosis. In what ways (note that this a plural noun) does this word apply to the transformation of Mary Anne?
2. Does it matter what happened, in the end, to Mary Anne? Would this be a better story if we knew, precisely, what happened to her after she left camp? Or does this vague ending add to the story? Why?

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3. "You're in a place where you don't belong." Any parallels to today? How does our lack of understanding of a people and their place destroy us (as it does Fossie)? How does it make monsters of us?

Chapter 10: "Stockings"

1. Why did Henry Dobbins continue to carry his girlfriend's stocking even after she broke up with him?
2. Consider the comparison O'Brien makes between Dobbins and America. Does O'Brien like America? Does he respect it?

Chapter 11: "Church"

1. What was Kiowa's reaction to setting up camp in a pagoda? Why? How does this differ with Dobbins's conception of faith/religion/spirituality?
2. The image of the monk cleaning an M-60 is incongruous and jarring. What purpose does it serve in the story?

Chapter 12: "The Man I Killed"

1. How did the narrator react to the fact that he killed another human being? What evidence in the story leads you to this conclusion?
2. This story describes fairly intimate aspects of the dead man's life. Where do these details come from? How can Tim O'Brien know them? What is going on here?

Chapter 13: "Ambush"

1. Tim O'Brien's daughter, Kathleen, asks if he ever killed a man: " 'You keep writing these war stories,' she said, 'so I guess you must've killed somebody.' " Following this, O'Brien relates two possible scenarios of the death described in "The Man I Killed" to explain "This is why I keep writing war stories." In your opinion, why does O'Brien keep writing war stories?
2. Where does truth reside in this book? What is the connection between O'Brien's actual experiences and the events in this book? Why is O'Brien using lies to get at "the truth"?

Chapter 14: "Style"

1. What symbolism lies in the woman's dance?

2. What does Dobbins mean when he says “Dance right!”?

Chapter 15: “Speaking of Courage”

1. What narrative point of view is used in “Speaking of Courage”?
2. Why is this story called “Speaking of Courage”? Assume the title does NOT hold any irony. In what sense does this story speak of courage?
3. Like other male characters in this novel, Norman Bowker develops an active fantasy life. Why do these men develop these fantasy roles? What do they get from telling these fantasy stories to themselves? What does this tell you about O’Brien’s understanding of the way fiction relates to real life?

Chapter 16: “Notes”

1. What is the effect of “Notes,” in which O’Brien explains the story behind “Speaking Of Courage”? Does your appreciation of the story change when you learn which parts are “true” and which are the author's invention?
2. What does O’Brien say about storytelling in “Notes”?

Chapter 17: “In the Field”

1. Briefly summarize the plot and style of the story. Is this story more of a “true” war story than the account in the chapter “Speaking of Courage”?
2. Why is the young man not identified in the story? What is the character’s purpose in the narrative?
3. In “In The Field,” O’Brien writes, “When a man died, there had to be blame.” What does this mandate do to the men of O’Brien's company? Are they justified in thinking themselves at fault? How do they cope with their own feelings of culpability? Consider all of the following characters.

Chapter 18: “Good Form”

1. In “Good Form,” O’Brien casts doubt on the veracity of the entire novel. Why does he do so? Does it make you more or less interested in the novel? Does it increase or decrease your understanding? What is the difference between “happening-truth” and “story-truth”?

Chapter 19: “Field Trip”

1. What is the point of putting Kiowa’s moccasins in the ground (burying them)?
2. Explain the significance of the final sentence. Who or what is “all finished”?

Chapter 20: “The Ghost Soldiers”

1. What does “The Ghost Soldiers” add to the book that we have almost completed? Does it provide any new insights, perspectives, or experiences about any of the characters? What do you think its function in the overall narrative might be?
2. Does your opinion of O’Brien change throughout the course of the novel? How so? How do you feel about his actions in “The Ghost Soldiers”?
3. “The Ghost Soldiers” is one of the only stories of *The Things They Carried* in which we don't know the ending in advance. Why might O'Brien want this story to be particularly suspenseful?

Chapter 21: “Night Life”

1. How did Rat Kiley get out of active duty in Vietnam?
2. Consider the placement of this story in the novel. What is O’Brien’s purpose in including this story so late in the novel and immediately following “The Ghost Soldiers”?

Chapter 22: “The Lives of the Dead”

1. How does the opening paragraph frame the story we are about to read?
2. What is the function of the Linda plot in “The Lives of the Dead”? Consider in particular what it teaches him about death, memory, storytelling.
3. What is the “moral” of the dead KIAs? Consider Mitchell Sanders' view.
4. Within the parameters of this story, how would you characterize Tim O’Brien’s understanding of the purpose of fiction? How does fiction relate to life, that is, life in the journalistic or historic sense?

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Overall:

1. Finally, if O'Brien is trying to relate some essential details about emotional life – again as opposed to historic life – is he successful in doing that? Is he justified in tinkering with the facts to get at, what he would term, some larger, story-truth?
2. On the copyright page of the novel appears the following: "This is a work of fiction. Except for a few details regarding the author's own life, all the incidents, names, and characters are imaginary." How does this statement affect your reading of the novel?