

Novel Guide: The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien

Name: _____

Description: "The Things They Carried represents Tim O'Brien's unique vision of the horror that was Vietnam...this powerful work presents an arc of fictional episodes, which take place in the childhoods of its characters, in the jungles of Vietnam, and back home in America two decades later. Each story echoes off the others to form an exhilarating, nightmarish, and passionate work." (quoted from the back cover 😊)

Good literature can teach us lessons about life in a way that few other experiences can; reading a book with characters we care about, in situations that are realistic and emotionally believable, transports us from our own lives into another world. Historical fiction allows us to experience a different time period--and to consider the human issues that are timeless. The Things They Carried is historical fiction; it takes place primarily during the Vietnam War. Yet one of the main themes of the book is that the experiences of war have a deep effect; they last long after the soldiers return home from the battlefields. Soldiers "carry" the weight of these experiences forever.

Another important theme is making difficult decisions. Tim O'Brien and his fellow platoon members face many difficult decisions, decisions that carry life-threatening (and life-altering) consequences.

The importance of storytelling is another significant theme. O'Brien says he survives the war (and other difficult experiences) because he is able to write stories about the people and experiences he remembers.

Critical Praise:

- A finalist for both the 1990 Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award ... Every story in *The Things They Carried* speaks another truth that Tim O'Brien learned in Vietnam; it is this blurred line between truth and reality, fact and fiction, that makes his book unforgettable. --[Amazon.com](#)
- "I've got to make you read this book.... In a world filled too often with numbness, or shifting values, these stories shine in a strange and opposite direction, moving against the flow, illuminating life's wonder."
--Rick Bass, [The Dallas Morning News](#)
- "Weapons and good-luck charms carried by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam here represent survival, lost innocence and the war's interminable legacy...O'Brien's meditations--on war and memory, on darkness and light--suffuse the entire work with a kind of poetic form, making for a highly original, fully realized novel," [Publishers Weekly](#).
- The Things They Carried is Tim O'Brien's beautiful, anguished collection of linked stories about Vietnam. In it, he blends diverse voices and events into an unforgettable portrayal of war and the people who fight it. Mingling fact with fiction, telling and retelling events from different points of view, the book is as much about war as it is about the difference between truth and reality. --[ReadingGroupGuides.com](#)

Background: "The Vietnam War (1955-1975) was an unsuccessful attempt by South Vietnam and the United States to prevent the Communists of North Vietnam from uniting South Vietnam with North Vietnam under Communist leadership. As stated in the background section of [Novel Aids](#), "Fighting in the Vietnam War was brutal. Tactics included 'free fire zones' and 'search and destroy missions.' When entering a 'free fire zone,' soldiers were to assume that anything that moved was an enemy to be attacked. When on a 'search and destroy mission,' soldiers destroyed entire villages and relocated the surviving populations. More than 47,000 Americans were killed in action. Another 11,000 died of other causes. More than 303,000 were wounded. More than one million North and South Vietnam civilians were killed. Because the Vietnam War was so controversial, many returning U.S. Soldiers were not treated and supported as heroes. Vietnam veterans suffered a great deal because of this. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built in 1982, and ...the Vietnam Women's Memorial was built in 1993" (Novel Aids, The Things They Carried).

Questions to Consider Before Reading:

1. The characters in the novel are put in very difficult situations, situations where they were expected to act without having had the time to consider the consequences of their actions. How might this affect their decisions?

2. What does courage mean to you? What are the situations in everyday life that require courage?
4. How would testing your courage at war be different from everyday life situations? Do you think a person who is courageous in everyday life will be courageous fighting in a war? Explain.
5. Do the citizens of the United States have a moral obligation to fight in a war?
6. In a war, should women fight in the same capacity as men? Why--or why not?
7. One of the themes of the novel illustrates the unexpected results of a decision. It is often impossible to predict all the effects a certain action will have. Think about a time when you did something that caused unexpected results. Were the results positive, negative, or both?

Metafiction, also known as Romantic irony in the context of Romantic works of literature, is a type of fiction that self-consciously addresses the devices of fiction; metafiction uses techniques to draw attention to itself as a work of art, while exposing the "truth" of a story. It is the literary term describing fictional writing that self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in posing questions about the relationship between fiction and reality, usually using irony and self-reflection.

