

# VETERANS DAY LESSON PLAN

## 11<sup>TH</sup> & 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADES



# Wreaths Across America

## Lesson Plan

Teacher:	Date:
Grade: 11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup>	Lesson: Veterans Day 4 Day Plan

<p><b>OBJECTIVES:</b> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. <b>SL.11-12.1.A</b> Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. <b>SL.11-12.1.B</b> Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. <b>SL.11-12.1.C</b> Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Letter Writing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> K-W-L</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Questions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Small Groups</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Large Group</li> </ul>
<p><b>MATERIALS:</b></p>	<p>Computer/laptop; internet (with access to YouTube); Smart Board; Copies of Vietnam K-W-L; Copies of the book <i>The Things They Carried</i> By Tim O'Brien or access to audio recordings of Chapter 1 of the book available on YouTube here: Chapter 1-"The Things They Carried"- <a href="https://youtu.be/8QTQZA-U0LI">https://youtu.be/8QTQZA-U0LI</a> Copies of The Things You Carry Letter Assignment; Copies of The Things You Carry Reader Response; Copies of The Things You Carry Reflection Questions</p>
<p><b>Engage:</b> Hook the students</p>	<p>Hand out the Vietnam K-W-L. Allow students time to fill in the first and second section of the K-W-L worksheet. As students complete the K-W-L, ask them about their "journeys" to your room, using questions such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How far have you traveled? (e.g., "all the way from the gym," "down the hill from my car," "just from the room next door," etc.)</li> <li>• What have you brought with you on this journey? (e.g., "last night's homework," "my soccer cleats for practice," "a bottle of water," etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Using this introductory conversation as stimulus, ask each student to list on a piece of paper all the things—both literal and symbolic things—he or she carries. As students begin to make their lists, prompt them with some of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you carry every day in school?</li> <li>• What do you have to bring to work?</li> <li>• What things do you carry that are very visible to the world?</li> <li>• What things are more hidden?</li> <li>• What things are totally invisible, that is, abstract or symbolic?</li> <li>• What do others make you carry?</li> <li>• What things do you carry that you'd like to put down?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Explore:</b> Students make sense of a concept through observations.</p>	<p>Once students have accumulated a long list, ask them to share some of their ideas. Write these ideas on the board. The list likely will include concrete things such as car keys, books, makeup, cell phones, hats, pictures, and good luck charms as well as abstract things such as stress, allergies, a secret, fear of not getting into college, memories of last summer, and so forth.</p> <p>Using the list on the board, ask students to consider various ways of grouping these items into categories such as “Necessities,” “Luxuries,” “Things I Love,” “Concrete Things,” “Abstract Things,” “Things That Make Me ME,” “Things I Wish I Could Put Down.” Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers here. The intent is to help students see that people carry things for different reasons and that we all have our own burdens.</p> <p>Ask students to estimate the symbolic weight of these items listed on the board. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. (For example, one student may be carrying a detention slip that seems to weigh 50 pounds, whereas another student may have a similar slip and find it almost weightless!) Students should begin to realize that we give weight to both objects and ideas depending on their importance and personal significance. Ask students to estimate the symbolic weight of some of the items on their own lists.</p>
<p><b>Explain:</b> Teacher introduces formal vocabulary and language to students.</p>	<p>concrete abstract literal</p>
<p><b>Elaborate:</b> Students apply what they have learned.</p>	<p>Tell students they will read the story “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien, from his 1990 novel about Vietnam, <i>The Things They Carried</i>. Ask students to share what they know about the Vietnam War from their K-W-L Worksheet before they begin reading. Go over the Vietnam Statistics sheet to give them an idea of the numbers. For homework, ask students to read or listen to Chapter 1, <i>The Things They Carried</i>. Link is provided above for a YouTube audio version.</p>
<p><b>Evaluate:</b> assessment.</p>	<p>Teachers should choose which activities to use as formal/informal assessments.</p>
<p><b>Enrichment/Service-Learning Project</b></p>	<p>Students will participate in an activity to Remember and Honor Veterans on Veterans Day. Encourage students to participate in the Wreaths Across America Oral History Project by <a href="#">Clicking Here</a>.</p>

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Vietnam K-W-L

What I KNOW:

What I WANT to KNOW:

What I LEARNED:

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### Vietnam Statistics

#### Totals

- 9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the official Vietnam era from August 5, 1964, to May 7, 1975.
- 2,709,918 Americans served in uniform in Vietnam.
- 240 men were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

#### Of Those Lost

- The first man to die in Vietnam was James Davis, in 1961. He was with the 509th Radio Research Station. The Davis Station in Saigon was named for him.
- Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.
- The oldest man killed was 62 years old.
- 58,148 were killed in Vietnam, 75,000 severely disabled, 23,214 were 100% disabled, 5,283 lost limbs and 1,081 sustained multiple amputations.
- Of those killed, 61% were younger than 21 years old.
- 11,465 of those killed were younger than 20 years old.
- Of those killed, 17,539 were married.
- The average age of the men killed: 23.1 years.

