

American Literature
11th Grade
Summer Reading Questions
Going After Cacciato, by Tim O'Brien
Preferred Edition: Broadway, 1999

Read through this entire sheet carefully before beginning to read the novel. Keep the questions next to you as you read. Going After Cacciato is enjoyable so do not put it off until the week before school or you will significantly reduce your ability to enjoy it and complete the assignment.

This assignment is due – typed and complete, on the first full day back to school. No exceptions.

QUESTIONS: Answer the following questions completely. Some answers will be longer than others, but none should have fewer than **four sentences**. Your responses will be evaluated based on depth of thought, support from the novel and accuracy.

1. Paul Berlin describes the story of Cacciato's flight as "a truly awesome notion. Not a dream, an idea. An idea to develop, to tinker with and build and sustain, to draw out as an artist draws out his visions." **How** does Paul manage to build and sustain this "notion"? **How** does Paul's fantasy differ from an ordinary daydream?
2. **Going After Cacciato** could be said to take place all in the course of one night of extended sentry duty on an observation post on the South China Sea, during which Paul Berlin remembers recent combat experiences and also imagines a flight to Paris. **Why** do you think O'Brien structured the novel so as to blur the distinctions between the three realities (the observation post, the combat memories, and the flight to Paris)?
3. If the journey to Paris is in Berlin's imagination, why does he get beaten by the monks in Mandalay? Or arrested in Iran? Why does Sarkin Aung Wan leave him? Why is his imagined journey after Cacciato full of so much emotional and physical pain?
4. **Does** the debate with Captain Fahyi Rhallon over desertion shed any light on the legitimacy of the squad's current pursuit of Cacciato? **Do you think** the squad is deserting from the war, or executing a military mission? **How** does Berlin manage to keep the distinctions blurry for the entire length of the novel?
5. Berlin thinks, "You could run, but you couldn't outrun the consequences of running. Not even in imagination." **Why** can't Berlin imagine deserting without letting the consequences sneak into his fantasies? **What role** does guilt play in the construction of Berlin's fantasy?
6. On the journey to Paris, the soldiers catch a ride with a young woman from California who is against the war in Vietnam. Why do you think the soldiers respond to her in the way that they do? Keep in mind their mission to find Cacciato, their disenchantment with the war, and the attitude of soldiers and those of anti-war proponents.
6. A *New York Times* reviewer wrote, "To call Going After Cacciato a novel about war is like calling Moby Dick a novel about whales." **What** did the reviewer mean by that? **Do** you agree? If Going After Cacciato is not about war, what do you think it is about?