Significant Characters:

- **Tim O'Brien:** Narrator who is drafted into the Vietnam War and who goes through many traumatic experiences
- **Jimmy Cross:** First lieutenant of Tim's platoon
- **Norman Bowker:** Soldier in Tim's platoon whose actions after the war illustrate the long-reaching impact of the war
- **Henry Dobbins:** machine gunner; wears girlfriend's pantyhose around his neck for luck.
- **Rat Kiley:** Medic of their platoon
- **Kiowa:** A Native American member of Tim's platoon whose death causes strong emotional reverberations
- **Mitchell Sanders:** RTO [radio telephone operator] carries brass knuckles, wants "a moral."
- **Ted Lavender:** The first member of Tim's platoon to be shot and killed
- **Mary Anne Bell:** A soldier's girlfriend who becomes an honorary Green Beret
- **Kathleen:** Tim's daughter who returns to Vietnam with him after the war is over.

The Things They Carried: Short Story Titles

	(# of pages)
1. "The Things They Carried" (read together)	22
2. "Love" Group One	3
3. "Spin" Group One	6
4. "On the Rainy River" (read together)	20
5. "Enemies" Group Two	2
6. "Friends" Group Two	2
7. "How to Tell a True War Story" (read together)	16
8. "The Dentist" Group Two	2
9. "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" (read together)	24
10. "Stockings" Group Three	2
11. "Church" Group Three	4
12. "The Man I Killed" Group Four	6
13. "Ambush" Group Four	3
14. "Style" Group Five	1.5
15. "Speaking of Courage" (read together)	16
16. "Notes" Group Five	6
17. "In the Field" Group Six	14
18. "Good Form" Group Five	1.5
19. "Field Trip" Group Seven	6
20. "The Ghost Soldiers" (read together)	6
21. "Night Life" Group Seven	4
22. "The Lives of the Dead" (read together)	19

Vocabulary and Military Terms Used:

- **Ambiguity:** interpreting something with doubtfulness or uncertainty.
- **Antipersonnel:** Something designed to inflict physical damage on a human being. To cause death or injury.
- **AO:** Area of Operation
- **Foxhole:** a pit dug by a soldier in combat for quick cover against enemy fire
- **M & Ms :** While this is not a military term, O'Brien's tone and context when his narrator uses the term "M & Ms" suggests it is a pain reliever for more serious wounds (morphine?).
- **Monsoon:** a wind system that influences a large region and switches direction seasonally.
- **PFC. :**Private First Class
- **PRC-25 :** Pronounced "prick 25"
- **Psy Ops :** Psychological Warfare (Ops = operations)
- **R&R :** Rest and Relaxation
- **RTO:** Radio and Telephone Operator
- **Shrapnel:** Little pieces of metal that fragment from an exploded artillery shell, mine, or bomb.
- **SOP :** Standard Operating Procedure
- **Tangible:** something that one is able to touch, something physically present
- **Taut:** strained or tense
- **Topography:** a detailed image of the geographic physical feature of a place or region on a map or just the surface features of a region.
- **Volition:** making a decision consciously
- **US KIA :** United States Killed in Action
- **USO :** United Service Organization (Volunteer Entertainment and Morale)
- **VC :** Vietcong

1. "The Things They Carried"

1. In what sense does Jimmy love Martha? Why does he construct this elaborate (mostly fictional) relationship with her? What does he get out of it?
2. When is he most likely to think about her? Why is he thinking about her while one of his platoon members is in the tunnel?
3. In what sense is Ted Lavender's death his fault?
4. Here is his excuse for allowing his men to be lax: "He was just a kid at war, in love." Why does Jimmy use this excuse? In what sense does it excuse him? In what sense, doesn't it?
5. Why do the soldiers tell jokes about the war, about killing?
6. How is the idea of weight used and developed in this story ("Jungle boots, 2.1 pounds")? How do you, as a reader, feel reading those lists of weight? What effect does it have on you?
7. In the list of all the things the soldiers carried, what item was most surprising? Which item did you find most evocative of the war? Which items stay with you?
8. If this is a story about sacrifice, what does Jimmy sacrifice, and why?
9. How has Jimmy changed by the end of the story? How will he be a different person from this point on? What has he learned about himself? Or to put it another way, what has he lost and what has he gained?
10. Do you think the war will affect him in a different way now that he refuses to think about Martha? How will it be different? What did "Martha" save him from?
11. What is "the great American war chest"?
12. Some literary critics view Jimmy Cross as a Christ figure—how might this view be accurate? Do you agree?