**How old are Vietnam Veterans in 2022?** The median age is 68 years old.

- 97% of Vietnam Veterans were honorably discharged.
- 91% of Vietnam Veterans say they are glad they served.
- 74% say they would serve again, even knowing the outcome.

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### Lesson Plan Day 2-The Things You Carry, Veterans Day

<p><b>Explore:</b> Students make sense of a concept through observations.</p>	<p>Begin discussion of "The Things They Carried." Ask students to note the technique O'Brien uses to tell the story, that is, the device of the list.</p> <p>Make a list on the board of the things the soldiers carry (e.g., radios, rifles, comic books, tranquilizers, the soil, the humidity, guilt).</p> <p>Encourage discussion that examines what each soldier carries and how that information reveals character.</p> <p>Ask students to make categories for these things and to consider the possible symbolic weight of the various things the soldiers carry.</p> <p>Tell students to return to the lists they made in the previous class session and to add to their lists anything, concrete or abstract, they may have forgotten. Allow students to share new ideas.</p> <p>On their papers, ask students to circle three of the most significant weights they carry. Note that these things may represent positive or negative weight. The point is that each item is important and has an impact on the student's life.</p> <p>Give students five minutes to free write on each circled item. Suggest that in the freewriting they might try to describe the item, give some background information about it, explain why they are carrying it, explain its symbolic weight, and connect it to someone else in their lives.</p> <p>After they finish freewriting, tell students to use their free writes to determine which one of the things from their lists they feel most strongly about and want to elaborate on in their upcoming letter writing assignment.</p> <p>Give each student a copy of The Things You Carry Letter Assignment. Explain the activity, telling them that they will write a letter to someone with whom they can share the weight of one of these things they carry. Remind students that while their letters will be in friendly letter format and will therefore have an informal tone, the letters still must include details, as well as solid and specific ideas. (Examples: a student might choose to write to his/her mother to explain why he/she feels an enormous and burdensome weight of parental pressure, or someone might write to a best friend to talk about the positive weight of the picture he or she carries of the two of them together.)</p> <p>Students should work on a draft of the letter as homework, which they will use in response groups during the next session.</p>
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### The Things You Carry Letter Assignment

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**a ring you love? a hall pass? an old love letter? loneliness?  
a memory of your grandfather? Keys? a debt? a lucky penny?  
a picture of your best friend? allergy medicine? too much responsibility?  
bitterness? your father's expectations? a ticket stub? political leanings?  
fear of commitment? a passion? a secret? fear of rejection?**

### **what else?**

- Choose something you are carrying. It may be a concrete, tangible object or something more abstract, intangible, or symbolic.
- Whatever you choose, let it be something that matters to you and that means something to you.
- Ask yourself questions:
  - Why am I carrying this?
  - Did I make the choice or is someone making me carry it?
  - Do I wish I could put it down?
  - What does it weigh?
  - What does it demand of me to carry it?
  - Where would I be without it?
- Then write a letter to someone (most likely someone connected to your weight) in which you talk about this “thing you carry.”
- Write a letter that truly makes your reader understand this thing you carry, why you take it with you, and how its weight affects you.
- The letter may be serious or humorous, but it should be powerful. Your tone will depend to a great extent on what you choose to write about in your letter.

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### Lesson Plan Day 3-The Things You Carry, Veterans Day

<p><b>Explore:</b> Students make sense of a concept through observations.</p>	<p>During this session, focus students' attention on responses and revisions of the second drafts.</p> <p>Divide the class into response groups of three to five students, and hand out the appropriate number of The Things You Carry Reader Response sheets to each group.</p> <p>Ask writers to take turns reading the drafts of their letters to their groups. After each letter is read, the group should collectively complete a The Things You Carry Reader Response sheet for that letter in order to generate material that the student can use to improve/revise the next draft.</p> <p>Ask each group to share a particularly strong letter or part of a letter with the entire class, after obtaining the writer's permission to do so. Ask the group members to comment on why that piece of writing is especially powerful in order to help students determine qualities of good writing.</p> <p>Allow writers who are struggling with aspects of their letters to ask for class input on specific problems they are encountering in their writing. Encourage a variety of suggestions from the class to help students recognize that there often is not one correct way to present material but rather that much of writing is subjective.</p> <p>Allow students as much time as needed to continue to rework these drafts both at home and in class. Students should have their final drafts ready prior the next session.</p>
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### The Things You Carry Reader Response

Name of writer: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of responders: \_\_\_\_\_

Whether the “thing you carry” is concrete or abstract, all letters must include some of the elements below.

