**11th grade Honors American Literature**

**2018-2019 Summer Assignment**

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**Course Overview:** 11th grade Honors American Literature is a survey of American Literature that encompasses a diligent study of literature and composition. In this class, we will engage in an ongoing conversation as we attempt to discover what it means to be an American.

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| **REQUIRED TEXTS and ACCOMPANYING ASSIGNMENTS:**  1.Novel*: The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien  **Assignment 1**: Read and annotate the novel. You will hand in your annotations for a quiz  grade and should expect a series of assessments and class discussions during the first two weeks of school. You MAY NOT complete your annotations on a separate piece of paper; they should be in the book.  **Assignment 2:** Compose a personal narrative (see instructions on next page).  2.Podcast: “NPR and Tim O’Brien—*The Things they Carried*: 20 Years On” found at  (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125128156>)  **Assignment**: After reading the novel, print the transcript of the podcast, listen and annotate. Be  prepared to discuss (verbally and in writing) your reactions to the podcast and its connections with to the n  novel. |

\*\*A note about the novel: *The Things They Carried* is written for a mature reader. You may encounter themes, situations, or language that may make you uncomfortable; in particular, the novel features profanity and violence, and sexual situations. It is always for a purpose and never used in a prurient or arbitrary fashion. You may visit Novelist through Galileo (<http://www.galileo.usg.edu/>) to preview the text.

**Below is a list of good textual annotation practices:**

• Highlight or underline key words/phrases/sentences

• Bracket important passages

• Connect related ideas

• Outline main ideas in the margins

• Write brief comments and questions in the margins

• Place an asterisk or exclamation point beside something unusual, special, important, or poignant

• Write “yes” or “no” near statements with which you either agree or disagree

• Paraphrase important ideas

• Note relationships between concepts (cause & effect, comparison, contrast)

• Add your own examples

• Circle unknown words and define them

• Note passages that you don’t understand with a “?”

• Write questions you have for your instructor or to investigate later

• Note passages that seem inconsistent

• Note passages that generate a strong positive or negative response

• Identify cultural, social, historical, or literary allusions

**Frequently Asked Questions (Please read these before emailing us with questions.)**

**Q:** Do I have to read *The Things They Carried* before listening to the podcast?

**A:** Yes. Obviously, it will make more sense that way.

**Q:** My older sibling already has an annotated copy of *The Things They Carried*. Can I add my annotations to theirs?

**A:** ABSOLUTELY NOT. You, and you alone, are responsible for completing this assessment. Plus, if you turn in a copy of the novel with someone else’s annotations, you’re plagiarizing and will receive an Honor Code violation and a zero for the assignment. It has happened in the past. Don’t make that mistake.

**Q**: Can you tell me what the assessments are that we’re going to have upon our return?

**A:** Nope. But there will be more than one, and it will be abundantly clear to us if you’ve done a careless or halfhearted reading (or, worse, relied entirely on Sparknotes).

**Q:** Is there a film version of *The Things They Carried*?

**A:** Nope.

**Writing Assignment: For this assignment, you will write a personal narrative/memoir—an artful account of an experience from your life. “Not another narrative!” you moan. Fear not! You won’t be writing just any ol’ narrative, but one that fits one of the following categories:**

