

Name: _____

Ms. Kamrass; Study Guide - The Things They Carried

Author:

Genre:

narrative structure of this novel— This novel is a collection of individual stories (chapters) that jump around between time, place, and narration; it does not have a linear, or chronological, structure. Some chapters are set in Vietnam; some are in the U.S. Some occur during the fighting; others show the soldiers after the war has ended. The narration changes from first-person point of view to third person, depending on the story (and the first-person narrator isn't initially named). Despite this structure, there are various patterns and ideas that unify it—this is what we will explore.

Why do you think the novel is structured this way? Write an answer below.

Literary Terms:

irony – This is such a complex subject that it takes up 8 pages in my literary term reference book. Here is the first line: A contradiction or incongruity between appearance or expectation and reality. (In its simplest form, *situational* irony is when the opposite of the expected happens.) Overall, if you explain that something is “ironic” you will explore some sort of contrast. Look for images, actions, dialogue, quotations that are ironic throughout this novel.

paradox – a statement, or situation, that seems contradictory, or nonsensical, on the surface, but highlights some greater truth. Images can also be “paradoxical.” Irony is inherent with paradox.

oxymoron – (from the Greek “pointedly foolish”) a figure of speech that juxtaposes—deliberately place things side-by-side-- two opposite or apparently contradictory words to present an emphatic and dramatic paradox for rhetorical purpose or effect. (Example: wise fool, bittersweet, living death, etc.)

juxtaposition - the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side

Review of past terms: imagery, symbolism, repetition, point of view (1st, 2nd, and 3rd person narration), setting. If you don't remember them, ask in class, or look them up.

Reading and Homework

Directions: There are several ways that we will approach the reading: some will be in class, and some will be assigned as homework. They are outlined below. ***I may make changes: keep track on your weekly sheets.***

Work to write specific and thorough responses—when you work hard on the smaller exercises, your larger (more significant) work improves.

Your answers should, in most cases, be original. The questions and prompts are geared toward *your* responses and interpretations. If your answers are too similar to others, you are in danger of losing credit (all parties involved). Even if you work together, or discuss your responses, your written work needs to be original.

Use MLA style when writing quotes with page numbers.

Write your answers on separate sheets of paper so that I can collect them. Please use full sheets of loose leaf and pen. There will be times where I grade for quality of your responses, and other times where it will be a completion grade (or combination of the two).

- **“The Things They Carried” – Read in class (finish for homework, if needed)**
 1. List one character and an item he carries. What does this show about him?
 2. List one abstract (non-physical) thing a soldier carries. What does this figurative element add to your understanding of this chapter or the soldier?
 3. Write a specific example of a paradox, or something paradoxical in this chapter.
 4. What does Ted Lavender carry? What’s ironic about his death?
 5. Do you see Jimmy Cross as a Christ figure? Explain.
 6. Why do you think that this chapter is the same as the title of the novel?
- **“Love” and “Spin” – Read on your own for homework**
 7. Why is “Love” the title of this chapter?
 8. Write a quote from “Spin” and explain why you chose it.
 9. Find a quote with a literary element (it can be new, or your answer to #8), write it, then write the literary term that applies to it.
 10. How does this quote (any from 8 or 9) help you understand the entire chapter?
- **“On the Rainy River” – Read on your own for homework**

No questions, but there will be a reading quiz after it is assigned.
- **“Enemies” and “Friends” – Read on your own for homework**
 11. Explain the complicated relationship between Lee Strunk and Dave Jensen. Include all the important details and explain thoroughly.

- **“How to Tell a True War Story” and “The Dentist” – We’ll start reading “...True War Story” in class and you’ll complete it and “The Dentist” for homework.**
 - 12. Find a quote that relates to Curt Lemon’s death—one that contains imagery.
Write it here and highlight the words that best create the imagery.
 - 13. Respond to this quote from the end of the chapter: “It *wasn’t* a war story. It was a *love* story” (85).
 - 14. How is “The Dentist” similar to an incident from any previous story?
- **“Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong” – We’ll read this in class (it’s a good one).**
 - 15. For homework: Write a paragraph that describes Mary Anne’s evolution. For full credit include details from the beginning, middle, and end.
- **“Stockings,” “Church,” “The Man I Killed,” “Ambush,” “Style” – We’ll complete a combination of class and homework reading and assignments related to these stories.**
- **“Speaking of Courage” – We’ll read this in class; you may have to finish it for homework.**

This story is set back in the U.S.A. after the war has ended. In particular, it’s in Norman Bowker’s hometown in Iowa. At the center is a lake.

 - 16. Norman has spent time around the lake as a teenager before the war: What happened in this lake?
 - 17. Describe what it’s like. What does Norman do at the end?
 - 18. What is it about the setting that reminds him of Kiowa’s death?
- **“Notes” and “In the Field” – You will probably read these for homework.**
 - 19. Who is responsible for Kiowa’s death? Write at least one quote.
- **“Good Form,” “Field Trip,” “Ghost Soldiers,” “Night Life” – You will probably read these in class and for homework.**
- **“Lives of the Dead” – We’ll read this in class.**

++++++After reading++++++

1. Define metafiction –

How does this novel fit this genre?

2. In “The Things They Carried,” Jimmy Cross carries a pebble in his mouth that Martha gives to him. She found it on the beach “precisely where the land touched the water at high tide, where things came together but also separated” (8).

The pebble has a “separate-but-together quality” (8).

↑

How might this paradoxical statement apply to the rest of the novel (write several answers).

3. Throughout this unit, I kept repeating that this novel **is** about the Vietnam War, and its soldiers, but that it **is not** about the Vietnam War. What is this novel about? How do you know (this means that you need to find quotes to back up your answer)?

Read and Analyze the Following Poem

“Dulce Et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind. 5

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time; 10
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, 15
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; 20
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest 25
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori¹.

Complete the following questions.

1. Why end the poem with a Latin quote? Why not an English slogan?
2. How would the poem be different if the last stanza weren't addressed to people at home? How does this stanza change the meaning of the poem?
3. Describe and discuss the tones of the poem and where the tone shifts.
4. How would you characterize the speaker's attitude towards war?

¹ It is sweet and right to die for one's country

Mirror

By Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful –
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old
woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

1. Circle the words that seem meaningful and annotate.
2. Underline and label at least literary techniques.
3. What is the mirror?



Dialectical Notebook*

Ms. Kamrass

English 10

This method helps you “converse” – have a dialogue – with the texts you are reading. Your responses show your unique perspective, depth of study, and engagement. In addition, you become aware of your confusion so that you may correct it with some help.

In order to complete an entry for your dialectical journals, you will take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns: **text and response**.

- Under **text**, chronologically list the important events from the section you have just completed reading. Write specifics or exact quotes – with quotation marks and page numbers – and include page numbers.
- Under **response**, list any question, comment, connection to your life, or connection to other texts (visual or literary). *Your entries should have a good mix of all responses.*
 - Your “response” column needs to start with common symbols. They are as follows:
 - ? question
 - > comment about the text
 - connection to your life
 - connection to other texts
 - LT for literary term (identify it too).

Your dialectical notes should be unique: the quotes and responses should not look like anyone else’s.

What are the advantages of keeping a dialectical notebook?

- It helps you notice relevant details that might have been overlooked.
- It helps you keep track of your thoughts while reading. Once they are written, it’s easier to use them for class discussion, writing, etc.
- This is an activity that encourages critical thinking and is something that everyone in the classroom is capable of completing.

*This is adapted from the pre-AP strategies from the College Board Web site.