

HIGH SCHOOL | BLUE VALLEY DISTRICT NOVEL RATIONALE

***Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien**

English Language Arts, 12th Grade

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Going After Cacciato is a novel about the Vietnam War, memory, and the imagination. The novel develops three distinct yet interwoven strands. The first is the story, told mostly in flashback, of Paul Berlin's experiences in the U.S. Army in 1968, the height of the Vietnam War. The second strand consists of ten chapters, each entitled "The Observation Post." In these chapters, Paul Berlin is on night watch at Quang Ngai. The third strand is concerned with an imaginary journey from Vietnam to Paris in pursuit of Cacciato, a soldier who is absent without leave (AWOL). Paul constructs this journey as he stands watch.

CONNECTIONS TO CURRICULUM*

The following are some, but not all, of the connections to curriculum for this novel.

- **Unit 1: Language and Perspective**
 - Essential Question: "How does language influence perspective?"
- **Unit 4: Universal Human Experience**
 - Essential Question: "How can reading reveal universal truths about the human experience?"

KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. RL.12.5
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.12.2
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. RL.12.1
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. RL.12.11
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama. RL.12.3
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of

specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

RL.12.4

- Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant. RL.12.6
- Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem, evaluating how each version interprets the source text. RL.12.7
- Demonstrate knowledge of foundational works of American and world literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. RL.12.9
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading. RL.12.10
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. RL.12.12