

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

Guidelines: This summer, as you know, you'll read your BBR book AND *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. Below are the essay prompts associated with *The Things They Carried*. As you read BOTH books this summer, please do the following:

- ❖ **Step 1:** ANNOTATE your book. Write ALL over your copy (or use meticulously color-coded sticky notes, if that's more your jam!) You should also take notes (HANDWRITTEN) on the general plot, themes/motifs and characters of each chapter of *Things They Carried* as you go; you may bullet point or write in complete sentences in all cases, but **you may not type** (you may want to **get your required 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)

I would expect you to be able to carry on a half-way decent, quasi-intelligent conversation on any of these topics upon the first day of class – **and will require you to do so depending on the direction of our first, in-class consultation and interview!**

- ❖ **Step 3:** After reading both books, decide on an essay 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 checked for credit, including your handwritten notes and annotations.

Also remember that prewriting is a process that looks 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."

First Day Introduction and Consultation: We will begin DAY ONE with thesis consultations and a brief one-on-one introductory interview. It's during this interview that I will be checking all your summer reading work. Here's a big hint though...DON'T WRITE THE ESSAY. Part of the process is the consultation step, and without any feedback from me or the advantage of being able to really talk/sort through an idea, I don't want you to do a ton of work you'll then feel like you have to UN-DO!

 **PROMPTS BELOW** 

Summer Reading Essay Prompts – 2023:

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 they have on the stories being told?
2. What thematic element/topic/idea/motif/personality trait etc. does O'Brien explore in this book that, despite its 1990 publication date, still resonates in contemporary times?
3. You may have chosen as your Bruins Big Read 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, 2023:** Send proposals to rsimna@paduafranciscan.net.