

Mrs. Simna - Honors English 11
Summer Reading - Required Read

Guidelines: This year's summer reading assignment will be different than those you have completed in the past. As freshmen and sophomores, you answered a list of in-depth questions prompting you to show understanding of the events, themes and literary elements in your novel and your grasp of appropriate text support that helped prove those answers. This year, with those skills in place, you're going to approach summer reading from a more holistic perspective.

Below are the essay prompts associated with *The Things They Carried*, your class-wide required reading for the summer. Your other book, as you know, should be selected from the list offered as part of The Bruins Big Read program.

As you read BOTH books this summer, please do the following:

- ❖ Step 1: Take notes (HANDWRITTEN) on the general plot, themes/motifs and characters of each story as you go; if the second book you chose is nonfiction, take notes on the topics, philosophies, data, and/or histories shared. You may bullet point or write in complete sentences in each case, but you may not type (you may want to get your English, college-ruled notebook early so you will have these notes right where you need them when school resumes).
- ❖ Step 2: Before, as, and after reading *The Things They Carried*, do a little research on the following:
 - American Modern and Postmodern literature
 - The Vietnam War
 - Metafiction
 - Tim O'Brien (the author)

Take notes on these topics of historical context and familiarize yourself with the author and his style.

- ❖ Step 3: After reading both books, decide on a prompt that you would like to pursue. On this prompt, do some prewriting on how you might approach the topic. **You may prewrite in any form** (outline, thought bubbles, freewrite, drafting etc.) but your prewriting must demonstrate a reasonable (***cough honors***) level of effort and work. Your prewriting may include any of the following:
 - thesis statement drafts or ideas
 - quotations from the book relevant to the prompt you've chosen
 - additional sources you think you might want/need to include

Please note: All 3 steps of this summer reading assignment will be collected for credit, including your handwritten notes on each book, and your notes on the historical contexts of *The Things They Carried*.

Also remember that prewriting is a process that looks slightly different for everyone based on their own unique sense of organization and brainstorming. **Do not waste time, energy and anxiety over worries like "I'm doing this wrong!" or "how many pages of notes do you think she wants?" or "is this thesis any good?"** Complete each step with genuine effort and a thorough follow-through of all directions and you will be "doing it right."

Summer Reading Essay Prompts – 2021:

1. Evaluate Tim O'Brien's novel as a piece of postmodern literature. Based on what you learn about postmodernism and what you read within his fictionalized memoir, what postmodern traits and motifs do you see **most prevalent** in the novel AND what effect(s) do those literary choices have on the stories being told?
2. Pick a chapter or a series of related chapters in O'Brien's novel that "hits close to home." In other words, what thematic element/topic/idea/motif/personality trait etc. does O'Brien explore that, despite the book's 1990 publication date, still resonates in modern times?
3. You may have chosen as your second book a work that [complements](#) *The Things They Carried* in some way. This could be a common theme, a common style of writing, a similar approach in narrative structure, thematic elements, or nonfiction/historical information that in some way relates to Tim O'Brien's expressed views or content. Evaluate **both** books by closely analyzing this connection. NOTE: Don't force this prompt – you may very well have chosen a novel/text that does not relate AT ALL.
4. **An idea of your own for the book you chose for the Bruins Big Read.** Generally students in this class prefer to write on *The Things They Carried* as it is a guaranteed shared reading experience with the teacher, but if you have a "killer" idea for a paper on the other book you chose, **you may submit to me, via email, a proposal for a paper topic on that book – submitted via g-mail to Mrs. Simna by July 31, 2020:** Send proposals to rsimna@paduafranciscan.net.