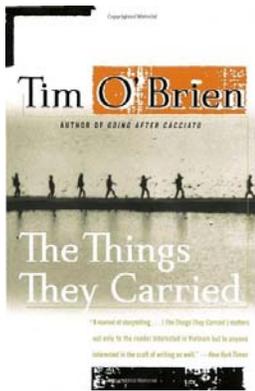


# AP English Language & Composition—Summer Reading Assignment, 2018

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**Purpose and Nature of the Summer Reading Assignment:** The AP Language and Composition course focuses on close analysis of language as it assists students in developing their own clear writing voice. This course emphasizes the study of argumentation, expository, and persuasive writing, and the use of rhetorical techniques. It prepares students for the AP Language and Composition examination, for which students may earn up to three college credits and/or placement out of introductory college writing courses. By completing these summer reading activities, you are preparing for success in this year's class. I hope you will also enjoy the reading and that it provides you with the opportunity to see the world from a different perspective and helps you appreciate the universality of human experience conveyed by literature.



**The Book: *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien**—Tim O'Brien writes, “In any war story, but especially a true one, it’s difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way.” O’Brien, a Vietnam veteran, draws on his own experience in his collection of linked short stories about a platoon of American soldiers fighting on the ground in the Vietnam War.

You may check out the book from Ms. Ivey (Room 117) or Mr. Restaino (Room 115) on a first-come basis while books last. If you are unable to check it out this way, you can find the book at the Elgin or Austin Public Libraries, at Half-Price Books, or at online booksellers and most other places you find books. Alternatively, you may possibly find a free PDF of the book by searching the title of the book and “free PDF”.

- **DEADLINE AND FORMAT:** You must read the book and complete the assignment before school begins in August. Please type or use your neatest handwriting for this assignment, which will be your first grades in AP Language. The book will be the subject of early class discussion, so be sure you read the book and take care with the work you do for this assignment, as it will set the tone for your year.
- **NOTE FOR NEWLY-ARRIVING STUDENTS:** If you are a new student to EHS or signed up for this class late, it is your responsibility to let Mr. Restaino know. I will verify that this is true, and if so, you be given an alternative assignment and will have two weeks from the beginning of class to read the book and complete the assignment. This will be in addition to the work we are completing in class.

**The Assignment:** In order to make personal connections to the text, you will write a series of dialectical journal entries as you read the novel. You will write dialectical journal entries for **nine different chapters**. A dialectical journal asks you to, using a two-column chart, identify passages from the novel that seem significant and analyze the significance of those quotations to the overall text. (**An example of a dialectical journal entry is on the back of this sheet.**) For each of the nine chapters, you must identify **three** passages to discuss. This means that you will turn in journal entries for **twenty-seven** different passages from the book. **Please do not simply summarize the quotes. If that is all you do, you will earn a score no higher than 50%.**

An important part of this assignment will be to discuss how the author uses **each of the four techniques outlined on the next page (diction, detail/imagery, syntax, and tone)**. Your dialectical journal must discuss each of the terms **at least once**. If you need inspiration to begin your journal, consider these questions:

- What does this chapter make us think about? Do I make any personal connections?
- How does this chapter characterize war or those involved in war?
- How does the author use literary or rhetorical techniques to create meaning (see attached list)?
- What strikes you as compelling about the main character or the narrator in the chapter?
- How do your previous ideas about the Vietnam War compare with what is communicated in this chapter?
- How is this chapter connected to other chapters or the rest of the novel?

## Sample Dialectical Journal Entry:

Passage from <i>The Things They Carried</i>	Chapter & Page #	Commentary, questions, analysis
“. . . they carried like freight trains; they carried it on their backs and shoulders-and for all the ambiguities of Vietnam, all the mysteries and unknowns, there was at least the single abiding certainty that they would never be at a loss for things to carry . . .”	Ch. 1, p. 2	O’Brien chooses to end the first section of the novel with this sentence. He provides excellent visual details of what each soldier in Vietnam would carry for day-to-day fighting. He makes you feel the physical weight of what soldiers have to carry for simple survival. When you combine the emotional weight of loved ones at home, the fear of death, and the responsibility for the men you fight with, with this physical weight, you start to understand what soldiers in Vietnam dealt with every day. This quote sums up the confusion that the men felt about the reasons they were fighting the war, and how they clung to the only certainty - things they had to carry - in a confusing world where normal rules were suspended.

**NOTE: Feel free to use the above passage for one of your own entries, but do not use the commentary from this sample. I provide it to give you a model of what a thoughtful, complete entry might look like.**

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### Key Terms to Use When Discussing the Quotes:

- **Diction:** The author’s choice of words to express shades of meaning and tone. Effective writers avoid non-specific, weak words such as *nice*, *thing*, *stupid*, etc. Instead, a strong writer employs precise, descriptive words for specific effect. For example, one may not merely *want* revenge; one can *thirst* for revenge. A door does not simply *shut*; it *thuds* closed. Verbs are the strongest parts of speech, and strong verbs such as “*thirsts*” and “*thuds*” are powerful and descriptive. Be aware of both the **denotation** (dictionary definition) and **connotation** (emotional meaning) of diction choices. When a writer calls a character *slender*, this conveys a different feeling from calling the character *gaunt*.
- **Detail/Imagery:** Facts, observations, and incidents used to develop a subject and impart voice. Specific details bring life and color to description, focusing the reader’s attention and bringing the reader into the scene. Detail makes an abstraction concrete, particular, and unmistakable. For example, when Orwell describes an elephant attack, the attack comes alive through his description of the elephant’s specific violent actions. By directing readers’ attention to particulars, detail connects abstraction to their lives and engages them.
- **Syntax:** Syntax is the way that words are arranged within sentences. Although the basic order of the English sentence is prescribed (there must be a subject and verb; word order cannot be random), there is great latitude in its execution. How writers control and manipulate the sentence affects the voice we hear and imparts personality to the writing. Syntax encompasses word order, sentence length, sentence focus, and punctuation. Most English sentences follow a standard pattern of subject-verb-object/complement. Deviating from this pattern can startle the reader and draw attention to the sentence or particular words in the sentence.
- **Tone:** It is the writer’s (or narrator’s) implied *attitude* towards his subject and audience. Tone is created by word selection (diction) and arrangement of words (syntax) and by purposeful use of details and images. Tone sets the relationship between reader and writer. Tone is usually described with an adjective, such as one of the following: affectionate, angry, anxious, apprehensive, approving, ardent, bitter, calm, confident, confused, disrespectful, exhilarated, joyful, sympathetic, etc. Understanding tone is requisite to understanding meaning. Identifying and analyzing tone requires careful reading, sensitivity to diction and syntax, and understanding of detail selection and imagery. This is where all your skills come into play. But, if we don’t understand that a writer’s tone is joking, we might misinterpret his meaning and find ourselves offended or angry.