

Things they carried character analysis essay sample

[Countries](#), [Vietnam](#)



Kiowa is the emotional compass of Alpha Company, the one who gets everyone else to talk. He's thoughtful, respects the Vietnamese, isn't a coward, and he even has a sense of humor. We quickly learn that he's Tim's best friend in the war. Kiowa tries to comfort O'Brien after he kills the North Vietnamese soldier, and it is to Kiowa that Dobbins opens up about his respect for the ministry. The night before Kiowa is killed, he is in a tent speaking to him about his girlfriend left behind. He drowns under the muck of a sewage field about which his lieutenant, Jimmy Cross, has a bad feeling, and becomes another victim in a war that strips men of their character and turns them into a statistic. Kiowa helps O'Brien by making his transitions easier.

He makes O'Brien more comfortable when he arrives at the war, talking to him about the others' jokes about corpses, and he tries to get O'Brien to talk about the Vietnamese soldier he killed. O'Brien tells the story of Linda to Kiowa. It is from Kiowa, therefore, that O'Brien learns the importance of communicating, leading eventually to his becoming a writer. In some ways, Kiowa's death is what makes O'Brien a writer, a teller of stories. When he returns to Nam with Katherine, he takes her to the site of Kiowa's death in the field. Although O'Brien does not tell her the story of Kiowa, he brings her to that site so that he might pass the story on, just as he will pass on the story of how he killed a man when he feels Katherine is ready to hear it. Overall, Kiowa is probably the most likeable character in the entire book.

Azar is the guy who kills puppies without any remorse or thought of regret. When Ted Lavender adopts a puppy, Azar straps it to a mine, explodes it,

and then completely fails to understand why everyone is mad at him. Azar is the ultimate “courageous” man. He’s always boasting about how tough he is, or saying incredibly insensitive things; however, sometimes he can be really funny, or pulling an insane prank on a fellow soldier. Azar can always be counted on for an insensitive joke at an unfitting moment. He mocks the Vietnamese girl who just lost her family. He jokes about Kiowa getting buried in the mud. That is the only incident when he feels guilty about something. In a normal situation, people would mourn the death of a close one.

Azar however, seems to only be unaffected. His purpose was to show that Vietnam changed men, made them insensitive to events that would otherwise be disturbing and shocking, make them seem to have lost some sort of their humanity because of Vietnam. This is why O’Brien can count on him to help scare Bobby Jorgensen when no one else will. Azar, who might not even know what the word “moral” means, and who would not care even if he did know the meaning, obviously agrees to help him scare Bobby Jorgenson. But when Tim decides to pull out, Azar goes through with the prank anyway and then kicks Tim in the head for being weak. But here’s the thing. Despite his whole manly-man thing, the rest of the platoon does not particularly respect Azar. Sure, they know he pulls these crazy stunts, and occasionally he’s hilarious, but the things he does and says disgust them.

Norman Bowker believes, according to O’Brien, that what marks men as courageous are medals and service awards. Because of and in spite of this belief, Bowker has an active emotional life, an intensity of feeling about the atrocities he experienced in Vietnam, especially Kiowa’s death. As the

mortars rained down on the men camped in the toilet field for the village on the hill, Kiowa was sucked under and Norman immediately ran over to pull him free only to be sucked down as well. Knowing that Kiowa was gone and when to let go, Norman mustered up the basic survival instinct courage to let go of him and get out before he himself would drown as well. The Bowker character is most essential to the novel as follow up to “The Things They Carried.”

O'Brien creates a fictional story. He asks O'Brien to write his story, and when he reads it, asks him to revise it to reflect more of his feeling of intimate loss. Bowker teaches O'Brien how to articulate pain through storytelling, the particular pain of Kiowa's death to the wastefulness of war. Without Bowker, O'Brien could have ended up like him. He helped him understand that he can get out and speak what he has to take off of his shoulders, by writing about it. These feelings are not directed out toward the world as anger, but instead are turned in upon him, and they become self-loathing and extreme survivor guilt. The Bowker character is most essential to the novel as fodder about which O'Brien creates a fictional story. He asks O'Brien to write his story, and when he reads it, asks him to revise it to reflect more of his feeling of intimate loss. Bowker teaches O'Brien how to articulate pain through storytelling, the particular pain of Kiowa's death to the wastefulness of war.