

The things they carried

[Sociology](#)



While Dobbins and Cross carry good luck charms, other men are more pragmatic about their belongings. Dave Jensen carries extra soap and toothpaste in the hopes of warding off disease. Though the bullets and booby traps were the biggest threat, Jensen saw dirt and disease as the villain. Ted Lavender carried tranquilizers to ward off the anxiety of war. These would eventually kill him, but while he lived they provided him with a better quality of life. Whether magical or pragmatic, each item brought the men comfort and ease in a world of torment and pain.

The items the men carried brought the unit closer by weaving a common thread throughout the unit. They could laugh about each other and take some comfort in their own sanity, which was a little less crazy than the guy next to them. In the world of war, each man had his own small space of comfort and that well being was shared by everyone.

The world of war is an unreal area that needs to be experienced to be believed. The narrator, Tim O'Brien, was careful to point out that this was a work of fiction. That is what war stories are. The truth can never be told, it needs to be lived. These men came through the experience after facing death and seeing the men beside them perish. In the face of hand grenades and automatic weapons, it was the little everyday items from home that protected their soul and their human dignity from destruction.