

The things they carried critique essay

Science



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Tim O'Brien's novel, *The Things They Carried*, provides an incredible realization of what life was like for an American soldier who fought in Vietnam from perspectives before, during, and after the war. The story's power draws you in. It makes the events in the story seem real and provides the reader with a sense of what it feels like to be one of the soldiers.

O'Brien's talent as a writer made a fictional story more than believable to the reader. When reading this book, the reader struggles with depicting what is factual and what is fictional.

O'Brien provides this effect by blurring the line between reality and fantasy. The book recollects many stories from O'Brien's own experiences as a soldier and includes fictional aspects to enhance the story and to help O'Brien get his point across. O'Brien teaches us in all of these stories that there is no difference between what is factual and what is fictional in war. By doing this, the reader experiences the feelings that O'Brien and his comrades felt. *The Things They Carried* describes what those men carried to battle and back home, both tangible and intangible.

The novel questions what war is and what the individual soldiers received out of it. This novel is an eye opener. Any person's perspectives on the war and its soldiers are most certainly to change after reading this book. *The Things They Carried* brings the Vietnam War to life like no civilian could have ever imagined. The things the soldiers carried in Vietnam were both tangible and intangible. The tangible items include the usual equipment that soldiers carry, but most important is the intangibles.

This book emphasizes that the intangibles the soldiers carried influenced everything about their lives, before, during and after the war. These things included the mental and psychological weight carried by the soldiers. This weight included shame, horrid memories, death and destruction. It included relationships and personal trials and temptations. It also included the soldiers' way of handling the war. Many soldiers described in the novel used things such as drugs, pain, or fantastical illusions to deal with the war. The author, who is the narrator, was against the war.

The book displays the weight of the personal struggle that he felt as someone against what he was doing over there. Another aspect that the book describes is the inexperience that the soldiers carried. This came from their age. Most, including the author, were of 21 years of age or younger. They carried the weight of large futures being destroyed by their involvement in the war. All of these aspects put extreme emotional stress on the lives of these soldiers during and after the war. The author deals with his emotional dilemmas by writing about the tragedies and emotions he and his comrades felt.

The book is entirely based off of these things. Its purpose is to help those who were not there to understand what it felt like to be them and for us to never forget the things they carried. *The Things They Carried* is about death. It questions death. It asks what death feels like. It also answers these questions by pulling death up and bringing it back to life. It brings it back to life and tells its stories. These stories share with the reader what death feels like. They show the reader what death is like for you and those who care about you.

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The author includes this topic, because it relates to something important to him that he “carried” over there. He carried his first experience of feeling what death is like. This was the story he wrote at the end of the novel about his first love, Linda, as a nine year old dying of a brain tumor. He took this story and related it to the death of his comrades and the people he killed. It provides the reader with the experience of not just knowing about death, but living it. This book impacted United States history greatly. It provides a perspective of not just the Vietnam War, but all war.

It is a testament to Americans of what life is like defending freedom, whether or not you agree with the cause. This book impacted United States history by helping finishing the story. It helps write the last few pages of what this war was about; not by filling it with more facts, but by filling it with questions, experiences, and life. This book demonstrates to Americans why views and opinions were made and also the purpose for many controversial decisions in our history. This book impacted our country’s history by giving the Vietnam War a personal touch.

Without this book, Americans would be left with only facts, information, and brief explanations for what life was like for the soldiers. The Things They Carried continues to impact readers and helps give understanding of current events. Because of this, it will continue to impact United States history for generations and its importance to our nation and its history will only grow. The Things They Carried also greatly impacted history in general. It did this especially for those living in Vietnam who were impacted by the war. It shares with them the trials and tribulations that Americans encountered.

The book shares with these people an emotional side to the war and helps them understand our soldiers' many motives. On an international scale, the book helps those who question American tactics and procedures to understand our nation's motives, principles, and character. Many mistakes were made on our country's part during the war and this book helps those who question those mistakes and or were impacted by them a sense of understanding and mercy. This book also helps people to understand what life was like for all those who fought in wars throughout the Earth's history.

It provides a sense of understanding of what all soldiers are impacted by in war starting from the beginning of time. I have been greatly impacted by this book in both a positive and negative way. I have been positively impacted by the new sense of understanding and compassion for the Vietnam War Veterans. I can now see clearly what experiences they faced during the war. I can also understand the feelings of those who were against the war and attempted to avoid fighting in it, much like the author. Another aspect I understand better now is their lives after the war.

The emotional turmoil that veterans go through once they arrive home from war can be greatly understood by reading this book. Even though it is disturbing and I find it more than sinful, I have a greater sense of understanding for those like Norman Bowker from the novel who took his own life. Even though I am highly against his action, I understand why he felt lost, empty, and purposeless on Earth after the war. Norman felt like he died in Vietnam and he struggled to find his place and purpose in life. This led to his suicide.

Because O'Brien included this story, it is much easier to find compassion for someone who would do what Bowker did. After reading this book, I have a new found respect for Veterans. I have felt their emotions and their tragedies, because of the power and realism of this book and now my compassion and respect for them has heightened greatly. The book also impacted me in a negative way. I hate to ever imagine that the things described in the book ever happened, but this book made these things a reality for me. Many of the tales told in this book are very disturbing and horrifying.

Though without the truthfulness and realism of this book and its stories, we would never be able to truly understand what happened to those who served in the Vietnam War. I am forever grateful for reading this book. All Americans need to read it. Without it, they will never be able to understand what the Vietnam War Veterans truly went through in Vietnam and what horrible memories they are faced with remembering today. Tim O'Brien's talent as a writer is what makes this novel such a compelling and eye opening experience. *The Things They Carried* is truly an American timepiece and a pivotal piece of American and historical literature.