

**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 – 2024:

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 2024?
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, 2024:** Send proposals to [rsimna@paduafranciscan.net](mailto:rsimna@paduafranciscan.net).