

ELA Virtual Learning

A.P. English Lit. and Comp.

May 11, 2020



Lesson: **May 11, 2020**

Objective/Learning Target:

Students will be able to effectively analyze a piece of prose and write an effective essay in a timely manner.

Success Starter

Self Reflection:

On a sheet of paper, reflect on past timed writings and FRQs and answer the following questions in a written response:

1. Do you annotate the prompt?
2. How much time do you spend reading the passage?
3. Do you annotate the passage?
4. How much time do you spend planning your essay?
5. How long does it take you to write your thesis?
6. Time it takes you to find evidence to support your thesis?
7. Do you go back to make sure you answer all the prompt?
8. Do you write a conclusion?

Success Starter Help Part 1

Do you annotate the prompt?

How much time do you spend reading the passage?

Do you annotate the passage?

- Always annotate the the prompt and passage. It will allow you to read faster- when you know what you are looking for, and ensures you answer all parts of the prompt.
- If annotating actual text is not an option, jot notes down as you read on paper or in a Google document.

Time to spend: Max: 10 minutes

How much time do you spend planning your essay?

- If you have annotated your prompt and the passage, you should spend a good 10 minutes here.

Time to spend: Max: 10 minutes

How long does it take you to write your thesis?

- Use the [ATMsVMPE](#) method if needed to make sure you get something down on paper- and quickly. If time permits, you can go back and make revisions.

Time to spend: 2 minutes

Success Starter Help Part 2

Time it takes you to find evidence to support your thesis?

- If you have annotated, this should go quickly.

Time to spend: 2 minutes

Do you go back to make sure you answer all the prompt while writing your essay?

- DO IT! This makes sure you are not rambling and stay focused. Not answering all parts of the prompt will not get you a high score.

Time to spend actually writing the body of your essay: 10-15 minutes

Do you write a conclusion?

- If you have time- or one comes naturally to you by the end of the essay- yes. Otherwise- don't worry about it. It is better to spend more time on analysis and explanation of that analysis than it is to write a conclusion.

Timed Writing

Directions:

Create a blank Google document and title it Timed Writing: The Things They Carried. Take a moment to set a countdown timer for 40 minutes before you begin. Click on the links below to find the pages for this timed writing. Watch your timer! When the 40 minutes are up- STOP!

As soon as you open the first link to the passage, begin your timer.

*****Please Use Ctrl + to make the images of the text larger on the document slides.*****

[Online Timer](#)

A SAMPLE PROSE ESSAY QUESTION

Question 2

The following passage is an excerpt from Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, a novel about life as a soldier during the Vietnam War. Carefully read the passage. Then, in a well-written essay, discuss the complex attitude of the narrator toward the Vietnam War through the author's use of such literary devices as imagery, detail, and syntax.

They carried plastic water containers, each with a two-gallon capacity. Mitchell Sanders carried a set of starched tiger fatigues for special occasions. Henry Dobbins carried Black Flag insecticide. Dave Jensen carried empty sandbags that would be filled at night for added protection. Lee Strunk carried tanning lotion. Some things they carried in common. Taking turns, they carried the big PRC-77 scrambler radio, which weighed thirty pounds with its battery. They shared the weight of memory. They took up what others could no longer bear. Often, they carried each other, the wounded or weak. They carried infections. They carried chess sets, basketballs, Vietnamese-English dictionaries, insignia of rank, Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts, plastic cards imprinted with the Code of Conduct. They carried diseases, among them malaria and dysentery. They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds. They carried the land itself—Vietnam, the place, the soil—a powdery orange-red dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces. They carried the sky. The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it, they carried gravity. They moved like mules. By daylight they took sniper fire, at night they were mortared, but it was not battle, it was just the endless march, village to village, without purpose, nothing won or lost. They marched for the sake of the march. They plodded along slowly, dumbly, leaning forward against the heat, unthinking, all blood and bone, simple grunts, soldiering with their legs, toiling up the hills and down into the paddies and across the rivers and up again and down, just humping, one step and then the next and then another, but no volition, no will, because it was automatic, it was anatomy, and the war was entirely a matter of posture and carriage, the hump was everything, a kind of inertia, a kind of emptiness, a dullness of desire and intellect and conscience and hope and human sensibility. Their principles were in their feet. Their calculations were biological. They had no sense of strategy or mission. They searched the villages without knowing what to look for, not caring, kicking over jars of rice, frisking children and old men, blowing tunnels, sometimes setting fires and sometimes not, then forming up and moving on to the next village, then other villages, where it would always be the same. They carried their own lives. The pressures were enormous. In the heat

of early afternoon, they would remove their helmets and flak jackets, walking bare, which was dangerous but which helped ease the strain. They would often discard things along the route of march. Purely for comfort, they would throw away rations, blow their Claymores and grenades, no matter, because by nightfall the resupply choppers would arrive with more of the same, then a day or two later still more, fresh watermelons and crates of ammunition and sunglasses and woolen sweaters—the resources were stunning—sparklers for the Fourth of July, colored eggs for Easter. It was the great American war chest—the fruits of science, the smokestacks, the canneries, the arsenals at Hartford, the Minnesota forests, the machine shops, the vast fields of corn and wheat—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.

