

Literary analysis the  
things they carried



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

A Fight between Love and War In *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien the narrator of the story tells of the burdens him and his Soldiers face mentally, physically and emotionally in the Vietnam War. Tim O'Brien describes many of the physical things the Soldiers carried, pictures, letters rabbit's feet, and a pebble. The characters in this story also carried mental burdens from being at war. Jimmy Cross is comforted by the items he brought with him, but his obsession with "love" causes the death of a Soldier. Most of the things the characters in this story carried meant a lot to them and they couldn't live without.

Kiowa the Native American carried a bible. Ted Lavender the first casualty of the company. He carried drugs with him to keep him calm. He was described as the "most frightened of the Soldiers." Jimmy Cross carried pictures, letters and a "good-luck charm," a pebble from Martha whom he was in love with so deeply in his mind. His constant fantasizing about Martha caused the death of a Soldier. "Ted Lavender was dead because he loved her so much and could not stop thinking about her." He uses Martha's love as his escape from war, "His mind wandered. He had difficulty keeping his attention on the war." "He would slip away into daydreams. On the morning after Ted Lavender's death Jimmy Cross burns and buries the letters and pictures that he has of Martha. His mental dilemma caused the death of his Soldier. After his death Jimmy Cross was "determined to perform his duties firmly and without negligence." After the war Cross is reminded of Lavender's death while going through pictures with O'Brien. He'd never forgiven himself for his mistake he hated Martha because he loved her so much and "because he realized she did not love him and never would." "She signed the letters "

Love," but it wasn't love. Kiowa is also burdened by the death of Lavender and is horrified.

The reader would think that Cross wouldn't be able to love Martha again, but after spending time with her he loves her again. The thing's Jimmy Cross carried was a representation of his inner conflict's, which was love. As each character carried baggage of war they also carried fear and the burden of killing people. The characters started out as boys and were forced to become men. Each man had their own internal or external problem. As for Jimmy his burden is his love for Martha and the consequence was the loss of Ted Lavender which was something he had to carry with him the rest of the war and his life.