

The effects of war in tim o'brian's "the things they carry"



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The effects of war in Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carry" In his story "The Things They Carry," Tim O'Brien effectively explains how the war affected the lives of American's soldiers in Vietnam. The young and inexperienced soldiers who come to Vietnam with "no dreams of glory or honor, just to avoid the blush of dishonor," stay in Vietnam without a real mission except to live and to kill (398). They kill soldiers in a battle and innocent civilians in their homes. They mutilated Vietnamese's bodies and burn their villages.

They also force themselves to believe that the gruesome things they do are morally acceptable and that they did not have a chance to handle things differently. They carry their weapons and their supplies and they try not to show their emotions. "They carried the sky. The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it, they carried gravity. They moved like a mules.

By daylight they took sniper fire, at night they were mortared, but it was not battle, it was just the endless march, village to village, without purpose, nothing won or lost.

They marched for the sake of the march. (395) They see the death everywhere, but they keep going and carrying their burdens and their fears. Depends of their specialty and rank they carry different things that weight between 15 and 20 pounds.

They, also carry different equipment for night, complicated of extremely hazardous missions. But, all the heavy rations and supplies weight less than the soldiers memories. Lieutenant Jimmy Cross carries Martha's letters that <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-war-in-tim-obrians-the-things-they-carry/>

weight 10 ounces. Marta is a girl who, obviously, loves him as a friend, but he is in love with her.

In the middle of the war, he dreams about her and he hopes she is a virgin. He carries her two photographs and the pebble she sent him. He carries the pebble in his mouth. Dave Jansen's carries a rabbit foot and Norman Bowker a tomb cut from a Vietnamese's boy corpse as a talisman. The tomb is a gift from Mitchell Sanders. Kiowa carries The New Testament and " his grandmother's distrust of the white man, his grandfather's old hunting hatchet" (390).

The other soldiers carry soap bars, toothbrush, dental floss, comic books, vitamins, M&M candy, and (like Harry Dobbins) the girlfriend's pantyhose.

Sometimes, they take turns when carrying to heavy staff (like radio). Ted Lavender carries tranquilizers (6-7 ounces of premium dope). Afraid of death he also carries 34 rounds of ammunition instead of typically 25, but they did not help him to stay alive. He is shot in the head in the same time when Lieutenant Cross dreamed about Martha and himself at the Jersey shore.

Lieutenant Jimmy Cross feels responsible for Lavender's death. He is dreaming about Martha instead paying attention on his job and his soldiers. The soldiers burn Than Khe after Lavender was killed outside that village.

Lieutenant Cross burns Martha's letters and photographs the morning after Lavender died and decided to " shut down the daydreams" (400). He plans to get rid of the pebble too, but not yet.

He keeps a memory of Martha as a part of a different world in which there is no place for him. He decides to tell his soldiers that he blames himself for Lavender's death. He also decides to distance himself from his soldiers because he thinks he will be a better leader if he does that. He will keep his soldiers together and require strict discipline.

Sometimes, his soldiers throw away their equipment during the march and he plans to stop that practice. They do that because they know " they would never be at a loss for things to carry" (396).

They will always carry their burden of guilt, the ghosts of their comrades and the ghosts of people they killed. Lieutenant Cross cries when Lavender died. Some soldiers do not cry, not even feel sadness. They become emotionally dull trying to distance themselves from all terrible things that happened to them and the other terrible things that they did to others.

Usually, their only emotion is a relief that they are alive when someone else died. The soldiers talk about people who shot their thumbs or fingers to avoid going to war or to leave Vietnam.

The soldiers act as they hate such a people, but actually, they wish to be on their place. They dream to fly out of the jungle and of the war. " They were flying. The weights fell off; there was nothing to bear "(399). But, most of them will not fly.

The wounded and dead soldiers are flying home. The others are waiting for the end of the war to leave Vietnam.