

# Reading response to the things they carried

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



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Name: Instructor: Course: Date: Reading Response to The Things They Carried Part 1 In the short story, The Things They Carried, Martha is seen to be a symbol to Jimmy.

In the harsh surroundings of the war field, Jimmy needs love and a sense of being cared for by someone. By being the Lieutenant, Jimmy is in command hence is responsible for the lives of his juniors. On the other hand, no one is in charge of his welfare probably adding onto his need to be cared for. He thus holds on to the illusion of having a love that is different from the atmosphere he faces in the battlefield. Martha symbolizes hope to Jimmy. Having Martha to build his hopes on, he finds a purpose to survive and a hope to get him through the harsh reality he faces.

Jimmy has created an illusion in his mind of what he would want Martha to be to him, and that gets him by. By holding onto her letters, Jimmy holds on to the hope that he may have a chance with her once he is out of the battlefield. In the real sense, the possibility of Jimmy and Martha ending up together seems highly unlikely. However, since Martha does not outrightly refuse him, it leaves him room to build fantasies on and dream of them ending up together. The pebble she sends to Jimmy is an extension of her in that, it is the only physical item that Jimmy has connecting them that is not perishable with time. It indicates Jimmy's undying love for her.

The pebble has a close resemblance to her in character. It is collected on the shoreline where seawater meets the sand at high tide, but because of the waves, the water has to recede back into the ocean, separating with the land as soon as it touches it. Martha and Jimmy's relation is similar in that by

being at the war front, Jimmy is bound to be in the battlefield where his life is unpredictable. Therefore, in as much as they like each other, a relationship between them is not possible. Question 1 In this story, Jimmy and Martha's relationship can be described as platonic. Irrespective of what Jimmy wishes it to be, they are no more than friends whose relationship cannot advance to a higher level. The relationship serves the purpose of bringing about hope in a hopeless situation in the story.

It also reveals Jimmy's soft nature. He is so concerned about being loved by Martha that he is unable to concentrate on what is at hand. Jimmy carries around a picture of Martha standing against a brick wall where the picture bothers him in that he can see a shadow of the man who took the photograph on the wall. It shows his deep desire to be loved bringing about insecurity and jealousy in him. Love is not a word that would suit Jimmy and Martha's relationship. In Jimmy's case, infatuation would be more fitting. Jimmy knows that a relationship between him and Martha is not possible.

However, he spends most of his time daydreaming about her and making up unachievable fantasies. Question 2 Emotional baggage in this case means all the hidden fears and feelings that the soldiers have within them that weigh them down on the battlefield. Emotional baggage may make soldiers lose their will to fight on, and especially fear may make one weak before their enemies. Two types of intangible baggage include grief over lost loved ones and the longing for unattainable love due to the distance and uncertainties (O'Brien 381).

For example, Jimmy's longing for Martha's love was affecting his performance in the field leading to the death of some his soldiers. Loss of their mates' lives also dampened the spirits of the soldiers. The phrase, "they were too frightened to be cowards" implies that being a coward was one thing that a soldier was never allowed to be at the battlefield (O'Brien 382). Hence, the soldiers endured their fears and strode on, putting on brave faces even when they were crumbling from within. Work Cited O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 1998.

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