

Outline for Study: *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien

English Ten

Name: _____

My hope is that when you finish the last page of this book, or any book, there is a sense of having experienced a whole life or constellation of lives; that something has been preserved which, if the book hadn't been written, would have been lost, like most lives are. (O'Brien)

Pre-Reading

Discuss prior knowledge about Vietnam.

View Vietnam video.

Discuss the following quotes/ideas:

1. "My own experience has virtually nothing to do with the content of the book . . . My goal was to write something utterly convincing but without any rules as to what's real and what's made up" (O'Brien qtd in Michael's Coffey's interview "Tim O'Brien: Inventing a New Form Helps the Author Talk about War, Memory, and Storytelling")
2. What do you carry with you when you aren't at school? Why? What do you carry with you when you are traveling? Why?
3. "It was the burden of being alive" (O'Brien *The Things They Carried* 19).
4. "Stories can save our lives" (O'Brien qtd in Michael's Coffey's interview "Tim O'Brien: Inventing a New Form Helps the Author Talk about War, Memory, and Storytelling")

During Reading

For each due date you will have one or more of the following assessments: resonance commentary, reaction paper, dialectic journal, quiz, timed writing.

<u>Chapters</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
"The Things They Carried"	_____	Reaction Paper
"Love"		
"Spin"		
"On The Rainy River"	_____	Quiz
"Enemies"		
"Friends"		
"How to Tell a True War Story"		
"The Dentist"	_____	Dialectic Journal
"Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"	_____	Reaction Paper
"Stockings"		
"Church"		
"The Man I Killed"	_____	Quiz
"Ambush"		
"Style"		
"Speaking of Courage"		
"Notes"	_____	Dialectic Journal
"In The Field"		
"Good Form"		
"Field Trip"	_____	Reaction Paper
"The Ghost Soldiers"		
"Night Life"		
"The Lives of the Dead"	_____	Quiz

For each reading due date, you will prepare resonance commentary. This is a small piece of text: a sentence or paragraph or fragment. Choose something that is confusing or something that you like. Choose something that you disagree with or something you want to explore further. On the due date, these comments will guide our discussion.

“Dulce Et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen

¹ It is sweet and right to die for one's country

Complete the following questions.

1. Why end the poem with a Latin quote? Why not an English slogan?
2. How would the poem be different if the last stanza weren't addressed to people at home? How does this stanza change the meaning of the poem?
3. Do you think that the speaker creates a realistic picture of his own experiences? Why or why not?
4. Describe and discuss the tones of the poem and where the tone shifts. Why?
5. How would you characterize the speaker's attitude towards war?

Significant Characters:

Directions: Write in more information as we read the novel (quotes, actions, descriptions, *what they carried...*).

Tim O'Brien: Narrator who is drafted into the Vietnam War and who goes through many traumatic experiences with his platoon.

Jimmy Cross: First lieutenant of Tim's platoon

Ted Lavender: The first member of Tim's platoon to be shot and killed

Kiowa: A Native American member of Tim's platoon whose death causes strong emotional reverberations in his friends.

Rat Kiley: Medic of their platoon

Norman Bowker: Member of Tim's platoon whose post-war actions illustrate its lasting impact

Henry Dobbins:

Dave Jensen:

Mitchell Sanders:

Lee Strunk:

Mary Anne Bell: A soldier's girlfriend who completes a startling transformation



Post-Reading

- Novel Study Guide
- Found Poem
- Research
- View Film
- Comparison Paragraph of film and novel.