



The focus of our summer reading will be *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. You will need a copy of the book so that you can annotate and mark in it. If you need help obtaining a copy, let me know, and I'll help. Both new and used copies are readily available from online retailers.

I could give you lots of background and historical context, but I'll let you explore it as you find necessary. I do, however, want to give you one exchange from a 2008 conversation between Josephine Reed, an audio producer at the National Endowment of the Arts, and Tim O'Brien talking about the book:

Reed: You structured this book in such an interesting way. Each individual story is like a small gem, like a necklace. But when you string them together, the cumulative effect is powerful.

O'Brien: That's my goal. I wanted to have self-contained stories that I think all chapters of books ought to be anyway. Yet I wanted each story to receive the light of other stories, the way it would in a necklace. Or one gemstone would receive the light of the ruby next to it. Although they are meant to stand alone, it seems to me that in the end, you aim ambitiously for what all writers worth their salt aim at—of making a book of art, of some sort. And that's the sense of pieces being in position so that they can reflect. So that the pieces are capable of not just reflecting but absorbing the light of the others.

Your Tasks:

- **Read the book.** Consider each story not only individually but also as a piece that is intentionally included and positioned within the greater movement of the collection.
- **Ask questions of the text you are reading and of yourself as a reader.** When I read, I love “How does it work?” - it helps me see the choices the author has made and how they impact my understanding - and “So what is the author trying to accomplish?” - it helps me consider the implications of what is happening in the text as well as connections to broader more global issues. Find your own question stems, develop your questions, and interact with the text by trying to answer them. Figure out a way to record your thinking. This process should be messy. It will likely be unique to each of you.
- **Some authorial choices to consider.** Genre. Point of View. Narrative Voice. Repetition. Diction. Figurative Language. Juxtaposition. Motifs and Symbols. Characterization. Conflicts. Plot. Irony. Ambiguity. Tone. Theme. Setting.
- **Consider the text in light of IB's Global Issue:** Fields of Inquiry - 1) Culture, Identity, Community 2) Beliefs, Values, Education 3) Politics, Power, Justice 4) Art, Creativity, Imagination 5) Science, Technology, Environment
- When you have finished reading, let the book sit for a few days. When you pick it up again later, find TWO passages from the book that are roughly 40 lines in length and mark them up. EACH of your passages should address a DIFFERENT GLOBAL ISSUE. You can color mark, annotate, write in the margins, or re-write it on a document to analyze. The passages you select should be ones that you feel are integral to not only the story in which they appears but also to the collection as a whole. Ultimately, I want you to be able to see how the choices O'Brien makes in these passages communicate what the understanding is that he hopes to pass along to you the reader.

I'd love for each of us to come back to school with entirely different selections so that we can explore a range of excerpts. We'll use these passages as starting points for discussion and further work.

I cannot guarantee that I'll have regular access to email, especially when I am traveling, but I will respond as I am able:
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