Vocabulary:

- **Foxhole:** a pit dug by a soldier in combat for quick cover against enemy fire
- **Taut:** strained or tense
- **Topography:** a detailed image of the geographic physical feature of a place or region on a map or just the surface features of a region.
- **Antipersonnel:** Something designed to inflict physical damage on a human being. To cause death or injury.
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- Tangible: something that one is able to touch, something physically present
 - Ambiguity: interpreting something with doubtfulness or uncertainty.
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 Monsoon: a wind system that influences a large region and switches direction seasonally.

2. "Love"

1. This story takes places years after the end of the war in Vietnam. What does it reveal about the passage of time upon painful memories?
2. What does Jimmy Cross's story about Martha's behavior at their reunion reveal? In your opinion, does Cross really love Martha? How do you know?
3. Explain the end of the story—does O'Brien betray his friend?

3. "Spin"

1. "Spin" is a series of seemingly-disconnected anecdotes and half-memories—why does O'Brien select this narrative style?
2. How does this story address the way the individual men choose to deal with the fear and uncertainty of war? What does it reveal about their inner conflict?
3. In "Spin," O'Brien says that it is many years after the war, yet his guilt and bad memories live on. What purpose does his daughter, Kathleen, serve in the story [what might she illustrate]? Does Kathleen's advice to write help him? Why—or why not?

4. "On the Rainy River"

1. How do the opening sentences prepare you for the story: "This is one story I've never told before. Not to anyone"? What effect do they have on you, as a reader?
2. Why does O'Brien relate his experience as a pig declotter? How does this information contribute to the story? Why go into such specific detail?
3. What is Elroy Berdahl's role in this story? Would this be a better or worse story if young Tim O'Brien simply headed off to Canada by himself, without meeting another person?
4. At the story's close, O'Brien almost jumps ship to Canada, but doesn't: "I did try. It just wasn't possible" (61). What has O'Brien learned about himself, and how does he return home as a changed person?
5. Why, ultimately, does he go to war? Are there other reasons for going he doesn't list?
6. How does Elroy Berdahl help Tim to decide what to do about being drafted? Be specific.
7. In "On The Rainy River," we learn the 21-year-old O'Brien's theory of courage: "Courage, I seemed to think, comes to us in finite quantities, like an inheritance, and by being frugal and stashing it away and letting it earn interest, we steadily increase our moral capital in preparation for that day when the account must be drawn down. It was a comforting theory." What might the 43-year-old O'Brien's theory of courage be? Were you surprised when he described his entry into the Vietnam War as an act of cowardice? Do you agree that a person could enter a war as an act of cowardice?

5. "Enemies"

1. Why does Dave Jensen break his own nose? What does his behavior reveal?

6. "Friends"

1. Why do Jensen and Strunk make this pact? Why does Strunk beg Jensen not to keep it? What does this reveal about social codes and notions of honor?
2. Why is Jensen relieved that Strunk dies? What has Jensen learned?
3. How does this reaction reflect an irony in the story's title?

7. "How to Tell a True War Story"

1. Why does this story begin with the line: "This is true"? How does that prepare you, as a reader, for the story? In what sense is "this" true?
2. In this story O'Brien relates a number of episodes. What makes these episodes seem true? Or, to put it another way, how does O'Brien lull you into the belief that each of these episodes is true?

- Find a few of O'Brien's elements of a "true war story" (such as, "A true war story is never moral.") Why does O'Brien believe these elements are important to a "true" war story?
- In what sense is a "true" war story actually true? That is, in O'Brien's terms, what is the relationship between historical truth and fictional truth? Do you agree with his assessment that fictional truth and historical do not need to be the same thing?
- According to O'Brien, why are stories important? In your opinion, what do we, as people, need from stories--both reading them and telling them?
- Why is the baby water buffalo scene (85) more disturbing than the death of one of O'Brien's platoon members, Curt Lemon (89, top of page)?
- Why does Rat Kiley kill the baby water buffalo? Explain the complex emotions he experiences in this scene.
- On page 90, O'Brien explains that this story was "not a war story. It was a love story." In what sense is this a "love story"? Why?
- Finally, O'Brien says "none of it happened. None of it. And even if it did happen, it didn't happen in the mountains, it happened in this little village on the Batangan Peninsula, and it was raining like crazy..." If O'Brien is not trying to communicate historical fact, what is he trying to communicate? Why change the details? What kind of truth is he trying to relate, and why is this truth set apart from historical truth? Is it OK that this "true" war story may or may not be entirely true?
- What advice does O'Brien offer on how to tell a war story?

