One Book, One College Presents

THE THINGS THEY CARRIED
ESSAY CONTEST

“This is one story I’ve never told before. Not to anyone. Not to my parents, not to my brother or sister, not even to my wife. To go into it, I’ve always thought, would only cause embarrassment for all of us, a sudden need to be elsewhere…” (O’Brien 37).

Chaffey’s 2013-2014 College Book, The Things They Carried, at times reads like a confession, making readers squirm as author Tim O’Brien lays bare the uncomfortable and ugly sides of war. O’Brien’s collection of connected stories exposes readers to death and fear and violence and sorrow, yet the author refrains from moralizing. He writes, “War is hell, but that’s not the half of it, because war is also mystery and terror and adventure and courage and discovery and holiness and pity and despair and longing and love. War is nasty; war is fun. War is thrilling; war is drudgery. War makes you a man; war makes you dead. The truths are contradictory” (76-77).

The One Book, One College Committee invites you to share your own original nonfiction writing that relates to The Things They Carried. You might describe a soldier or a combat zone, narrate a military experience, or offer a war-themed argument, but your submission need not be a conventional “war” story.

You might write about camaraderie, forgiveness, peer pressure, nostalgia, or regret. You can describe your first love, a hostile foe, or someone who helped you make an important decision. You can tell a story about visiting a place from your past, trying to live up to your parents’ expectations, feeling like an outsider, witnessing the magical power of storytelling, being dumped, experiencing a meaningful transformation, or finding closure. You are welcome to write about an instance of terror, loneliness, honor, revenge, inaction, embarrassment, bravery, cowardice, or reconciliation.

In fact, you are invited to compose any essay (description, narration, argument, exposition, profile, critique, etc.) that clearly connects to this year’s College Book.

Deadline: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 by 1:00 pm

Submit a hard copy of your essay to Mary Thomas in Language Arts Room 107 on the Rancho Campus any time before the deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted. Please do not write your name on the essay; instead, include a separate cover sheet with the title of your essay, your name, phone number, and student ID number. Please also include your title on the first page of the essay and number your pages. Essays should be between two and five double-spaced pages and will be judged on originality, compelling content, and the quality of written expression.

Finalists will receive a cash prize and will read their essays at an awards ceremony in April, 2014.

For more information, contact Professor Neil Watkins (652-6952, neil.watkins@chaffey.edu) or Professor Deckard Hodge (652-6924, deckard.hodge@chaffey.edu).