Timed Writing Reflection

Once you have finished your essay, pause for a moment to reflect on what you struggled with the most in those 40 minutes. Answer the following questions on the same sheet of paper as your Success Starter.

1. Where did you need more time?
2. Is there anywhere that you could spend less time without skipping annotation or planning?
3. Do you have a distraction-free environment? How can you make sure you are as focused as you need to be in order to produce your best work?

Student Sample Essays

Directions:

Read the student examples on the following slides. After you read the student samples, re-read your essay and answer the following questions:

1. What did you do well in your essay?
2. How do you need to improve your essay?
3. Annotate your essay with comments or suggestions.

Sample Student Prose Essays with Comments

A Student Essay Scored 8 (6 - with this year's new rubric)

One of the most popular authors of the Vietnam War, Tim O'Brien, shows in this passage the myriad of emotions and ideas associated with being a soldier in Vietnam. The narration, in third person and in past tense, uses "they carried" often, suggesting that there is a need to disassociate himself from the action and separate the past and the present. There is a mixture of emotions regarding Vietnam—all represented within various descriptions of what the soldiers carry. There are objects such as "tanning lotion" and "Black Flag insecticide" that are unique to the individual soldier. These individual items characterize the individual personalities, but the focus is on what the soldiers carry in common. What they share with each other. It is a motley list of items that normally do not go together, but in the extreme circumstances of war, they become a part of every soldier. The narrator uses a series of juxtapositions to list the things they carry. There are the wounds of battle carried along with the basketball or the chess set. There are the diseases such as malaria and dysentery mingled with lice and ringworm. The medals of war such as the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star are carried in the same pockets as the dust of Vietnam itself. It is a mixture of courage, stamina, and chance.

The narrator says that the soldiers carry "the whole atmosphere" of Vietnam, which is not seen in a favorable light from the use of imagery provided, "stink of fungus and decay" and the "powdery orange-red dust that covered their boots and fatigues and faces." It seems to be a sort of cursed land to the narrator. Later, the narrator discusses the empty monotony of the soldier's march during the day. The passage is sprinkled with frustration and weariness with "endless march," "without purpose," "nothing won or lost," "dumb," and "unthinking." What is absent is a sense of mission and accomplishment. The narrator does not view the war as an event with a decided purpose. It is a war that is more concerned with appearances than actual realities. He is quick to point out that there is no "sense of strategy or mission" and that the soldiers are functioning more as animals driven by the instinct to survive than by the intellect that man is capable of. The war in all its cruelties has no high purpose, no actual mission to save the world. They are focused on saving themselves. War is an aggressive action that goes against our intellect. He says the "pressures were enormous" that they carried each day. The irony is that the soldiers are given "sparklers for the Fourth of July, colored eggs for Easter," all as part of the American war chest—not gold, medicine, land, glory—all the things we associate with a war chest. The things that are sent to them are not practical, but merely a reminder of the innocence they left behind in a country far away. Despite what each soldier carries, in the end there is no question regarding the fact that the soldier will never have a loss for things to carry. The most important

baggage of all is the emotional baggage that each soldier will continue to carry long after the war is over. The end of the passage suggests that as the soldiers go on marching, the war machine of industry keeps on churning out the food and ammunition needed to continue the war. It is the profit of war—a gain of dollars for one and the loss of life for another.

Vietnam becomes a place of "ambiguities" where the narrator points out that at one point they are operating solely on the instinct to survive and the next they are taking off their helmets and jackets, despite the threat of sniper fire, for a reprieve from the heat of the day. The syntax of the passage weaves short statements of fact such as "They moved like mules" with a series of clauses separated by commas. There are no long pauses in the passage that reflect the life of the soldier, for they have no time to rest either. There are scattered thoughts here and there written as dependent clauses, which gives the overall impression of a narrator speaking about his experience in a series of disjointed scenes and thoughts. Everything from the topography of the land to the thinking of the men is described in contrast. Vietnam is not a place only of death, only of frustration, only of a loss of innocence, but a combination of many things including a place of camaraderie. But even the sense of belonging has its price and as the narrator comments "they would never be at a loss for things to carry."

