

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Rrrrough draft due: Peer review draft due: **F 10/19**—bring 4 copies, TWO FULL pages minimum

Peer review shared with group: **M 10/22** You must attach your minimum ONE page typed review to the back of each peer's draft.

Meet with instructor in her office at appointment time: **W 10/24** (Note: Instructor will only review rough drafts one-on-one during an appt. you make with her)

Final Paper due per final draft format criteria: **F 10/26**.

Extra Credit LRC visit w/ proof: 10 extra credit points given ONCE for attending LRC during this entire essay's drafting process, but you may go as many times as you need to. Must include proof of visit attached to your final draft.

The stories we have read by Tim O'Brien deal with the Vietnam War, but they also contain many compelling issues about the human condition unchanged by the 30 years since that conflict. For your second essay of the semester, write an essay in which you draw from these stories some issue, conflict, theme, or motif that interests you. As stated in the portfolio requirements, "This should not only discuss an author's ideas but should also present the student's opinion and interpretation as distinct from the author's."

Below are several topic choices for you to consider; if you have another topic in mind, please discuss it with me before proceeding.

Refer to *Everyday Writer* for additional guidance on writing about literature (pages 469-475). Refer to the Text-Based 098 essays (57-71) in *New Voices* for successful examples.

Writing Tasks (choose only ONE):

1. In "The Things They Carried," O'Brien writes that "Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to" (21). Find three characters from the assigned stories and explain how their actions, attitudes, and beliefs reflect O'Brien's point of view in regards to such issues as masculinity, cowardice and courage. What are your conclusions regarding the issues O'Brien raises? Use plenty of examples from the stories to support your point.
2. Why is it so hard to "tell a true war story"? Write an essay in which you examine O'Brien's use of imagination and invention, and the difficulties posed by wartime conditions on truth-telling.
3. Throughout the stories, O'Brien juxtaposes images of great beauty with images of great horror, the scene of Curt Lemon's death in "How to Tell A True War Story" being one notable example. Write an essay in which you trace the use of such contrasting images across at least three of the stories. What do these contrasting images say about O'Brien's experiences in Vietnam?
4. The men deal with the uncertainty, fear, and death around them in sometimes surprisingly tender, irreverently funny, or horrifyingly brutal ways. Choose three characters from the stories to examine how these characters respond to their circumstances and the men around them. What conclusions can you draw about men and war through these examples?

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5. People are usually profoundly changed by their experiences in war. Choose at least 3 characters from the stories and examine how these characters were changed by their experiences. What conclusions can you draw from these examples about the effects of war on the human spirit?
6. What is the role of women and girls in the book? Examine the various female characters in the novel and explain what each may represent.
7. The "Speaking of Courage" sequence, as well as the stories related to "The Man I Killed," deal a lot with the issue of responsibility and guilt. Discuss how at least three characters deal with their feelings of guilt over the deaths of those around them.

Goals:

- Construct a critical stance on *The Things They Carried* (in other words, do more than just summarize) and explain how your efferent and aesthetic readings have broadened your repertoire and support your point of view
- Use the rhetorical elements as a writer yourself.
Think about
 - your paper's central theme (don't repeat the paper prompt verbatim)
 - your subject and the kind of evidence you'll use to develop it (paraphrase and quotes)
 - your audience's knowledge, ideas, attitudes and beliefs about the subject
 - your character as a writer—what qualities should you bring forward or down play as you write
- Incorporate a very brief synopsis of the stories you are discussing. This means writing a sentence or two about each story (no more than one paragraph in total).
- Incorporate at least three of the stories
- Develop your own title for your essay (*The Things They Carried* is O'Brien's title)
- Ability to cite your quotations according to MLA guidelines.

Format: MLA typed, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 font, 1 inch margins, left justified).

Length; 3-4 pages (without Work Cited page, with Work Cited 4-5 pages). Include Work Cited page.