

## Peer Review Instructions

- On a clean sheet of paper write Reader: (then fill out your name); then Writer, and leave a blank space.
  - Read and provide detailed answers to the following questions.
  - To keep on the positive side, try the following to answer the questions: "Try \_\_\_\_\_," "Consider \_\_\_\_\_," or "How about \_\_\_\_\_"
1. How does the intro draw you in and make you want (or not want) to read the rest of the essay?
    - a. How could a reference to "real-life" help? What about a reference to a larger issue (growing up, love, truth, etc.) surrounding the story? Personal example?
    - b. What terms or ideas (coping, truth, etc.) need to be defined?
    - c. Is the story title and author's name mentioned?
    - d. What other suggestions or reasons for a new introduction can you make?
  2. Copy out the thesis and division statement.
    - a. Take out the questions from the assignment sheet. Which words in the thesis connect it to the question? Explain.
    - b. How could the divisions be made clearer or more specific?
  3. Body paragraphs – answer the following questions for each paragraph
    - a. Which word in the topic sentence connects back to the division statement? Which word connects to the thesis?
    - b. Where is more information needed to frame the argument of a paragraph or set up a quote?
    - c. Where is more detail (quotes, descriptions) from the literary work needed?
    - d. Knowing that the explanation should connect/explain how the examples prove the topic sentence, where do you need to "see" more of the writer's argument? Consider where a "real-life" example or analogy would help?
    - e. Where could the writer explain how the actual words (their verb tense, connotations, image patterns, tone, etc.) of the quote back up the argument of the paragraph?
    - f. Where do you lose the train of the writer's thinking?
    - g. Where could the writer break into a new paragraph (with more development)
    - h. Where could specific information from a secondary source (on the power of stories, violence, coping, love among soldiers, etc.) help?
  4. Conclusion
    - a. Does conclusion refer back to the introduction?
    - b. Now that the essay has made an argument, does it answer the larger question "What's it all mean?"
    - c. Is it the old, tired, dry, "repeat your main points" conclusion?
    - d. Suggestions for new conclusion?
1. In an interview, O'Brien writes that "If there is a theme to the whole book it has to do with the fact that stories can save our lives" (qtd. in Publishers 202). How does the novel show this? Trace out this theme in the novel by showing that, indeed, the novel does argue that "stories can save our lives."
  2. Though ostensibly a war novel, the stories touch on many other issues as well. What, for instance, does the novel suggest about ideas such as love, or how people cope, or \_\_\_\_\_ (idea of your own)? Your goal in this essay is to narrow down to one idea and then state this clearly in your thesis statement (i.e. "the novel says that love helps by \_\_\_\_; " or "the novel says that people cope by \_\_\_\_\_"), then argue how the novel illustrates this single theme in your divisions.
  3. Much of the novel deals with questions of truth: write an essay that first states O'Brien's definition of truth ("For O'Brien truth is \_\_\_\_\_.") and then explains how the novels illustrates this definition. Check with me for a reading on relativism that will help with this topic.
  4. Connected to this idea of truth is the idea of history. How does O'Brien undercut the idea of history as fact in this novel? How does he get readers to question what they read in the newspaper? How does he make it difficult to read an "eyewitness" report or a historical overview of a topic and just accept another person's conclusion or version of "what happened"? This will become even clearer after watching *Two Days in October*.
  5. How does one of the questions O'Brien raises in the novel -- the slipperiness of truth, the ease with which people can be fooled, the apathy and willful ignorance of much American society, etc. -- manifest itself in 21st century America? Another way of answering this question is to ask yourself "How is this novel still relevant?" Check with me for a reading on relativism that will help with this topic.
  6. The Vietnam War left O'Brien with a variety of experiences, which in turn led to a novel, *Things They Carried*, which can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The documentary *Two Days in October* (OCC library) and *Hearts and Minds* (OCC library), and the essays "The Whole Thing Was a Lie" and "The Hollow Man" show that many others shared his view of the war or experienced similar events. Write an essay that traces a single thread through at least two of these secondary sources and the novel itself.