Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***The Things They Carried***

**Personal Inventory Assignment**

**English III CP McCook**

***tangible* (adj./n.) -** Capable of being touched; discernible by the touch; material or substantial;

real or actual, rather than imaginary or visionary; a thing that is capable of being touched

***intangible* (adj./n.) -** Not tangible; incapable of being perceived by the sense of touch, as incorporeal or immaterial things; impalpable; a thing that cannot be touched

**Part One**

*Examine at least five (5) items you brought with you today to class and record them in the chart below.* ***Think about both tangible and intangible items.*** *Next to each item, record the item’s approximate weight. This can be the item’s real weight or the item’s weight to you (For example, my English book weighs barely anything because I LOVE English, but my math book weighs 50lbs because I struggle with that book and it is a burden in my life). Then speculate on what each item might symbolize about you or your life. Try to go beyond the literal (my lacrosse gear symbolizes ~~that I play lacrosse~~ … ~~my athleticism~~ …my over-commitment to so many sports and activities in a quest to find out what I really love…?)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Weight** | **Symbolic Significance** |
| 1.  2.  3.  4.  5. |  |  |

**Part Two**

*Answer the questions below.*

How was your ‘journey’ to class today? Was it easy? Hard? Long? Short? Go beyond the literal.

What do you carry today that you wish you could put down?

What do you carry that is put on you by others?

How do all these items **define you** as a person? That is, how do they contribute to your **identity**?

Do we choose the items we carry, or do the items choose us?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Part Three**

*Now channel the author Tim O’Brien’s style to write your own sentences about the things you carry. Write at least one sentence for each category below.*

**State the reason the things were/are carried**

The things they carried were determined largely by necessity (2).

The things they carried were determined to some extent by superstition (12).

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**List several items in one long inventory sentence**

Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wristwatches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets packets of Kool-Aid, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military Payment Certificates, C rations and two or three canteens of water (2).

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**Interrupt with a relative clause (“who . . .”) to add information**

Henry Dobbins, who was a big man, carried extra rations; he was especially fond of canned peaches in heavy syrup over pound cake (2).

Dave Jensen, who practiced field hygiene, carried a toothbrush, dental floss, and several bars of soap he’d stolen on R&R in Sydney, Australia (2).

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**Begin with a prepositional phrase**

On their feet they carried jungle boots . . .(2)

Until he was shot, Ted Lavender carried 6 or 7 ounces of premium dope . . .(3)

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**Begin with a “because” clause**

Because the land was mined and booby-trapped, it was SOP for each man to carry a steel-centered nylon-covered flak jacket, which weighed 6 .7 pounds, but which on hot days seemed much heavier (3).

Because you could die so quickly, each man carried at least one large compress bandage, usually in the helmet band for easy access (3).

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**Create a simile**

They moved like mules . . .(14).

They carried like freight trains . . .(15).

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**Interrupt with a pair of dashes to elaborate on an idea**

They carried the land itself—Vietnam, the place, the soil—a powdery orange-red dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces (14).

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**Part Four**

*Now put it all together into a piece of personal writing that channels Tim O’Brien’s style, but reflects how the items you carry define you as a person. The number of paragraphs is up to you. See what author Tim O’Brien does. The piece should be one to two typed, double-spaced pages in length.*