Brown Bag Items for *We Were Here* (Spring ’15)

1. Mong’s tooth necklace (3 other students suggested this item)
2. tooth necklace
3. the money (they steal)
4. a leather money bag
5. the rock at the beach
6. the files (buried in the sand)
7. the boys’ folders, in pieces, flying through the wind down the beach
8. a pen
9. books
10. a bicycle
11. handcuffs
12. the road
13. booze/alcohol
14. empty bottle of whiskey
15. fishing pole
16. filet mignon dinner
17. flower from the liquor store
18. a penny (everything seems to revolve around money and there is never enough)
19. sand
20. a brain – to represent the growth in Miguel
21. Mexico, photo of Mexico (1 other student suggested this item)
22. brotherhood
23. Miguel’s journal (2 other students suggested this item)
24. friendship
25. a map
26. a knife
27. an image or representation of Miguel and Diego fighting
28. a boomerang (cocoon Miguel sees in Jaden’s office)
29. the book, *The Color Purple* (1 other student selected this item)
30. “I said, ‘Yo, Ma, this isn’t that bad, right?’ I though those people would lock me up and throw away the key.

She didn’t say anything back, though. Didn’t look at me either. Matter of fact, she didn’t look at me all the way to Juvenile Hall, drop me off at the gate, where two big beefy white guards were waiting to escort me into the building. And even then she just barely glanced at me for a split second. And we didn’t hug or anything.” (2)

1. “Dude didn’t know I was probably gonna write a book anyways. Or that it’s hard as hell bein’ at home these days, after what happened. So when he gave out my sentence it was almost like he didn’t give me any sentence at all.” (5-6)
2. “If you send a normal kid to a group home with a bunch of dummies for nine months what’s more likely to happen? The normal kid ignores all the shady shit around him and gets his life straight, or he just turns into a damn dummy his own self?” (14)
3. “When I was a kid I used to try and think how he did it…I used to copy his clothes style and how he did his hair. But after a while I stopped, man. I realized that’s just how it is for Diego.” (36)
4. “But when you read books you almost feel like you’re out there in the world. Like you’re going on this adventure right with the main character. At least, that’s the way I do it.” (41)
5. “…I seriously don’t think I can do it. I’d never be able to come back. Ever. And besides, shouldn’t I have to stay here and suffer doing the time they gave me? Even if it goes the whole year and I gotta do two times as many counseling sessions? Shouldn’t I have to pay for what I did? Wouldn’t it be messed up if I just left the Lighthouse and Jaden and the sentence they gave me and went to another country to start over, like Mong said?

Still, though, I keep thinking.

But if I do.” (63)

1. “How many kids before me had stood in my exact spot, playing their counselor, while the other residents talked head on the side, waiting their turn. It made me feel like a straight-up cliché, man…I only really wanna spend the energy it takes to be alive if I’m original.” (70-71)
2. “It’s how we were different from other people. Original.” (83)
3. “Sometimes I wonder if growing up isn’t the saddest thing that can happen to a person.” (89)
4. “She smiled, said: ‘Writers are different, I think. You guys are so much more sensitive.’ I shrugged again and looked down at my journal. But inside it felt kind of nice what she said about me.” (91)
5. “But then again, I though, looking into the sky to try and see what Mong and Rondell were seeing. Maybe it’s *not* that strange. People always think there is this huge hundred-foot-high barrier that separates doing good from doing bad. But there’s not. There’s nothing. There’s not even a little anthill. You just take one baby step in any direction and you’re already there. You’ve done something awful. And your life is changed forever.” (119) (2 other students selected this quote)
6. “I think we’re all just passing through in this life. We’re only temporary. When I learned that I realized there’s no reason to be scared.” (131)
7. “…but for some reason I still *wanted* to…except everything that happens in it is true instead of made-up stories.” (133)
8. “I buried everything I’d just read and covered it with dirt and sand and gravel, patted it all down with the underside of my fists so nobody could ever read his life again.” (136)
9. “But even so, I decided something sitting there: me, Mong, and Rondell might be temporary, but while we were here we were more than just what some file could say. We were real people too, just the same as anybody else who was alive…” (138)
10. “He spit in front of him, said: ‘When you look at the ocean, like you and me right this second, you realize how small we are.’”(179)
11. “Ever since I found out I was sick I feel like I’ve been fighting…Not just people, either. Everything. I thought the more things I could wreck the better I’d feel.” (182)
12. “You’re a normal kid who did something very bad. And even though it was just a mistake, you’re trying not to forgive yourself.” (183) (1 other student selected this quote)
13. “’You’re a normal kid who did something very bad. And even though it was just a mistake, you’re trying not to forgive yourself… And you’re trying to convince yourself you don’t care. But you do care. You care a whole lot. I can see it…It’s what you hate most about yourself… You hate that you care so much.’” (183) (1 other student selected this quote)
14. “Yo, I used to try and be just like my brother. In every possible way. Used to copy his clothes style and how he did his hair. Even copied the way he *walked*. But then I realized I was wasting my time. ‘Cause no matter how hard I tried, Diego was always gonna be Diego and I was always just gonna be me.” (186)
15. “’I also knew we’d end up being best friends like this,’ Mong said…

I shot him a crazy-ass look. Best friends? Me and Him?” (188)

1. “I didn’t know where we were going, or how we were gonna get there, or why. None of these things came into my head. I just knew to keep moving forward. And to look at the sand.” (194)
2. “All right, man, listen up, then. I, Miguel Castañada, ain’t leavin’ Rondell Law under no circumstances. All right? That good enough for you?” (2080
3. “I realized I was crying now for real. Tears streaming down my cheeks and in my mouth and I didn’t even try to stop ‘em… Somehow it was a relief to just say it, over and over…” (337)
4. “This time our messing around isn’t just messing around because I trip and fall with the knife and my head bangs the cupboard door and when he goes to tackle me there’s the knife and he falls on it and it goes in him. The knife. It goes in him.” (340-41)
5. the entire flashback of Diego’s death and Rondell’s reaction (337-346)
6. “When we got home, after we got paid again…I counted up our money and we had more than enough to pay back the Lighthouse. I looked up at Rondell and said, ‘Just so you know, man. Tomorrow I’m going back to do my time.’” (347-48)
7. “And then I sat up and pulled out this book. And that’s how I am now, sitting here writing. Trying to get down every single thing that’s happened in the past two days. Even the parts that are hard to talk about or even think about.” (350)
8. “’I told him to stop a little ways down, Mexico. We was goin’ and then I thought of somethin’. Maybe I could make good here too. Before goin’ to Mexico. And plus then I could do like your grandma told me and look out for you.’”(356)
9. “Life usually doesn’t work out how you think it will, though. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to what you’re running from.” (no page # given)