English 11 **WHAT IS TRUTH?**

“How to Tell a True War Story”

**BEFORE READING**

As we begin our study of our fourth core text—*All Quiet on the Western Front*—it is helpful to pause and take stock of our growth so far. Today, we’ll read a chapter from Tim O’Brien’s novel *The Things They Carried* which deals with the nature of war and—more broadly—the nature of truth itself. As we read, think about the following questions. You’ll discuss them with your group after we read.

1. How do you define **truth**? What is the difference between “happening truth” and reality?
2. Does everyone experience “reality” the same way? Why/why not?
3. What factors contribute to an individual’s interpretation of reality/truth?
4. How are these questions *especially* relevant to discussions about **war**?

**AFTER READING**

1. Work with a partner to compile a list of Tim O’Brien’s “guidelines” for telling a “true” war story. Use quotes from the text itself—but also explain these in your own words and reflect on what he means when he sets these guidelines. Keep these guidelines in your binder/notebook throughout the duration of the unit, as we’ll refer to them from time to time in our study of *All Quiet*. **Each person should write these down.**
2. Discuss the four questions above. These are **big questions** and merit a discussion that’s longer than 30 seconds. I will ask each group to share their responses to **one** of these questions after you’ve had time to discuss. **No need to write formal answers here, but you may want to jot down notes for sharing.**

**CREATIVE ACTIVITY** (worth 20 points for each group member—group grade)  
Working with your group, create a “concept map” for your group’s definition of **TRUTH**. You must arrive at this definition by consensus and agree upon how to best portray your definition of truth. This may take the form of:

* A concept map
* A visual metaphor
* Artistic depiction