

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition 2009 Summer Assignment~ McGee~ Floyd E. Kellam High School

Welcome to AP Literature and Composition. What follows is a list of activities that comprise your summer assignment. I hope that you find them enjoyable and enriching; I know that you will find them helpful as we start the process of tackling the AP exam.

In order to introduce you to the kind of reading we will do, I would like you to begin thinking about the idea of literature as a *made thing*. By this I mean that the writers of great fiction do more than tell a story by simply relaying information about characters and events. They deliberately guide us through fictional representations of worlds, making choices about how to tell their story in order to highlight certain aspects of our own human experience, and present us with the questions that are most important to us as human beings.

A. Keeping this *made thing* in mind, we will explore a work of fiction based on the experiences of one writer who served in the Vietnam War. **Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*** is a unique collection of fictional episodes based on his characters' experiences before, during, and after the war. While each episode can be read and experienced separately, together they form this powerful contemporary novel.

As you read, annotate the text.

If you are unsure about annotating, and even if you are sure about it, go read the brief essay "How to Mark a Book," on the website *slow reads* at <http://slowreads.com/ReadingArtsHowToMarkABook.htm>

Look for things that puzzle you, disturb you, or resonate with you. If you decide to buy the book, mark directly in it. Ask questions in the margins; underline things that interest you. If you are using one of Kellam's books and don't plan on purchasing it, use post-its or create a running response log. Read actively and enjoy the book.

1. Post a minimum of three original responses to the novel on our Wikispace.

- ' See attached guidelines for responding to the novel.
- ' Each post should focus on a personal response and, of course, your own literary analysis of the book; the post should not be a summary.
- ' Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Pink Monkey, and the like have their place in the literary world, but they are not substitutes for reading the actual text of a novel or any other literary piece. Reading **only** plot summaries and critical commentaries in place of a novel is a sin against literature. These responses should be **personal** reflections and **personal** analyses of the novel, not someone's opinion that you read online. Trust yourself and your own opinion; these summaries won't be there on the day of the AP exam. Using ideas from such electronic or print summaries will result in immediate failure of the assignment and a grade equivalent to zero.

2. Respond to at least three posts made by your fellow classmates.

These posts may be well-thought-out responses to the posts of your fellow classmates. These responses should be between 100 – 150 words, should be meaningful, and should consist of more than the perfunctory "I agree" or "Ditto."

3. Copy and paste your original posts and your responses into one Microsoft Word document or RTF file and email it to me by August 31, 2009.

B. Read Thomas Forster's book, *How to Read Literature like a Professor*.

This is an engaging and easy to read book that you will enjoy. You will find this book to be a valuable tool in helping you really look at literature and feel more confident as you begin to analyze literary pieces on your own. **You can buy or borrow the book, but in either case you will need to read it.**

Note: A writing assignment for the book is attached. It is due the second week of school (September 18, 2009) but you may begin working on it now, if you like.

C. Poetry

Summer reading and poetry may seem a strange combination, but I'm hoping you find this requirement interesting. Many students find the poetry in AP classes to be difficult, and the textual analysis to be aggravating and annoying. Perhaps it is, but let's put that aside for now. This summer, I'd like you to collect some poems that reflect YOUR interests or YOUR background.

Don't include nursery rhymes or music lyrics. Select actual poems. These may be ones you yourself have found and enjoyed, or they might be ones read to you. Yes, Shel Silverstein counts, but Dr. Seuss does not. I'm checking out a copy of our official text book, *Perrine's Literature, Structure, Sound and Sense* (of BFB for short – Big Fat Book) to you. There are many poems in there. Another great spot to look for poems is Poetry 180, <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/> I've put the link on the Wikispace, along with others.

For the **four** you select, I would like you to demonstrate the range and quality of your current knowledge of poetry terms. To do so, for each poem discuss informally why you enjoy it, and point out facets of the poem that empower it in a paragraph of at least 250 words. **Copy the poems into a Word document followed by your paragraphs and email them to me by August 31, 2009. Don't forget to include the title and author of each poem.**

I could give you a list of typical poetic elements, but the whole point is that you are going to show me your prowess with the genre. In other words, I want to get an idea of what you already know. I'm not grading this other than for completion, so there's no pressure. Don't go searching for websites or literary criticism, just talk about what you know. I'm really interested to hear it, and it will help me focus our learning about poetry during the school year.

D. Begin working on your academic resume.

One of the things we will work on during the first nine week grading period is getting your academic resume in order and writing a college essay. I've included a brainstorming activity to get you thinking about all the things you might include in your resume. Begin working on it. I've uploaded it to the Wikispace as well (just in case you lose it). You will need it around the third week of school.

I will also post a link on the Wikispace to a list of **essential literary terms to know**. You will be responsible for **knowing** and **learning** these terms. This is a good chance to get a head start.

Grading: The posts and responses to *The Things They Carried* will count as a test grade. The completion of the poetry assignment will count as a quiz grade.

If you're having trouble, or are confused, email me at abbie.mcgee@vbschools.com or mcgee.abbie@gmail.com.

What books you need:

- ' *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien
- ' *Perrine's Literature, Structure, Sound and Sense*
- ' *How To Read Literature Like a Professor*, by Thomas Forster

Joining the Wikispace:

Go to www.wikispaces.com

Sign up with a username and password.

Send me an e-mail (abbie.mcgee@vbschools.com) with your username.

I will invite you to join the group. When you're invited, accept!

Some of this material is adapted from an assignment developed by Eileen Murphy.

