

Analysis of tim o'brien's the things they carried

Literature



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The narrative is split into real-time war scenes and imaginary romances between Cross and Martha, the subject of Cross's unrequited love. The story follows the title by offering an inventory list of the objects the soldiers carry, including ammunitions, survival tools, and emotional burdens.

O'Brien's story is intriguing as it presents not only the brutality of the war, but it also depicts how war dehumanizes the soldiers. In the scene where Cross and his men search villages and shooting chickens and dogs, the reader cannot but feel sympathy towards them even though they are acting like a group of madmen. O'Brien successfully arouses the reader's emotions by rendering the soldiers actual human beings with feelings and weaknesses. The personal objects they carry show that they are unique persons who have different desires and emotions. However, during the war, they are all the same. The juxtaposition of Cross's experience in Vietnam and his memory and imagination about Martha brings a drastic contrast between the life of a soldier and that of a civilian. In the end, Cross decides that the two cannot co-exist as he destroys the letters and photos of Martha and chooses to be only a soldier but not a lover. This is emotionally powerful as the very few people are willing to sacrifice their love and their desire for a comfortable life.