

The point of view of a vietnam war soldier through the use of imagery, tone, and ...

[War](#), [Vietnam War](#)



War is a devastating and dramatic experience for soldiers. Their conditions, both physical and psychological, were nothing short of horrendous. In Tim O'Brien's novel *The Things They Carried*, he depicts life from the point of view of a soldier during the Vietnam War. Through his use of imagery, tone, and syntax, O'Brien portrays the ambiguity and robotic methodology of war, juxtaposing the many things the soldiers carry physically with the burden they carry emotionally.

They are described as mules and freight trains, carrying baggage and moving on to their next programmed stop. For what reason they don't know yet they push forward simply because they were told to. They walk through the Vietnam soil that O'Brien describes as a "powdery orange-red dust" that covered their boots and faces. Agent Orange; the orange-red dust that would possibly give them a myriad of cancers, Hodgkin's disease, Parkinson's disease or many other life altering diseases. This novel has profoundly detailed descriptions, making them very powerful. He uses the description in a metaphoric way. He tells of the unnecessary physical possessions they all carry on their backs along with other feelings of sentimental strain they carry inside. With the detailed description of the things they carried, O'Brien makes powerful statements about the men who fought in the Vietnam War alongside him. The things the soldiers carried in Vietnam obviously stuck with them throughout their lives.

The tone of the novel is cynical and distanced. He doesn't include himself when he mentions the things they carried. The reader can assume it is because he too has been terribly burdened by this war and it pains him to

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talk about it. “ They carried diseases, among them malaria and dysentery. They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds. They carries the land itself– Vietnam, the place...The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it they carried gravity.” The narrator tells us of how the land of Vietnam affected the soldiers physically. Their experience on this land, a choice that was made for them that gave them such critical diseases. The metaphor of the soldiers carrying the sky and the atmosphere it shows that the war will be ingrained into them. They were changed physically and emotionally and ended up being scarred for life. He emphasizes the purposelessness of their actions. Saying that when ravaging a village sometimes they would start a fire or maybe sometimes they wouldn't. This highlights the unnecessary destruction the war did to the land physically and to the soldiers psychologically.

The syntax O'Brien uses is a pattern of one long drawn-out sentence followed by short, frank ones. This shows the prolonged hardships he went through and the abrupt stops show the reality of his war experience. He tries to get past it. With the abrupt stop and new, short sentence that follows, the reader can understand that what he feels is real and he has been burdened by his time in Vietnam for his whole life. One sentence about the soldiers plodding along slowly and dumbly is stretched for nine lines before it comes to a halt. He described the loss of their patriotism, the loss of their desire, their hope, their sensibility, their intellect.

In his novel *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien describes a group of soldiers marching through Vietnam carrying the basic " necessities" for survival in the Vietnam War. But they also carry memories, and fears, and burdens more than their tangible items. The weight of this abstract baggage is as real as that of anything on their backs, and unlike those physical objects, they are not so easily cast away. O'Brien says " for all the ambiguities of Vietnam, all the mysteries and unknowns, there was at least the single abiding certainty that they would never be at a loss of things to carry."