

Nicholas but also the
psychological
burdens of the



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Nicholas McBride Mrs. Deakin English 225. 1. 18 The Things They Carried

Literary Analysis The author's purpose in writing this is to show, The Things They Carried, the physical objects they had to carry but also the psychological burdens of the events of the war and the actions they've taken to stay alive. The theme of The Things They Carried is to show that what they had to carry physically could not compare to what they had to carry mentally.

Such as the men they've lost or the men they've had to kill in combat. Such example of the former would be the loss of their fellow soldier, Ted Lavender. In the case of Cross, he carries the weight of responsibility for his men and it gets heavier with the loss of Lavender, this change remains rather visible throughout the progression of the story. Cross believes that his mental preoccupation with Martha and the life they could have after the war was a distraction. Cross blames Lavender's death on himself for being distracted with his love interest could be signifying the divide between love and war, which would hold true with the subsequent distress and mental absence of Cross. How Cross was affected by the loss of Lavender shows how combatants can be left irreversibly distraught. Before Lavender died Cross often thought about Martha with vividness and often wondered about the insignificant details such as why she misleadingly signs her letters with love or whether or not she is a virgin and the meaning of the "separate but together" with the pebble he received. He credits his constant obsession with these minute details as the reason he was distracted, ultimately deciding that his obsession with Martha is the reason that Lavender died.

He burns his pictures of Martha in attempt to disassociate himself with distractions in an attempt to distance himself from his emotions, which he has deemed to be dangerous following the death of Lavender. Nigh the end of this story with Cross burning his pictures of Martha he decides to become stricter, so his men will see him as a real leader as it is his role to lead and not to be loved. He ultimately comes to the conclusion at the end of the story that it is better to be loved than it is to lead. The mental weight of what they had to carry is enhanced by their young ages, most soldiers in the Vietnam War were in their late teens and early twenties. They didn't know how to justify their killings or how to come to terms with the loss of their fellow soldiers, as seen throughout with the constant reanimation of the deceased in an attempt to cope with the knowledge that death is final, in an attempt to lighten the mood and not focus on who they are now that they are dead but rather to focus on who they were, furthered by their reanimation of the dead. Some men carry the weight of guilt of not being able to do anything about the situation, such as with Cross and the loss of Lavender. He believes he caused Lavender's death by focusing on Martha instead of the surroundings and subsequently cites his distraction as the reason Lavender died. O'Brien's choice to use the items the men carried to show who they were and what they deemed important enough to carry with them in wartime rather than saying what they were like as a person gives us an incomparable window to who the men really were.

In Kiowa's case, his grandfather's hatchet he carries around and his illustrated New Testament signify he's holding onto the past, rather than just saying that up front that he is a sentimentalist. In O'Brien's The Things They

Carried this insight into the characters moral beliefs and deeper inner thoughts are incredibly effective at making readers understand the ideas of The Things They Carried.