

## Mrs. Simna – Honors English 11

### Summer Reading Guidelines

**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 help prove those answers. This year, with those skills in place, you're going to approach summer reading from a more holistic standpoint.

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 of books offered as part of our new comprehensive reading community 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 Post-Modern literature, the Vietnam War, metafiction, and 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 initial prewriting on how you might approach the topic, and then type up a more detailed and more thorough prewriting outline. This outline should include the following:
  - a) A possible thesis statement
  - b) Major points/ideas that you will need to establish and cover in order to prove that thesis
  - c) At least six passages of text support (properly cited from one or both novels)
  - d) Explanations for each of those passages explaining what you believe these passages show with respect to your thesis
  - e. A Works Cited page (MLA 8)

**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*. The outline will be the basis for your summer reading essay in the hopes that you will have a fresher, more organic perspective on the book AS you read it, knowing ahead of time what those prompts will be, and a whole summer to adequately plan for it.

Also remember that prewriting is a process that looks slightly different for everyone based on their own unique senses 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 – 2019:

1. Critique Tim O'Brien's multiple definitions of and statements about the degree to which his stories in *The Things They Carried* are true. Decide whether or not you agree with his premise that "story truth" is sometimes truer than "happening truth" and use multiple supports from the work to defend your decision (which need not necessarily be O'Brien's). NOTE: This essay prompt tends to be popular, but historically students rely too heavily on the chapters in which O'Brien *explains* "story truth" rather than proving how *other* chapters *show* his concept in play. The evidence you collect for this prompt should extend beyond the few chapters where he's just giving you the definition and include chapters where we see its implementation.
2. Conduct a close read of one particular chapter in *The Things They Carried* that you believe to be uniquely representative of the entire book as a whole. In other words, what chapter best exemplifies a theme or a message that you believe O'Brien intends to resonate throughout the rest of the work. In your analysis, consider your identification of the following elements in O'Brien's work: symbolism, personification, choice of narrator, story structure, frequent motifs etc.
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 and compose a thesis that relates one to the other. 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 – **submitted via g-mail to Mrs. Simna by July 31, 2019.**