Name:

Haflin

Modern Dilemmas

Date:

“Tim O’Brien 2009 National Book Festival” Reading

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KG3L0DMeTsE>

**Background:** Tim O’Brien’s reading at the 2009 National Book Festival includes a story about his son Trevor, nicknamed “Tad”, a letter to his son, and an excerpt from “The Lives of the Dead”, i.e. the last chapter of *The Things They Carried*. The focus of today’s lesson is not as much on the content of O’Brien’s stories, but how he tells these stories. Story-telling is an art form universally recognized; we can all identify how effective a storyteller someone is quite easily by simply answering this question: **was I engrossed in the speaker’s story?** Today’s lesson focuses on **why** O’Brien’s stories are compelling, and why we read many of these tales aloud in class.

**Instructions:** As we listen to O’Brien’s speech, please answer the following questions for a post-viewing discussion. **This will be collected**.

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| 1. Why does O’Brien start his speech with a joke? **(Minimum 1 sentence)**
2. What’s your reaction to O’Brien’s admission that he’s an “older father”; he had his first kid when he was 56!! **(Minimum 1 sentence)**
3. After telling the story about Tad and the wastepaper basket, O’Brien laughs uncontrollably. What is your impression of this laugh, and how does it add to the story? **(Minimum 1 sentence)**
4. List 5 details that particularly stimulate your emotions during the “Tad Story” and list your emotion felt.
5. Tim O’Brien speaks with a particular cadence (timing). Identify the cadence, and explain its effect on his storytelling. **(Minimum 1 sentence)**
6. Explain how Tim O’Brien’s appearance adds to his storytelling. **(Minimum 1 sentence)**
7. Create a plot diagram for “The Lives of the Dead” on the attached sheet. Be sure to include as many details as possible!
8. “The thing about a story is that you dream it as you tell it, hoping that others might then dream along with you. And in this way memory and imagination and language combine to make spirits in the head. There is the illusion of aliveness” (230).

How does this version of storytelling differ from watching T.V. or a film? **(Minimum 1 sentence)**1. Ultimately, why do you think that we split time between reading the stories out loud in class and alone at home, presumably silently? Why listen to O’Brien read something you already read for homework? **(Minimum 2 sentences)**
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