**General Questions**

Discuss the importance of memories and history in each story.

Each of these stories relies heavily on symbolism – discuss the ways in which each story makes use of symbolism to say something thematically.

Many classmates mentioned different “lessons” they got from one or more of these stories. Even though these may not be the themes, may not even be what the author intended, in reader response theory what readers get from a story is most important. So, please discuss what you think is the one thing you “got out of” each story that is worth remembering, if anything.

Each of these stories is set in a specific time frame and/or references a specific historical event that affects the impact of the story. Which of them do you think transcend the time frame and which NEED to be set in the time they are? Why?

Each of these stories uses a lot of description to create a sense of scene – discuss how this works to create both physical and emotional senses of scene and whether/when it is effective or not. Also include a discussion of the clip from *Field of Dreams* and do some comparing to the written version.

In what ways do the authors create a sense of empathy or antipathy for different characters at different times? What effect does this have for the story over all?

Both “Shoeless Joe Jackson” and “The Things They Carried” are short stories that are also published as part of a collection, in novel form. To what extent does this information alter your reaction to them?

Discuss what you think works well and what doesn’t – focusing exclusively on the tangible writing style issues rather than analysis.

What is the importance of culture and behavior in each of these stories?

**“Everyday Use"**

Discuss the ways that this story addresses issues of personal identity, cultural identity, family heritage and cultural heritage

What does Dee's action of changing her name reveal about her views on her heritage?

What is the significance of the quilt to each of the characters?

At the end of the story Dee/ Wangero says “you do not understand your heritage”-.how do they not understand? What does she mean by that? Is she right? What does Dee not understand about her heritage?

Why is the fire important?

What is the importance of these photos that Dee takes?

The story is set in the 1970s and addresses issues of the Black Power movement. Do some brief research [for instance, Wikipedia] and then discuss how the story reflects those concerns.

What is the significance of Dee/Wangero wanting to have items for decoration instead of using them?

What is the possible thematic significance in Dee having no scars, but Maggie having scars?

**"The Things They Carried"**

There is a lot of repetition in this story and also a lot of circular story telling – what effect do these story telling techniques have?

Could the unexplored tunnels that the men are forced to crawl through with a flashlight and a pistol represent their sexual angst? I pondered if these unexplored tunnels represented Martha’s virginity in a way? If you were to explore this story from a Freudian perspective, as this question does, what sort of analysis would you arrive at?

Discuss what is so important about Lavendar’s death. Why did Jimmy Cross blame himself for Lavendar’s death? Why does the narrator use Ted Lavender's death as a time reference so much? "Until he was shot", "Before he was shot"

How reliable are Lieutenant Cross’s memories of Martha and how accurate are his conclusions about her feelings towards him? Why did he carry the lucky pebble in his mouth?

When Lieutenant Jimmy Cross burns the letters and pictures, does it symbolize him moving on from Martha or just trying to erase his memory of the guilt he now faces?

Why does O’Brien emphasize the amount of equipment the soldiers carry? Why was how much they carried important to the story? What if you took away the physical descriptions of items? Would that affect the significance of the “psychological” weights? What's the "heaviest" thing they had to carry?

How does O’Brien make use of physical items to symbolize emotional and psychological items? In other words, why does each character carry something that is not essential and what emotional or psychological significance does it have? What can you understand about each of the characters by the specific personal items they carry?

**"Shoeless Joe Jackson"**

What does Shoeless Joe symbolize in this story?

Would the story have been as affective if Shoeless Joe didn't receive a lifetime ban from playing baseball?

How might the narrator’s passion for baseball be linked to memories and love for his father rather than the game itself?

Discuss the importance of the repetition of the line “If you build it, he will come”

Magical realism is a type of fiction where magical things happen and are simply accepted as being part of the world. In this case, the idea that Shoeless Joe has appeared is supposed to be accepted as magical realism. However, does it matter whether Shoeless Joe is actually there? What do you believe is the meaning for the narrator’s vision and magical meeting of the historical Major League baseball player?

Many classmates asserted that they couldn’t enjoy “Shoeless Joe” because they don’t like baseball. To what extent does an interest in baseball matter for enjoying this story?

As one of your classmates put it, “the whole story was rich in sensory description that gave the reader a sense of almost tangible experience” – to what extent do you find this to be true? Find specific moments that feel tangible to you. What effect does this have for the reader?

What if Ray had built the baseball field in a park instead of a cornfield? Would it take anything away from the story? Why or why not?

Why did the main character work so hard for something he was not sure would work?

Where are the "messages" really coming from that speak to Kinsella? Does it matter?