8. "The Dentist"

- Curt Lemon is afraid of seeing the dentist, and he vows not to go into the tent—yet he goes in. Why? What happens later that night?
- Why is he proud when he reveals that the dentist has pulled his tooth? Why does he feel the need to prove himself?
- How is his death ironic?

9. "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong"

- Is this really a war story? Does it use classic war story elements? Why—or why not? Who is the main character, and why?
- Again, this story plays with truth. In the first paragraph (101), O'Brien tells us, "I heard it from Rat Kiley, who swore up and down to its truth, although in the end, I'll admit, that doesn't amount to much of a warranty." How does O'Brien engage you in a story which, up front, he's already admitted is probably not "true"? How does this relate to his ideas for a "true war story" found in an earlier story?
- In "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," what transforms Mary Anne into a predatory killer? Does it matter that Mary Anne is a woman? How so? What does the story tell us about the nature of the Vietnam War?
- How does O'Brien use physical details to show Mary Anne's change? (Think of her gestures, her clothes, her actions.) How, specifically, has she changed? And why?
- Why do you think O'Brien keeps stopping the story so that other characters can comment on it? (i.e. page 108) How do these other conversations add to Mary Anne's story?
- Does it matter what happened, in the end, to Mary Anne? Would this be a better story if we knew, precisely, what happened to her after she left camp? Or does this vague ending add to the story? Either way, why?
- The story Rat tells in "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" is highly fantastical. Does its lack of believability make it any less compelling? Do you believe it? Does it fit O'Brien's criteria for a true war story?

10. "Stockings"

- Why does Henry Dobbins still wear his girlfriend's stockings around his neck, even after she breaks up with him?
- What does the story reveal about the relationship between the soldiers and women?
- What does the story reveal about faith—and the power of superstition?

11. "Church"

- What does this story reveal about American-Vietnamese relations?
- How is Kiowa used as a foil—a character whose actions/emotions contrast with and thereby accentuate those of another character—for Dobbins? [Although Kiowa is the most religious character, he can't imagine being a leader in a church because, to him, religion isn't about demonstration or even participation—it is about inward reflection and the power of belief.]
- Although the men are in an almost impossible situation, what does Dobbins insist? What does this reveal about him?

12. "The Man I Killed"

1. When Tim O'Brien introduces the subject of "The Man I Killed," he does it with the following description. Why does he start here? Why use these details? "His jaw was in his throat, his upper lip and teeth were gone, his one eye was shut, his other eye was a star-shaped hole, his eyebrows were thin and arched like a woman's, his nose was undamaged, there was a slight tear at the lobe of one ear, his clean black hair was swept upward into a cowlick at the rear of the skull," etc.
2. "The Man I Killed" describes fairly intimate aspects of the dead man's life. Where do these details come from? How can Tim O'Brien know them? What is going on here? "(From) his earliest boyhood the man I killed had listened to stories about the heroic Trung sisters and Tran Hung Dao's famous rout of the Mongols and Le Loi's final victory against the Chinese at Tot Dong. He had been taught that to defend the land was a man's highest duty and highest privilege. He accepted this," etc.
3. For the remainder of the story O'Brien portrays himself as profoundly moved by this death: "Later Kiowa said, 'I'm serious. Nothing anybody could do. Come on, Tim, stop staring.'" How would you describe O'Brien's emotional state in this scene?
4. Why doesn't O'Brien answer Kiowa when Kiowa asks if O'Brien would rather trade places with the boy he has killed?
5. In the story, O'Brien seems to offer no insight into the way he felt at the time—why? O'Brien seems to both console and torture himself when he indulges in a fantasy that he shares several characteristics with the man he killed. What does the story reveal about guilt?
6. The story alternates between beauty [the butterfly, the tiny blue flowers] and gore. Why?
7. Since the book alternates between "story-truth" and "happening-truth," some critics believe it is unclear as to whether Tim O'Brien actually killed anyone in Vietnam. Do you think he did? Is it important whether he did? Why—or why not?

13. "Ambush" [group 4]

1. In "Ambush," Tim O'Brien's daughter, Kathleen, asks if he ever killed a man: "'You keep writing these war stories,' she said, 'so I guess you must've killed somebody.'" Following this, O'Brien relates two possible scenarios of the death described in "The Man I Killed" to explain, "This is why I keep writing war stories." In your opinion, why does O'Brien keep writing war stories?
2. In "Ambush," O'Brien tells part of "The Man I Killed" story to his daughter, Kathleen. Consider that O'Brien might not actually have a daughter. Would that change how you felt about the story? If he doesn't have a daughter, what is she doing in this novel?

