Step One: Read *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien. You can get this book from any bookstore or library: publishing details are available below. There may be limited copies available to check out from BSM.

**About this book:** *The Things They Carried* (1990) is a semi-autobiographical work on the Vietnam War, comprised of interwoven short-stories informed by Tim O’Brien’s own experiences.

Step Two: Bring your completed assignment on the first day of school.

The assignment has four different parts:
- Annotate a Passage
- Character Study
- Writing Style and Use of Language
- Themes
The Things They Carried Summer Assignment

1. **Annotate a passage**

Annotate a two-page selection from The Things They Carried. Choose a part that you find to be significant or compelling. Since you may not be able to write on the pages of your book, you may want to copy or scan your pages and annotate a printed copy or use Preview, Microsoft Word or GoogleDocs to annotate a digital copy. Tips and reminders for annotation can be found at https://www.litcharts.com/how-guides/how-to-annotate-texts

You will need to hand in proof of this for the first day of class.

- Show evidence of a close reading (making connections, making predictions, asking questions, clarifying, defining, summarizing, responding, etc.)
- Make special note of items in the following categories
  - Use of language
  - Use of figurative language
  - Character development
  - Plot development

2. **Character Study**

Who is Tim O’Brien: In the chapter “How to tell a true war story,” How does the author encourage the reader to see the novel as autobiography, and how does he encourage questioning the concept of an objective truth? Give examples.

3. **Writing Style and Use of Language**

Highlight examples of the way O’Brien uses language to create tone and develop specific themes. Choose two of the elements of style and tone—details, diction, imagery, and figurative language—and find examples of them in the reading. Discuss how these examples, both individually and together, contribute to the meaning (both in terms of theme and in terms of tone) of the story.

- **Details**—Review the first story in the book, “The Things They Carried,” paying specific attention to the different reasons the soldiers carried specific items. Find specific details that indicate the wide variety of the physical things they carried, and why they carried them. Now find specific examples of the metaphorical or symbolic things they carried, and the reasons they carried those things. Finally, construct your own well-formed hypothesis that covers their purpose in carrying things.

- **Diction**—(word choice): “This is one story I’ve never told before …the pressure on my dreams.” What do you think is the tone of this passage? What individual words and short phrases (two to three words) communicate this tone? Further, the passage that begins and ends: “All of us…over the years.” Pick out words/phrases that stand out. It may look like the tone is no longer shameful by this diction, but what are some smaller, less obvious words that show that in fact the narrator does not feel he was brave? Now move on to passages of your choice. Analyze the diction similarly. How does the progression of O’Brien’s diction influence a developing tone and a specific theme? Establish a statement of theme consistent with your analysis of O’Brien’s diction.
The Things They Carried Summer Assignment

Name_______________________________________

• **Imagery**—“On the Rainy River” is a story about a particularly distressing time in Tim O’Brien’s life. Analyze the imagery in the story. (Remember that imagery is any language that appeals to any of the five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.) Write down examples of imagery that emphasize O’Brien’s distress. Make sure you discuss how this imagery contributes to tone. Come up with a theme statement for the story that is consistent with your analysis of its imagery.

• **(Figurative) Language**—Skim the story looking for similes, metaphors, and symbolism. Make a list of your examples. What does the figurative language in “On the Rainy River” tell us about the meaning of the story (both theme and emotions expressed)? Make sure your group comes up with a theme statement for the story that is consistent with your analysis of figurative language.

4. **Themes**

Directions: for each theme, find at least two quotations that represent or are an example of that theme in the novel. The challenge is to give your understanding of that theme, not the internet’s. Include the page number in parentheses immediately after each quotation as per MLA style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Quotations (page numbers)</th>
<th>Context of the quote</th>
<th>Connection to this theme?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>The legacy of war</td>
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<td>Truth and story</td>
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<td>Loss and regret</td>
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<td>Fear and courage</td>
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