

The things they  
carried” tim o brien  
short story essay  
sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Tim o Brien's work in the things they carried in which he shows himself as one of the main characters and the narrator is a classical mirror of life on the battlefield and through character development as he develops each characters image, a lot can be fortified and shown. As he reencounters' his experiences on the battle field in the Vietnam War he is able to share his two cents on the war. The story tells of his painful memories, he capitalises on these throughout the story.

One of his main characters, jimmy cross, who shows how the effects of being given a responsibility and how it would affect those who are not yet mature to handle them. Jimmy is young and joins the war not ready to become a team leader but eventually is sent to the war ground with several men in his charge he is unsure of what to do. Due to these he is often destructed at war as in the case where in the midst of a war he is taken away in false memory of a beauty, Martha, who was his classmate. He sends her flowery messages without mentioning of war. His evident love for Martha is destruction to his duties as a leader of his platoon. For him to have joined the army, he ought to have some love for the work an army does, he however shows little concern for these and even convinces himself that he loves Martha more than his fellow soldiers.

In this story the writer tries to bring out different ways of showing love and commitment depicted in what every soldier carries. The story explains events the writer, who also appears to be the narrator of the story, had encountered. It tells of situations their leader, Jimmy cross went through to help him realise that he wasn't a good leader and ought to have changed.

As shown in this story each soldier has items they carry around as they march together at the battlefield. Every soldier's physical load has a certain figurative yet emotional burden to himself. The things they carried varied from time to time depending on the mission they were undertaking.

From the story it can be noted that at times things carried were always determined by superstition and personal beliefs, illustrated by Kaiwo's behaviour of carrying his grandfathers hat . Henry Dobbins, for instance has his girlfriends under wares way to combat loneliness as they walk through the war zone. Each member of jimmy cross' platoon carry items depending on the ranks and the positions they hold in the group. For instance, Dave Janssen carries soap and tooth pastes because he always feared diseases. Ted lavender carries with him a bag of tranquilizers. Kaiwo is seen not to leave behind his copy of the New Testament bible, Kaiwo is a religious fellow and hence he always held dearly the good book.

The writer shows us that in Vietnam, nights were cold and hence all the soldiers carried with them heavy clothing to resist such harsh weather conditions. Jimmy cross carried letters from Martha that reminded him of the intimate sessions he had with her at their home town. He sinks into this memories and longs for the days when he would have romantic moment with her. He always remembered taking her to the movies to see bonnie and Clyde.

The lieutenant also carried with him a lucky charm, a pebble; he had received as a gift from Martha. Toward the end of the story It. jimmy cross realises that he had been living in a world of fantasy, decides to burn all the

letters he had received from Martha. With these letters burning away, so does he wake up from the fantasy world? He realises the extent to which he had become a letdown to his platoon and decides to change for the better. He was now determined to perform his duties firmly and without negligence. Ted lavender's death acts as an eye opener to cross and he decides to also dispose off his lucky pebble as a sign of him moving forward

Lieutenant cross had joined the army thinking that it was a place for laxity. As a young graduate from Mount Sebastian College, he is not familiar with the battlefield let alone leading a platoon in the war toned Vietnam. He is seen not to care at all in the beginning; he shows no commitment for his role as leader. He is always day dreaming about his infatuations for Martha, a lady he isn't sure loves him back. He sees Martha in fantasies' and remembers her at a volleyball games playing around along the beach. He is seen to allow his soldiers smoke dope; he allows them to leave machinery behind among other flaws.

When Ted lavender dies and the world of reality opens down to him, Cross realises that a war zone needed a much more committed soldier. He opens his eyes and realises that had he been a better leader then such loss of friend would have been avoided. He carries the burden of guilt. He blames himself for the killing of Ted lavender and this helps shape him up. He vows to become a leading example to his fellow soldiers in his platoon. He decides not to tolerate laxity, to show strength, he reminds himself that his role was to lead and not to be loved. Lieutenant Jimmy cross is in the long run convinced that some of the misfortunes that his platoon had encountered were as a result of his negligence. Upon his turning point it can be seen that <https://assignbuster.com/the-things-they-carried-tim-o-brien-short-story-essay-sample/>

if he would truly adhere to the new principles he had laid down then it would eventually lead to him working as a good leader to his crew.

Lieutenant jimmy cross decides to take charge of the platoon, he changes for better as seen in the story when he even thinks of way he would dispose of the lucky pebble he had received as a gift from Martha. Tim O'Brien tries to show us various lessons Cross received from the experience of losing a member of his platoon.

Tim O'Brien talks of love through the character jimmy cross. Cross seems to be obsessed with Martha; who does not return his feelings. Jimmy Cross has infatuations towards Martha . the writer tries to tackle the problem soldiers undergoes when on a battlefield. However the love shared between soldiers takes centre stage in these stories as the writer tries to show as that girlfriends betrayed soldiers, parents expected too much while love for the country seemed ridiculous as it puts one on the verge of death at the war zone.

O ' Brien's character, Kiowa demonstrates his love for his religion by always carrying his copy of New Testament bible. Close ties created by the soldiers under lieutenant jimmy cross platoon is evident throughout the story. The soldiers realise that being away from, one had to take care of their fellow soldiers. They were always worried about each other. A classical illustration of these bonds is shown when Ted lavender gets shot at the than Khe village. The soldiers take collective responsibility; wrap up the body of the gone friend in the canvas bag in preparation to be aired away in a chopper. The

soldiers are bereaved by these circumstances and even take up ted lavenders dope and smoke it to commemorate his death.

Mitchell sanders and Norman Bowker are close as friends, these is illustrated in an odd army style when Mitchell sanders gives Norman a thumb he had cut from a VC corpse from a boy they had found at a valley in the warring Vietnam. Henry Dobbins, the troops big man, who normally carried their machine guns and was a great accessory when it come to heavy machinery shows love in the context as he carries on the memory of his girlfriend. He does carry his girlfriend pantyhose always on his battlefield to remind him of her even though she dumped him. It can be seen through the story that the writer tries to illustrate various ways in which soldiers in the battlefield express love.

#### Reference

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1990. Print.