15. "Style" [group 5]

1. Some critics claim that this story, like "Church," concerns the contrast and ambiguity of good intentions and ill intentions—explain why it may be viewed this way.
2. How does Henry Dobbins's behavior in the story represent a division between positive and negative, between good intentions and ill intentions? Relate this to his wearing his girlfriend's stockings around his neck for good luck.

16. "Speaking of Courage"

1. Address the title, "Speaking of Courage." What does the story illustrate about courage? How would Norman Bowker define courage? How is the title ironic?
2. "Speaking of Courage" is one of the few stories in the novel written in third person (along with the title story and "In the Field"). Why are these stories set apart in this manner? What does the author achieve by doing so?
3. Like other male characters in this novel (for example, Tim O'Brien and Lt. Jimmy Cross), Norman Bowker develops an active fantasy life. Why do these men develop these fantasy roles? What do they get from telling these fantasy stories to themselves?
4. Answer the following questions with respect to Norman Bowker: Why does he still feel inadequate with seven medals? Why is Norman's father such a presence in his mental life? Would it really change Norman's life if he had eight medals, the silver star, etc.?
5. Why is Norman unable to relate to anyone at home? More importantly, why doesn't he even try?
6. Kiowa is clearly a prominent character in the company's narrative, a soft-spoken, peaceful man—how does his death change their relationships?

17. "Notes"

1. In "Notes," Tim O'Brien receives a letter from Norman Bowker, the main character in "Speaking of Courage." Why does O'Brien choose to include excerpts of this seventeen page letter in this book? What does it accomplish?

2. Consider for a moment that the letter might be made-up, a work of fiction. Why include it then?
3. In "Notes," Tim O'Brien says, "You start sometimes with an incident that truly happened, like the night in the shit field, and you carry it forward by inventing incidents that did not in fact occur but that nonetheless help to clarify and explain it." What does this tell you about O'Brien's understanding of the way fiction relates to real life?
4. "Speaking of Courage" gives Bowker's view of Kiowa's death, and "Notes" gives O'Brien's view. This story allows other company members to comment. Describe their viewpoints. [Lieutenant Cross's, Azar's, and the unnamed soldier's]. What do their viewpoints illustrate?
5. What does this story reveal about Azar? How, for example, does it illustrate his immaturity?
6. Does the story illuminate anything about optimism? How [and why] does each experience with death bring each soldier closer to life?
7. Some critics claim that Jimmy Cross is a Christ figure. Using this story as a lens through which you examine his character, state why he might be viewed in this way. What about him is Christ-like?

18. "In the Field"

1. In "In the Field," O'Brien writes, "When a man died, there had to be blame." What does this mandate do to the men of O'Brien's company? Are they justified in thinking themselves at fault? How do they cope with their own feelings of culpability?

19. "Good Form" [group 5]

1. In "Good Form," O'Brien casts doubt on the veracity of the entire novel. Why does he do so? Does it make you more or less interested in the novel? Does it increase or decrease your understanding? What is the difference between "happening-truth" and "story-truth?"
2. What is O'Brien saying about truth in this story? What is he saying about communication and human connection?
3. One critical analysis of the story states, "O'Brien provokes us to conclude that the largest truth in the telling of such stories is in the feelings instead of the facts." Is O'Brien saying that feelings are more significant than facts?

20. "Field Trip"

1. When thirty-four-year-old O'Brien and his ten-year-old daughter go to Vietnam, each has a profoundly different experience. Explain.
2. What does the story reveal about the children of war veterans in terms of their parents' war experiences? Does it, for example, illustrate that it is unrealistic for war veterans to expect their children to understand their experiences? To what extent should veterans try to explain these experiences to their children?
3. Explain the title of the story—and relate the title to the relationship between the author and his daughter.
4. Why does Tim leave Kiowa's moccasins in the field?

21. "The Ghost Soldiers"

1. How do you feel about O'Brien's actions in "The Ghost Soldiers"?
2. "The Ghost Soldiers" is one of the only stories of The Things They Carried in which we don't know the ending in advance. Why might O'Brien want this story to be particularly suspenseful?
3. After reading this story, reflect as to whether the fear O'Brien feels is more acute than the actual pain of being physically hurt. Is it? Be specific in your description.
4. How does "The Ghost Soldiers" demonstrate the tension between a soldier's need for camaraderie and the difficulty of finding it? When does O'Brien feel alienated—and why?
5. How does the story show O'Brien's progression? For example, in "On the Rainy River," he was an innocent young man. Yet this story reflects upon how he has been changed by the war. Explain this idea fully.