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| **“The Things They Narrate,” version 1:** In the first chapter,O’Brien uses the concept of “carrying” as his overarching metaphor. By detailing the physical burdens, he shows the ways in which the literal “things they carry” (a picture of a girl, an illustrated New Testament, etc.) reflect the person who’s carrying them. In addition, he also suggests the non-physical things they carry (fear, grief, responsibility) weigh on them just as powerfully. Now, “carry” on that tradition by writing your own “carrying” narrative! (Carr-ative?)  Identify a group of people you know—your family, peer group, teammates, co-workers, etc. In a brief narrative, write about the kinds of “things they carry.” Think about what these “things” say about each one of them. You can use physical or non-physical things… but you have to be specific! This assignment depends on specific images. |
| **“The Things They Narrate,” version 2:** So, again, Tim O’Brien uses “carrying” as a unifying metaphor, something to tie all the pieces together. Write a narrative—about anything really—but come up with your own overarching metaphor. Craft a piece with an image or action or symbol that not only recurs throughout but also binds the different elements together. So, just as O’Brien uses “carrying” as his metaphor, you could use “running” or “reading” or “cooking.” A tricky assignment… but impressive if you can pull it off! |
| **Personal Paradox:** The “On the Rainy River” chapter climaxes with his paradoxical revelation that O’Brien was a coward for going to war; if he were truly brave, he would have run off to Canada. Paradoxes are all around us, in our literature and our lives. Identify one paradox (a contradiction that ultimately proves true) in your life, and then write a brief, compelling narrative that revolves around that paradox. |
| **“Spin”:** “The war wasn’t all terror and violence,” Tim O’Brien tells us at the opening of the chapter “Spin.” “Sometimes things could almost get sweet.” This idea encapsulates many of the tensions of the book, in that he constantly *juxtaposes* some terrifying experiences with touching, “sweet” ones. Now, put a “spin” on something that’s from your own life.  Pick a person, place, experience, a talent, job, etc., about which you know a great deal. You, in other words, are on “the inside.” Then in a brief narrative, look at it from “both sides.” First, describe how the topic you’ve chosen is generally regarded—i.e. the impressions people “on the outside” have. Next, describe it from your perspective, as an “insider.” You can put a positive or negative “spin” on it; in other words, you can take something generally regarded as “bad’ and shine it up nicely, or you can take something generally regarded as “good” and expose its unsavory underbelly. |

No matter which assignment you choose, remember that you are still writing a narrative. You still need to write about *something*; you still need to recount an event. Here are some guidelines to consider, regardless of the assignment:

* Purpose: *You* need to have a purpose, a main idea—and you need to know your purpose*.* Don’t just say, “Whatever my reader gets out of it is fine.” Your reader may interpret your essay in a different way, but you still need to know what you *want* your reader should get out of it. But once you know your purpose—don’t tell me about it! Stop short of actually coming out and saying the “moral of the story is…” Instead, lead us to that point and then let us figure out the purpose on our own.
* Zoom!!: The best memoirs zoom in on something *specific*. Each chapter of *The Things They Carried*, for example, tackles a specific aspect of life with this group of soldiers—So, for your own writing, don’t talk in general terms about your love of snowboarding; instead, zero in on a specific experience on a specific mountain. Zoom in, and describe this scene/ person/ object in as much detail as you can stand. Specific detail is key!
* Make Meaning: Want to change the outcome of a situation to make yourself look better? No problem. Do you want to make a situation seem worse than it really was, in order to ratchet up the drama? Be my guest. Or maybe don’t change the experience at all, but just relate it exactly as you remember it. You’re the boss here. The key is to find *meaning* in your experiences. Your memoirs don’t have to be “true,” in the literal sense, but there has to be some “truth” to them. In other words, you need to find some purpose, some meaning, in the experiences you’re relating. What do you want your reader to know or believe after reading your “story”?

**Requirements:**

* Narrative must be typed and double-spaced
* Narrative must be no longer than three pages
* Narrative should obviously reflect an understanding of the narrative of the novel and reflect the type of narrative you have chosen from the options above.
* Narrative must include an MLA heading like the one below:

Name

Narrative topic you’ve chosen (ex: “The Things They Narrate,” version 2)

Due Date (August 6, 2018)

**Personal Narrative Rubric**

**Stimulating Ideas (x2) 1 3 6 8 10**

* Focuses on a specific event or experience
* Presents an engaging picture of the action and people involved
* Contains specific details and dialogue
* Makes readers want to know what happens next

**Logical Organization (x2) 1 3 6 8 10**

* Includes a clear beginning that pulls readers into the essay
* Presents ideas in an organized manner
* Uses transitions to link ideas
* Flows smoothly from one idea to the next

**Engaging Voice 1 3 6 8 10**

* Speaks knowledgably and/or enthusiastically
* Shows that the writer is truly interested in the subject
* Contains specific nouns, vivid verbs, and colorful modifiers

**Grammar/Conventions 1 3 6 8 10**

* Sentence structure and variety
* Spelling, punctuation, capitalization
* Word choice and usage

**Attention to Directions 1 3 6 8 10**

* No more than 3 pages in length
* Typed (no exceptions)
* 1 inch margins all around (top, bottom, left, and right)
* Double spaced
* Times New Roman 12 pt. font