COMMENT

This essay effectively analyzes the passage and discusses the complexity of emotion created by the narrator. The student notes the narrator's point of view, as well as the use of past tense as a means of detachment from a scene that perhaps the author does not want to be a part of. The contrast in objects is noted in the first paragraph of the essay and summed up with "it is a mixture of courage, stamina, and chance." The essay provides examples from the selection and then comments insightfully on their purpose. For example, the student notes the idea that the shipment of "sparklers for the Fourth of July" and "colored eggs for Easter" is especially ironic; there is no use for either object in Vietnam, and they only serve to remind the soldiers of the innocent traditions of home. The student also comments on the fact that war is a loss of life for the soldier who fights but a boon for industry in providing the weapons of war. The essay does have some problems with wording, but in general, it shows a mature writing style and, more importantly, insightful analysis.

A Student Essay Scored 6

In the passage from The Things They Carried, the narrator reflects a complex attitude toward the war in Vietnam. First, the soldiers are described as carrying an assortment of objects from "tanning lotion" to "ringworm." Some of the objects they carry are positive or useful—like the tanning lotion—but others are not. The objects that the soldiers carry depict the many aspects of Vietnam and the war. Vietnam is a hot country with plenty of sun so it makes sense to carry tanning lotion, plastic water containers, and insecticide; however, there are other objects that are carried that don't make sense such as Sanders' "starched tiger fatigues." Why would you need to starch anything in the jungle? The Vietnam War is viewed through the things the soldiers carry. The war at times seems rational—something that is necessary like the insecticide and at other times completely senseless like the need to carry starched fatigues. The author uses a lot of juxtaposition in that he draws attention to the contrast between items such as the soldiers "carrying" lice and ringworm at the same time they are carrying Bronze Stars and a PRC-77 scrambler radio.

The narrator describes the soldiers as "simple grunts" perhaps incapable of independent thought. They are described as acting out of instinct rather than obeying a set of rational, well-planned orders. The narrator suggests that perhaps the war in Vietnam was based on gut reaction rather than a well thought-out decision. Regardless of the things they will use along the trail, the soldiers will always have something to carry according to the narrator. The American war chest continues to supply what the soldiers need—for practicality purposes but not for their emotional needs. It is the emotional baggage from the war that the soldiers will carry with them forever.

The narrator is torn between the need to do his duty as an American soldier and to justify the reason for why he was there. The items each soldier's pack carried signified bits and pieces of the puzzle known as Vietnam. The experience itself is complex for the narrator for he remembers the feelings of frustration and exhaustion through each item and as fragmented thoughts throughout the passage much like someone who has suffered trauma. Vietnam is a series of images, mostly negative, that are a part of him forever. However, he says that they "carry their own lives" as though each man is the simply the sum of what he carries on his back.

The passage ends with a surreal scene of soldiers taking off their protective gear (flak jackets) and blowing up their ammunition for fun knowing of course that there is plenty of ammo waiting for them at the end of the day. It's as if for that brief period in the heat of the day, their cares are thrown aside. The baggage is tossed away and the war for a little while gets tossed away as well. However, the ending sentence sums up the narrator's view that "there will always be things to carry" whether they are in the farm fields back home or in the rice fields of Vietnam. The experience of Vietnam will always be baggage, a burden, to carry.

COMMENT

This is a developed essay that does an effective job of analyzing the text and explaining how the literary devices used (juxtaposition, diction) contribute to the narrator's view of the Vietnam War. The sentence structure is varied, and the control of language is apparent; however, the writing is generally unsophisticated in style and diction. The student does understand the connection between the objects carried by the soldiers and their relation to the attitude the narrator has for the war itself.

With the current rubric, this essay would score a high 4 or 5.

Reflect and Revise Your Plan

Directions: After reading the student samples, revisit the strategy and timeline provided to you in the Success Starter. Note any adjustments in the timeline that you need to make for yourself in order to produce your best possible work within 40 minutes. You will write this on the same sheet of paper as your success starter and other notes throughout this lesson.

1. Time needed to annotate the prompt?
2. Time needed to reading and annotate the passage?
3. How much time do you need to spend planning your essay?
4. How long does it take you to write your thesis?
5. Time it takes you to find evidence to support your thesis?
6. Do you go back to make sure you answer all the prompt?
7. Did you have time to write a conclusion?

Additional Resources

[YouTube Link to all College Board Virtual Lessons](#)

There are several lessons at the above link regarding prose-both its analysis and essay composition.

Works Cited

Greiner, Angelia C., et al. *Fast Track to a 5: Preparing for the AP English Literature and Composition Examination*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010.