

# Tim o brien's the things they carried

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



1945 was a difficult time for America. There were so many people still recovering from World War II, and now the Vietnam War was starting. The Things They Carried told a story of how the war changed a person, in this case, it was Tim O'Brien.

It showed the struggle he, and many soldiers in any war went through to be able to overcome the grief and the struggle to deal with death. In this time young men were being drafted into the Vietnam War. For example, in The Things Carried By Tim O'Brien, the protagonist in his book was being drafted into the war but tried to run from it. After he tried to run from his fate he realized he was not able to. This was just the start of The Vietnam War. For example Tim O'Brien and his friends and comrades in the war. He was able to paint pictures through his words being able to let the reader feel like they are there with him. Tim O'Brien's book The Things They Carried explained in detail how the war affected the soldiers and those around them. Tim O'Brien allows the audience to feel this emotion better by writing this book as fiction. The government also had a hand in the Vietnam war as well. The American involvement in Vietnam was shaped based on the Cold War. Even though his book is fiction, in some ways that can have an advantage in explaining the war.

Tim O'Brien the narrator is telling a story about the participation he had in the war. A lot of symbolism in Tim O'Brien's book helped us see what he went through, even though he himself did not go through it, this is the reason that a fiction story hooked the reader and gave the reader more information than a nonfiction story can. Tim O'Brien brings up about both the physical objects they carry but also they have to carry their emotional

burdens. The objects that each soldier carries serves as a symbol for what they are carrying in their minds. It just starts out with the title, The Things They Carried. Before reading the book one might think that it is just about what the soldiers carried in the war. Which in the beginning that what Tim O'Brien is talking about. He lists every soldier, and what they carried on their backs throughout the war but this can mean something deeper if you look in between the lines. Each and every soldier carries physical baggage but the baggage they carry can represent their emotional baggage from the war. The items on their back were the psychological weight of the war. For example, Lieutenant Cross carried a picture of Martha to comfort him. He also carried a pebble that she sent ton lieutenant Cross that was a good luck charm. The quote Martha wrote that she has found the pebble on the Jersey shoreline, where the precisely where land touched water at high tide, where things came together but separated.(7).

Just like now soldiers would carry pictures and mementos of their loved ones into war to comfort them for example now soldiers may carry pictures. The war had a big toll on soldiers especially when they come home. That emotional and psychological baggage may never go away. Another way the physical baggage they carried can symbolize that they lost their true identity and now they were looked just of what they carried on their backs. Another physical memento that a soldier in the book carries is when Henry Dobbins ties a pair of pantyhose from his girlfriend around his neck to help him remember the good memories he had before the war. Another way thee pantyhose can symbolize something is since while men are at war there is not much female intimacy that they got at home. Now soldiers are able to

call their families and even see them. So, that was how they were able to get their female intimacy and a sense of confidence. for example, all the physical items that soldiers would carry because they have something to look forward to, and want to come home. Even though *The Things They Carried* is a fiction story it has many lessons that the reader can learn. Being a fiction story it is easier and tells everything how it is rather than a nonfiction story where the person writing it could be hiding facts back because they are scared of it. If a veteran would have written a story like this they may have blocked out a lot of important details that have happened because of PTSD and anxiety as well as depression. Fiction can also make it easier to explain horrible events in detail that no one that lived through it could.

For example when Tim O'Brien was explaining to his daughter about what he experienced when his daughter asked Daddy, "tell the truth," Kathleen can say, "did you ever kill anybody?" And I can say, honestly, "Of course not." (172) As Tim O'Brien stated this quote In the chapter Good Form, O'Brien used the quote that states, story -truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth. (171). After that he continued to explain how as he told these stories that are not true in reality, instead made the reader have the ability to sense that the feelings that it gave the reader a feeling that they are there even if the book is a work of fiction it would give the same sense if it was nonfiction, it gave the same message but not in the same context. Without using fiction some stories that are told would give the reader better knowledge than the real stories would. Fiction would not be completely sufficient for being able to bring the emotions that the soldiers were feeling

during the war. Being able to catch someone's attention was the main goal in Tim O'Brien's book *The Things They Carried*. He was able to create a story that was able to instantly grab the reader's interest, it allowed the reader to become more involved and able to make an image and feel the emotions that were actually being felt at the time. Even though Tim O'Brien's work of fiction was not able to give a true and real story about Vietnam, it was able to give Tim O'Brien the ability to use that as an opportunity to use techniques like metaphors and symbolism to let the reader think deeply about the situation. Fiction may seem like a story of lies, but in his work of fiction, it was positive because it was the only way to tell the real truth.

When reading Tim O'Brien's story, he made sure to have the reader ask little to no questions about the story, but instead, they became in touch with the emotion of the characters. Physical events that happened in the book had a major impact on how he explained the history of the Vietnam War. One of the first physical events that he pointed out was when he brought up the event of the puppy on the landmine on page thirty-five. He stated that one of his friends adopted an orphan puppy and took care of it by feeding it from a spoon. Then Ted Lavender came and took the puppy. Tim O'Brien stated, Azar strapped the puppy to a Claymore anti-personnel mine and squeezed the firing device. (35). This event that he described had a deeper meaning when he was telling it. It symbolized the ability to make Azar have a sense of control in a time where it seemed that no one had control over anything, but he blamed it on his immaturity. Men today in the war still would have had a problem with how they felt during the war. This incident could have also meant that he was killing something innocent and pure, just like the war

did to him and his comrades in the war. Some other events that had more of a meaning than what was said at that moment in the book. The event that was mentioned was when before the war and he was trying to escape from being drafted in the war, and he went to a cabin in the Rainy River as he decided to stay there for a few months. Then he came to the realization that he could not escape the war. This was what many soldiers still felt in other, more modern wars.

They tried to hide or flee the country, but in the end, they needed to serve their country. The event that made him realize that was on his last day at the cabin. The event was when the cabin owner, Elroy, took him up on the river towards Canada was where Tim O'Brien wanted to go. Tim O'Brien said you're scared, and there's a hard squeezing pressure in your chest. What would you do? Would you jump? Would you feel pity for yourself?(54). One of the last and biggest events that happened was the Death of someone close to you can make you see everything in a different light. For Tim O'Brien, this was the death of his first love Linda. The death of Linda represented the event that the past could be brought back through some sort of symbolism in his book. Linda was a classmate of O'Brien's, but she died of a brain tumor when they were in the fifth grade. This event symbolized O'Brien's faith that fiction storytelling was the best way to show those emotions. This event showed how he was able to deal with the pain, confusion, and most of all, the sadness that death was able to bring to him. Linda was O'Brien's first love and also his first experience with death's random choice. He was able to retreat into his mind, more specifically his dreams. He was able to see Linda, alive.

This showed that even though some things are just dreams which, later for Tim O'Brien evolved into his story that the dead could be alive through those who remember them. The young Vietnam soldier hit Tim O'Brien especially hard, like any first death on his own hands would do for a soldier. He was not completely clear if actually threw a grenade and killed My Khe, the way he described the man's death is descriptive his death. This symbolized the way humans guilt over how horrible events that happened in the war. In *The Man I Killed*, O'Brien was able to distract himself from this event by speaking in the third person so he did not have to directly say what he did or not do. He did what many people did they would distract themselves from the memory. How Tim O'Brien did this is by speaking in the third person and constructing fantasies as to what the man must have been like before he was killed.