

Dear Incoming Juniors,

May 2010

To jumpstart our discussion of American literature and history and provide a starting place for our journey, you will read three books and complete five assignments relating to them. The first two required books are relatively recent classics that many of your parents (and all of this year's seniors) have read; please feel free to engage in discussions with them. There are two assignments for each novel that follow on the next pages of this letter

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*
Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*.

The third book is to be a work of non-fiction on a topic from American History; it may be about a person, a war, a social event, a President or First Lady, a political party, or an artist. We encourage you to choose a topic of interest. Brittynne Fitzgerald must approve the selection by June 11th. For approval, please email the title and author of the selection to brittynne@crossroadscollegeprep.org. This work will be used to enhance our study of U.S. History throughout the year.

History Assignment:

You should complete a book review of your selection. The review should be a typed 2-3 page essay that includes:

- 1) a brief (1-2 page) synopsis of the book, which also makes its historical context clear
- 2) your review of the book--topics you may wish to address: what are the strengths and or weak points, what did you like about the author's style, what sections did you find particularly memorable, and would you recommend it to another reader--why or why not?
- 3) The essay should conclude with a list of five important quotations or sections, with page numbers, that you will want to share with the class at a later date. This assignment should be **emailed to Brittynne before Wednesday, August 25th, the first day of school.**

Have fun this summer and happy reading!

Yours,

The English and History departments
Crossroads College Prep School

N.B. Of course, students entering our 11th grade have learned the bases in **Lessons 1-19** in *Everyday Words from Classic Origins* as well as vocabulary words for each base. The workbook is available from Lisa Straub in the front office (367-8085 X 203). Every student needs one. You will need your three books, your workbook, and your writing assignments on the first day of school. This is our first impression of you; make it good.

Crossroads College Prep School
11th grade Summer Reading 2010 (part 1 of 4)
The Joy Luck Club

The Joy Luck Club is a novel about eight women; it is often hard to keep these women straight. Please take notes on a chart such as this one as you read: record salient plot details (minimum of 6 per woman) about the characters as well as any quotations that help elucidate the women's characters.

Character chart

<i>Mothers</i>	<i>Daughters</i>
Suyuan Woo	Jing-mei "June" Woo
An-Mei Hsu	Rose Hsu Jordan
Lindo Jong	Waverly Jong
Ying-ying St. Clair	Lena St. Clair

11th grade Summer Reading 2010 (part 2 of 4)
The Joy Luck Club

Analytical Writing Assignment

The novel *The Joy Luck Club* is told in four sections: "Feathers From a Thousand Li Away," "The Twenty-Six Malignant Gates," "American Translation," and "Queen Mother of the Western Skies." Before each of the sections, the author tells a short parable. As a way to ascertain your comprehension of the novel's themes and the strength of your analytical writing, please choose ONE of the four sections and write ONE paragraph defending the given parable as an introduction to the themes of the section that follows. Your first sentence will serve as a thesis (or topic sentence) for the paragraph's argument. (Use the standards for analytical writing you have studied for four years, most recently with Anne; refer to the Handbook as necessary to ensure adherence to form. It must be perfect MLA formatting with evidence, citations, analysis, transitions, and a Work Cited entry. Your editing and proofreading as juniors should be impeccable.)

11th grade Summer Reading 2010 (part 3 of 4)

The Things They Carried

The Things They Carried may seem like a collection of short stories, but it is generally considered to be a novel unified by character and theme. To evaluate the unity this challenging piece of fiction, please fill out the following information for each of the 22 chapters using this format:

Title:

Page # in your copy of the book:

Major Characters:

Plot summary: (minimum of four sentences)

11th grade Summer Reading 2010(part 4 of 4)

The Things They Carried

Choose ten of the chapters of the novel that do something interesting stylistically and complete the following chart. We've done three for you to provide examples. The first two represent what we'd like you to strive for in your analysis; the third is an acceptable level of analysis.

Quotation	Effect of <i>style</i> on <i>meaning</i>
<p>“They carried diseases, among them malaria and dysentery. They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds” (O’Brien 14-15).</p> <p>chapter: “The Things They Carried”</p>	<p>In this two-sentence quotation, O’Brien chooses to list the dangers and diseases of Vietnam in a form that emphasizes each item and suggests the totality of their weight. By joining his lists with the coordinating conjunction “and” rather than using a comma, O’Brien elongates the list, and the reader is forced to slow down and attend individually to each item. As each item is unpleasant in a visceral sense (“lice,” “ringworm,” “leeches,” “paddy algae,” “rots”), the weight of their unpleasant nature is magnified by O’Brien’s style. As one of his primary purposes in this chapter is to show the reader how hard life was in Vietnam for the everyday soldier, using his words to establish their weight serves to reinforce his theme directly.</p>
<p>“A moral freeze: I couldn’t decide, I couldn’t act, I couldn’t comport myself with even a pretense of modest human dignity” (O’Brien 57).</p> <p>Chapter: “On the Rainy River”</p>	<p>O’Brien’s intentional misuse of the colon (he knows the grammar rule) in this single sentence establishes that the action of the sentence, its heart, its main clause, is in the impotence which follows. With no main clause before the colon, the reader feels that the freeze is being personified as a clause of its own. He repeats three times that he “couldn’t,” establishing a lack of action in his informal use of a contraction, speaking with intimacy about this inability to do what he felt he should do. O’Brien’s negative construction emphasizes what he felt he should have been able to do: “decide,” “act,” “comport.” The final, longer clause (“I couldn’t comport myself with even a pretense of modest human dignity”) elevates the diction and moves the reader to a more refined and deeply considered moralistic statement; its diction suggests it is something he has considered at some length, a personal moral goal. Together, these clauses form a single sentence that communicates O’Brien’s impotence as a soldier faced with life and death, establishes his self-judgment of his impotence, and states his predetermined philosophy of what he should have been. In Vietnam, according to his this moment in his fiction, he was not what he should have been.</p>
<p>“Star-shaped hole” (O’Brien 124, 126, 128).</p> <p>chapter: “The Man I Killed”</p>	<p>O’Brien’s repetition of this phrase insists that the reader attend to the fatal injury as a visual image. If it is something we must look at, we live with the narrator for a moment in the horror of the war, surrounded not by poetic death but by real death: holes in heads – some of which we may have caused. This repetition makes the moment immediate, alive, and real as Vietnam was for the soldiers.</p>

Please have fun with your reading and writing, but be neat. Typing, as always, is ideal, but clearly labeled and neatly presented handwritten work is acceptable.

All the best!

Crossroads College Prep English Department