

Honors American Literature

11th Grade

Summer Reading Questions

East of Eden, by John Steinbeck

Preferred Edition: Penguin, 2002

And

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. Check the quotation assignment at the bottom and answer as you read. *East of Eden* is enjoyable and lengthy, so do not put it off until the week before school or you will significantly reduce your ability to enjoy it.

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**.

1. Describe Adam and Charles' father's treatment of them. Are they treated the same or differently? Explain using evidence from the novel.
2. Why does Charles want to kill his brother? What specifically takes place to cause Charles' anger?
3. The first two pages of chapter 8 are extremely relevant to developing Kathy's character and establishing the theme of predestination vs. free will. Explain how this theme is raised and explored through Kathy.
4. Do you think there are people born without a sense of right and wrong; born without a conscience? Explain.
5. Make a list of the first names that are important in the novel. Do those with the same initials have similar traits? Jot down some words to describe their traits. Think about the theme of free will vs. fate. Are certain characters masters of their own destiny while others without free will? Are there characters who don't seem to fit their category based on their initial? Explain.
6. Consider the theme of good and evil. Think of examples of characters or couples who might represent this dichotomy. Think beyond the major characters. Is Steinbeck presenting a black and white case for mankind's propensity for either good or evil? Explain.
7. After Sam Hamilton delivers Cathy's sons, she bites him viciously. Why did Steinbeck write this into the story? What is the significance of this act? What does it imply about Cathy?
8. When Cathy leaves Adam he gives up on life and emotionally abandons his sons. Is Cyrus at fault for the failings of Adam as a father? Explain.

QUOTES: In 2-5 sentences, identify the chapter, page#, speaker, and significance of the following quotations. Read over this sheet each time you read and keep it nearby. Be sure to highlight these sections in your book as well.

1. "He developed a love for poor people he could not have conceived if he had not been poor himself."
2. "I guess if a man had go shuck off everything he had, inside and out, he'd manage to hide a few little sins somewhere for his discomfort. They're the last things we'll give up."
3. "I believe there are monsters born in the world to human parents. . . . The face and body may be perfect, but if a twisted gene or a malformed egg can produce physical monsters, may not the same process produce a malformed soul?"
4. "No one who is young is ever going to be old."
5. "And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected."
6. "Some men are friends with the whole world in their hearts, and there are others that hate themselves and spread their hatred around like butter on hot bread."
7. "In human affairs of danger and delicacy successful conclusion is sharply limited by hurry. So often, men trip by being in a rush. If one were properly to perform a difficult and subtle act, he should first inspect the end to be achieved and then, once he had accepted the end as desirable, he should forget it completely and concentrate solely on the means. By this method he would not be moved by false action by anxiety or hurry or fear. Very few people learn this."
8. "There are techniques of the human mind whereby, in its dark deep, problems are examined, rejected or accepted. Such activities sometimes concern facets a man does not know he had. How often one goes to sleep troubled and full of pain, not knowing what causes the travail, and in the morning a whole new direction and clearness is there, maybe the result of the black reasoning. And again there mornings when ecstasy bubbles in the blood."
9. "Perhaps the best conversationalist in the world is the man who helps others to talk."
10. "War... [is] a reversal of the rules where a man is permitted to kill all the humans he can."

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?