**Using a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the best), rate how well you think the writer has achieved each of the elements by marking a rating on each blank line. For any rating of 3 or under, include specific suggestions as to how the writer can strengthen the piece.**

\_\_\_\_\_ a vivid description of the “thing you carry”

\_\_\_\_\_ an idea of the weight of the “thing you carry”

\_\_\_\_\_ a sense of whether this weight is a negative burden or a positive pleasure

\_\_\_\_\_ an explanation of why he or she carries this thing

\_\_\_\_\_ a story/stories involving the “thing you carry”

\_\_\_\_\_ a clear sense of whom the letter is written to (and how he/she is connected to the “thing you carry”)

**The writer also may need to consider the items below while revising the letter.**

**Note any suggestions for improvement in these areas:**

- Develop an interesting and attention-getting opening.
- Work on a conclusion that ends the letter smoothly. No choppy endings!
- Think about word choice. Use interesting and appropriate words and avoid repetition.
- Proofread to correct spelling, punctuation, errors in sentence structure, etc.

**On the back of this paper, do the following two things:**

- Explain what you think is the greatest strength of this writer’s letter in its current form.
- State what you think would be the most significant thing the writer could do to improve his or her paper. How should he or she do this?

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### Lesson Plan Day 4-The Things You Carry, Veterans Day

<b>Explore:</b> Students make sense of a concept through observations.	<p>Hand out the The Things You Carry Reflection Questions for students to complete and attach to their final drafts before handing them in for grading. After the final draft has been corrected and graded, ask students to do one more draft for “publication.”</p> <p>Tell them that they will mail this draft to the person to whom it is directed (i.e., the “Dear _____” ) <b>(Note: in some cases, a student may not feel comfortable doing this. If that is the case, the student may submit to the teacher for grading purposes only. )</b></p> <p>If necessary, you may need to conduct a mini lesson on addressing envelopes; in an age of e-mail, this is becoming a lost art!</p>
<b>Enrichment:</b>	<p>To get a sense of what veterans carry with them from their time in the military, have students listen to the NPR <a href="#">interview with Tim O’Brien</a> that was conducted on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of <i>The Things They Carried</i>.</p> <p>O’Brien shared his own burdens: “I carry the memories of the ghosts of a place called Vietnam—the people of Vietnam, my fellow soldiers. More importantly, I carry the weight of responsibility, and a sense of abiding guilt.”</p> <p>Start a discussion: What are some of the physical objects the soldiers carry? What do the objects tell you about the characters, their emotional states, and the war’s impact? Point out O’Brien’s use of repetition as a storytelling device. What affect does the repetition have on you?</p> <p>Have students complete the Vietnam K-W-L worksheet.</p>
<b>Service-Learning Project</b>	<p>Ask students to brainstorm a way to serve veterans in their local communities on Veterans Day. See the last page of this lesson plan for suggestions for service. Students will participate in an activity to Remember and Honor Veterans on Veterans Day. Encourage students to participate in the Wreaths Across America Oral History Project by <a href="#">Clicking Here</a>.</p>

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**The Things You Carry Reflection Questions**

Name of writer: \_\_\_\_\_

1. If you were to send this letter to the person(s) to whom it is directed, what do you think his/her/their reaction would be? WHY?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the strongest or most powerful line in the letter? WHY?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What aspect of this letter would you like to improve if only you knew how? Be specific!
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How did (or didn't) the responders in your group help you? Again, be specific!
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How does having written about this weight you carry change it?

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### “Find a Way to Serve” on Veterans Day

- **Make Thank You cards to Veterans you know in your community, or in a local VA Home or VA Hospital. Let them know you appreciate their service to our country.**
- **Collect items for “Survival Back-Packs” for homeless veterans with socks, caps, gloves, toothpaste, a toothbrush, and other toiletries to be distributed to homeless vets in your community. Many large cities hold Operation Stand Downs for Veterans. For more information, [Click Here](#).**
- **Form a school club whose focus is community service work. Organize it so it is sustainable, so future classes can participate.**
- **Read aloud to a veteran who is visually impaired.**
- **Create a cookbook to sell and donate profits to a charity that helps veterans.**
- **Help an elderly veteran with yard work.**
- **Interview senior veterans and report on – personal histories, community, and stories of character.**
- **Make gift baskets and deliver to veterans in hospitals.**
- **Sing, perform a play, give a magic show, host a dance, or play an instrument for veterans.**
- **Become pen pals with residents of a local veterans’ home.**
- **Write letters to be included in soldier care packages. [Operation Gratitude](#) sends over 250,000 packages to Servicemen and Women, and First Responders annually, the link above provides guidelines for participation in their program.**

[DoSomething.org](#) is the largest non-profit exclusively for young people and social change. Their digital platform activates millions of young people to create offline impact across the globe.