

**11TH GRADE ENGLISH REQUIRED SUMMER READING**  
Grade-Level

*The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien [Note: Please get the physical book, not the electronic version, and bring it to class.]

This book is a collection of short stories; please read “The Things They Carried,” “Enemies,” “How to Tell a True War Story,” “Sweetheart of Song Tra Bong,” “The Man I Killed,” “Ambush,” “The Ghost Soldiers,” and “The Lives of the Dead.” You also must write a short response (see below) that is due the first day of class.

Something I learned recently: in Vietnam, the war is often referred to as “The American War” or “The Resistance War Against America”. Although the conflict was rooted between the communist North Vietnam (Viet Cong) and South Vietnam (the ARVN), which had a corrupt government supported by the West, Americans entered into the conflict as a means of fighting back against communism, which those in power feared would spread across Asia. Essentially, this was a war of ideals. (this is, of course, a huge simplification)

Often, in war, the only thing that can motivate you to fight for a cause is to dehumanize your enemy, to stop seeing them as people and more as objects. A byproduct of this may result in seeing yourself as this object, or collection of objects, too. But to protect ourselves when we commit a horrendous act, we often justify what we’ve done.

**In a paper of 1-1.5 pages, double-spaced, you must respond to the following prompt:**

Pick a particular story (or small story \*within\* one of the stories) where the Vietnamese people, or their way of life, are reduced to objects

How does O’Brien, in that story, describe the soldiers distancing themselves from the “enemy,” as well as from their own individuality or sense of humanity?

**Quoting is expected; please use at least five carefully selected quotes**