

***The Things They Carried* -- Culminating Essay**

English III -- Ms. Weiss

- Select **one** of the topics below.
- You may not use outside sources.
- Due our first day of class in the 2018-19 school year.

TOPICS

1. In "On the Rainy River," O'Brien narrates events that occur in the months after he receives his draft notice. He concludes the story by saying that embarrassment and cowardice kept him from fleeing to Canada: "I was a coward. I went to the war" (58). Explain the irony of this statement, and evaluate its conclusion. Is O'Brien a coward? How so or how not? Use evidence from this and other stories in the novel.
2. *The Things They Carried* contains a lot of moral ambiguity -- intentional unclearness about good and bad, right and wrong. Explain how and why O'Brien chooses to portray his characters as morally ambiguous, citing examples of their actions as evidence.
3. Throughout the novel, O'Brien presents an essential paradox about war: it is horrible and it is beautiful. Trace some of the ways O'Brien and the other characters experience the contradictions of war -- both its horror and its beauty.
4. Compare and contrast the ways Tim O'Brien (the character) and Norman Bowker deal with their war experiences after returning home. Why does one "make it" while the other does not?
5. Soldiers are usually profoundly changed by their experiences in war. Choose at least three characters from the stories and examine how these characters are changed by their experiences. What conclusions can you draw from these examples about the effects of war on the human spirit?
6. O'Brien and his fellow soldiers deal with the uncertainty, fear, and death around them in sometimes surprisingly tender, irreverently funny, or horrifyingly brutal ways. Choose three characters from the stories to examine how these characters respond to their circumstances. What conclusions can you draw about soldiers and war through these examples?

ESSAY REQUIREMENTS

Mechanics and Format –

1. Proper MLA format (12-point font, double spaced, etc.)
2. Essay must be a minimum of two complete pages.
3. Proper spelling, grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation.
4. Page number citations are required for quotations from the novel, like this (75).

Introduction –

1. A hook of at least a few sentences that captures the reader's interest by relating aspects of your selected topic to real life
2. A brief summary of the novel; include the author and title (*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien -or- Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*).
3. A clear thesis statement about your topic (remember: thesis = topic + purpose)

Body Paragraphs –

1. Minimum of three body paragraphs.
2. Each body paragraph begins with a distinct topic sentence.
3. Each body paragraph presents **evidence** from the novel that supports your thesis:
 1. summaries,
 2. paraphrases,
 3. and/or direct quotations with citations.
4. Each body paragraph has at least two quotations. Quotations are not stand-alone sentences; instead they are blended into longer sentences.
5. Sentences using quotations end with proper page number citations. Example: At Gatsby’s party, Tom first suspects that something is not right when he wonders aloud if Gatsby is a bootlegger. He tells Daisy, “A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know” (107).
6. In addition to **evidence** from the play, each body paragraph contains commentary and observations made by you, the writer, in order to explain and expand on the evidence presented.

Conclusion –

1. Summarizes key points of your analysis.
2. Reminds the reader of the thesis
3. Ends with a memorable thought about your topic’s connection to real life (kind of like a reverse hook).

Note –

I recommend you make yourself an organizer like the one below to organize your thoughts and plan your essay:

Intro	Hook: Summary: Thesis:
Body 1	Topic: Evidence and quotes:
Body 2	Topic: Evidence and quotes:
Body 3	Topic: Evidence and quotes:
Conclusion	Summary of key points: Final analysis of topic/reverse hook:

