Essay 1: How to Tell a True _______ Story

☐ proposal (1 page, 1 pt.) due Wednesday, August 21
☐ outline (2 pages, 1 pt.) due Monday, August 26
☐ rough draft (4 pages, 2 pts.) due Wednesday, August 28
☐ meet with a tutor (or me) by Tuesday, September 3
☐ final draft (4+ pages, 10 pts.) due Wednesday, September 4

All of these must be typed using MLA format.

Topic

In The Things They Carried, based on his experiences in the Vietnam War, Tim O’Brien questions the boundaries between truth, fiction, memory, and storytelling. He writes, “You take your material where you find it, which is in your life, at the intersection of past and present” (33). In this essay you will also examine this “intersection” by writing a narrative and simultaneously analyzing that narrative.

After reading “How to Tell a True War Story” (64-81), think about a significant event in your life, such as a moment of indecision, a moment of confusion, an epiphany, or a turning point. Write an essay (4+ pages, 8+ paragraphs) with alternating paragraphs of narration and commentary (similar to the alternating sections in O’Brien’s story). Possible topics for your true _____ story include:

war peace love hate friendship adventure sports regret

For example, you can write about an event from your military service, a metaphorical war or battle that you experienced, a friend’s betrayal, or a moment of great triumph. In your commentary, you should reflect on the experience, describe your process of writing, analyze the positive and negative aspects of the story, or even instruct your readers on how to tell such a story.

Audience & Purpose

Consider that your reader has read the story “How to Tell a True War Story” but does not know who you are. Your essay should tell a compelling true story from your life and should explain to the reader how and why you told that story.

Structure & Content Checklist

_____ Write a creative, informative title for your essay (not “How to Tell a True _____ Story”).
_____ Your introduction will preview your narrative in a general sense before the specific thesis statement.
_____ The thesis statement needs to explain the significance of your narrative and preview your commentary.
_____ Include sophisticated topic sentences and transitions in every supporting paragraph, which should alternate between narration and commentary.
_____ Include plenty of vivid, specific, descriptive details as well as dialogue in the narrative paragraphs.
_____ Include specific, thoughtful analysis of your experience and your writing in the commentary paragraphs.
_____ Write a strong conclusion that reinforces the message of your essay.
_____ Edit and proofread your sentences so that they are as clear and correct as possible.
_____ Format your paper properly: double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman.
Required Reading Assignments

• *The Things They Carried* (64-81)  
• *Understanding Rhetoric*: intro., chap. 1, chap. 6

Process – You must complete and submit all of the following with the final draft:

- typed final draft
- tutoring receipt or my comments**
- typed rough draft(s)
- peer review comments
- typed outline
- typed proposal & any other prewriting notes

** If you are unable to see a tutor for this essay, you may visit my advice hours.

• Bring this assignment sheet, your notes, your drafts, *The Things They Carried*, and *Understanding Rhetoric* with you when you see a tutor at the Language Success Center.

• Please feel free to visit my advice hours (MTW 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. & Th 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.) or email me (neil.watkins@chaffey.edu) at any point in your writing process.

Proposal Questions – 1 page, typed, due Wednesday, August 21

1. What do you plan to write about?
2. Why have you chosen that topic?
3. What do you want your reader to learn or understand from your essay?
4. What obstacles or challenges might you face as you write? How will you overcome those?
5. When & where will you write the essay?

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**student’s advice**

“Take advantage of the essay handouts. They keep you on track and have all the information you need to write a great essay in a timely manner.”