

## summer reading for students entering **AP English Literature & Composition**

Our year begins with a unit in which we examine the importance of narrative perspective, with specific emphasis on the nature of truth in fiction. Some time during the second half of the summer, please read *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien, and *On Writing*, by Stephen King. The former is a work of fiction that has unmistakable ties to its author's actual life experiences, which are discussed in brief commentaries O'Brien provides readers in between the stories themselves. When considered together these stories, and the author's reflection on their development, express a variety of themes. The second work is a memoir, in which the author, having nearly lost his life in an accident, reflects upon the relationship between actual life experiences and the act of writing fiction.

As you read, take note of those observations that both O'Brien and King make about the role truth plays, or should play, in fictional narrative. With *The Things They Carried*, keep a journal in which you record your own observations about the characters, conflicts, and chosen points of view relied on throughout the collection, as well as the author's use of specific literary techniques with which you are familiar.

Then, compose a thesis-based essay that examines what, in O'Brien's and King's opinions, it means to be a truthful storyteller when writing a work of either semi-autobiographical or pure fiction. Focus explicitly on the need to deviate from "happened truth" in order to achieve "story truth," as well as any responsibilities O'Brien and/or King feel a storyteller author has to their readers when they do so.

Support of your thesis must not be limited to these authors' commentary about craft. Instead, you should highlight how the stories in *The Things They Carried*, and the specific literary techniques that have been incorporated into them, put into practice the ideas central to O'Brien's and King's beliefs about the writing process. Use a minimum of three stories to illustrate your claim/thesis. Do not summarize the plot of these stories. Instead, assume the readers of your essay are closely familiar with them.

The maximum length for this essay is five typed pages, double-spaced. Be sure to include a title that reflects the focus of your thesis. Cite quotations and other supporting information using the latest MLA guidelines, which can be found at [Purdue's Online Writing Lab](https://tinyurl.com/ycxwt5wm): <https://tinyurl.com/ycxwt5wm>

Your essay will be assessed using the College Board's essay scoring rubric for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam, a modified version of which you will find on the next page. **To receive credit for this required assignment, and maintain placement in the AP English Literature and Composition class, it must be submitted to me on our Google Classroom page, for which you will receive an invitation this summer, before our first class meeting.** If you have any questions, you may contact me at [dosora@hvrhs.org](mailto:dosora@hvrhs.org).

I look forward to meeting you in August.



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## AP ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

### ESSAY SCORING GUIDELINES

#### 9–8

These essays offer a well-focused and persuasive analysis of the nature of truth in storytelling, as it has been defined by O'Brien and King, and explain with great clarity how this can contribute to our interpretation of *The Things They Carried*. Using specific textual support, of a wide variety, these essays offer an insightful and original view of how the work as a whole is shaped by the author's beliefs about what constitutes truth when writing semi-autobiographical or pure fiction. Although these essays may not be error-free, they make a strong case for their interpretation and analyze the text under consideration with significant insight and understanding. Essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do essays scored an 8.

#### 7–6

These essays offer a reasonable analysis of the nature of truth in storytelling, as it has been defined by O'Brien and King, and explain with clarity how this can contribute to our interpretation of *The Things They Carried*. Analysis of how the author's view of truth shapes his narrative is supported by text of a more limited variety or specificity. While these papers demonstrate understanding of the text on multiple levels, the analysis is less insightful, original, accurate, and/or clear than that of the 9–8 essays. Essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do essays scored a 6.

#### 5

These essays respond to the assigned prompt with a plausible reading, but they tend to be superficial or thinly developed, lacking insight or originality. Plot summary is often substituted for substantial analysis. Although the essay's writer attempts to discuss the nature of truth in storytelling, they demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of its significance, with support that is too general to provide insight. While these essay's writers demonstrate adequate control of language, their essays may be marred by easily detected errors. These essays are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as 7–6 essays.

#### 4–3

These essays fail to offer an adequate analysis of the nature of truth in storytelling and how it contributes to the meaning of *The Things They Carried*. The analysis may be partial, unsupported, or irrelevant, and the essays may reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the text. These essays do not fully examine the authors' views of how truth contributes to the meaning of their works, or may instead rely on plot summary alone. These essays may be characterized by an unfocused or repetitive presentation of ideas, an absence of textual support, or an accumulation of errors. They may lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and/or inept writing.

#### 2–1

Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The student's remarks may be presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays scored a 1 contain little coherent discussion of the texts.