21. "Night Life"

1. How has Rat Kiley been affected by the war? Is his action an action of cowardice?
2. In this story, the men in the company seem to react with both scorn and envy. Explain their reactions.
3. What does the story reveal about the drive for survival?

22. "The Lives of the Dead"

1. Reread the first paragraph of "The Lives of the Dead." How does O'Brien set us up to believe this story? What techniques does he use to convince us this story is "true"? In general, how are details used in this collection of stories in such a way their truth is hard to deny?
2. In your opinion, why does O'Brien choose to include this story about a young girl, named Linda, in this collection? What does it accomplish?
3. In many ways, this book is as much about stories, or the necessity of stories, as it is about the Vietnam War. According to O'Brien, what do stories accomplish? Why does he continue to tell stories about the Vietnam War, about Linda? Does it matter to you, as a reader, whether Linda was a real person in O'Brien's life? Why—or why not?
4. Reread the final two pages of this book. Consider what the young Tim O'Brien learns about storytelling from his experience with Linda. How does this knowledge prepare him not only for the war, but also to become a writer? Within the parameters of this story, how would you characterize Tim O'Brien's understanding of the purpose of fiction? How does fiction relate to life, that is, life in the journalistic or historic sense?
5. Would it change how you read this story, or this novel, if Linda never existed? Why or why not?
6. Assume for a moment, that the writer, Tim O'Brien, created a fictional main character, also called Tim O'Brien, to inhabit this novel. Why would the real Tim O'Brien do that? What would that accomplish in this novel? How would that strengthen a book about "truth"?
7. Finally, if O'Brien is trying to relate some essential details about emotional life--again, as opposed to historic life--is he successful in doing that? Is he justified in tinkering with the facts to get at (what he would term) some larger, story-truth?

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is the first story, "The Things They Carried," written in third person? How does this serve to introduce the rest of the novel? What effect did it have on your experience of the novel when O'Brien switched to first person, and you realized the narrator was one of the soldiers?
2. What is the role of shame in the lives of these soldiers? Does it drive them to acts of heroism, or stupidity? Or both? What is the relationship between shame and courage, according to O'Brien?
3. Often, in the course of his stories, O'Brien tells us beforehand whether or not the story will have a happy or tragic ending. Why might he do so? How does it affect your attitude towards the narrator?
4. On the copyright page of the novel appears the following: "This is a work of fiction. Except for a few details regarding the author's own life, all the incidents, names, and characters are imaginary." How does this statement affect your reading of the novel?
5. What does the book illustrate about storytelling?
6. The book is about the author's experiences in Vietnam—but aside from the story "The Man I Killed," Vietnamese characters are largely absent from the text. Why?
7. Discuss the structure of the book. The stories, for example, do not progress in a standard, linear manner. Why? Does the fragmented style fit the story itself? How—or why not?
8. How does the book comment upon male/female relationships? Be sure to explain your answer completely, using specific examples from the text.
9. Does your opinion of O'Brien change throughout the course of the novel? How so?

“The Things They Carried”

Found Poem

“The endless march, village to village, without purpose, nothing won or lost.	(15)		
A kind of emptiness, a dullness of desire and intellect and conscience and hope.	(15)		
They carried all they could bear, including a silent awe	(9)	They carried the shared weight of memory. They took up what others could no longer bear.	(14-15)
Jimmy Cross (carried) a good-luck charm from Martha... a simple pebble...on the march... he carried the pebble in his mouth	(9)	Often, they carried each other, the wounded or weak.	(15)
Imagination was a killer	(11)	A hard, hating kind of love	(23)
the two of them buried alive	(12)	All the emotional baggage of men who might die	(20)
<i>She did not love him and never would.</i>	(17)	Shameful memories... the heaviest burden of all	(20)
Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend's pantyhose wrapped around his neck as a comforter	(10)	Afraid of dying but...even more afraid	(19)
Ted Lavender ... shot in the head... went down under an exceptional burden... He was dead weight	(7)	He would accept the blame The terrible power of the things they carried	(24)
<i>Afterward they burned Than Khe</i>	(8)		(9)
Norman Bowker... carried a thumb... a gift by Mitchell Sanders... cut from a VC corpse	(13)	Very sad, he thought. The things men carried inside “	(24)

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