

Name _____ Class _____

The Things They Carried

Tim O'Brien

About this Text

Tim O'Brien is an American author and veteran. This short story is based on his experiences as a soldier in the Vietnam War; the characters and details are fictional. For nearly 20 years, from the mid-1950s to 1975, American soldiers fought in South Vietnam against North Vietnam and their communist allies.

Vocabulary

Let's pronounce these words together as a class:

Bear [bair]
 Elusive [ih-loo-shv]
 Somber [som-ber]

WHOLE CLASS READING

[1] First Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carried letters from a girl named Martha, a junior at Mount Sebastian College in New Jersey. They were not love letters, but Lieutenant Cross was hoping, so he kept them folded in plastic at the bottom of his rucksack. In the late afternoon, after a day's march, he would dig his foxhole,¹ wash his hands under a canteen, unwrap the letters, hold them with the tips of his fingers, and spend the last hour of light pretending. He would imagine romantic camping trips into the White Mountains in New Hampshire. He would sometimes taste the envelope flaps, knowing her tongue had been there. More than anything, he wanted Martha to love him as he loved her, but the letters were mostly chatty, *elusive* on the matter of love. She was an English major at Mount Sebastian, and she wrote beautifully about her professors and roommates and midterm exams, about her respect for Chaucer and her great affection for Virginia Woolf. She often quoted lines of poetry; she never mentioned the war, except to say, Jimmy, take care of yourself. The letters weighed 10 ounces. They were signed Love, Martha, but Lieutenant Cross understood that Love was only a way of signing and did not mean what he sometimes pretended it meant. At dusk, he would carefully return the letters to his rucksack. Slowly, a bit distracted, he would get up and move among his men, checking the perimeter, then at full dark he would return to his hole.

[2] The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wristwatches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, packets of Kool-Aid, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military Payment Certificates, C rations,² and two or three canteens of water. Together, these items weighed between 15 and 20 pounds, depending upon a man's habits or rate of metabolism. Henry Dobbins, who was a big man, carried extra rations; he was

DURING READING QUESTIONS

STRUCTURE: Paragraph 1

A. Find Evidence: The title of this story is "The Things They Carried." Highlight three details about the first thing we are told a soldier carries.

B. Think & Share: What does this placement in the story indicate about this "thing" he is carrying?

¹ a hole in the ground used by troops as a shelter against enemy fire or as a firing point

² prepared food that each soldier carries with him

The Things They Carried Study Guide

Yijin Wang



The Things They Carried Study Guide:

The Things They Carried Study Guide Book Review: Unveiling the Power of Words

In a world driven by information and connectivity, the ability of words has become more evident than ever. They have the capacity to inspire, provoke, and ignite change. Such is the essence of the book **The Things They Carried Study Guide**, a literary masterpiece that delves deep into the significance of words and their effect on our lives. Compiled by a renowned author, this captivating work takes readers on a transformative journey, unraveling the secrets and potential behind every word. In this review, we shall explore the book's key themes, examine its writing style, and analyze its overall effect on readers.

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