American Literature

*The Things They Carried* Vignette Jigsaw Discussion

As you discuss, and listen to others discuss, the additional vignettes, answer the following questions.

**When discussing “your” vignette/s…**

…give the main ideas of what happens in your vignette/s

…make sure you are discussing O’Brien’s purpose.

…explore O’Brien’s writing techniques.

…discuss how this vignette fits in with the others either by continuing characterization, plot elements, themes, symbolism, etc.

…use the guiding questions as necessary to make sure you have covered the important aspects of your assigned vignette/s.

**When listening to the other vignettes…**

…take notes in your green packet regarding important points.

…take note of either furthering characterization, plot elements, themes, symbolism, etc.

“Ghost Soldiers” – would someone who has read this vignette please explain it to the group?

**PAIRED PORTION:**

With one other person in your group, do the following:

Create a thesis statement answering ONE of the following prompts:

1. “My own preference is for a story that is a kaleidoscopic, with a number of different voices rather than one character speaking for the entire novel or short story.”  Focusing on single and/or multiple voices, discuss the effects of this viewpoint…
2. “The characters of a novel can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place.” How important is the setting of a particular time and/or place to the development of the characters?...
3. Discuss the idea of morality as a driving force in at least two characters’ actions you have studied.
4. “Fiction is an essentially rhetorical art – that is to say the novelist or short-story writer persuades us to share a certain view of the world for the duration of the reading experience.”  To what extend do you agree with this statement?

On the back, write a response to ONE of these questions:

1. Does your opinion of O'Brien change throughout the course of the novel? How so, where does it shift, & why?
2. Was The Things They Carried a work of fiction or nonfiction? Did the author do anything to muddy the waters between the two categories?
3. The Things They Carried is full of different points of view – re: the use of first person (“I”), the use of second person (“You”), and the use of third person (“He, She, They”). Why do you think O’Brien slipped back and forth between different points of view? How did it affect your reading experience?
4. In “How to Tell a True War Story,” O’Brien says,

*“A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue.”*

1. What is your reaction to that quote? Can you think of other movies, poems, novels, or short stories that hold this same sentiment?
2. Was your understanding of war expanded by reading this book? How? What were some startling or surprising elements you learned about?

Partner Names:

When finished, turn this in and continue/begin to work on the packet from Mrs. Anderson.