

As an American college student unexpectedly drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, Tim O'Brien shares the life-changing events he and his comrades undergo during their times before, during, and after the war. The stories O'Brien chooses to tell provide a deep and thoughtful insight into what goes on in the minds of the soldiers as they face the most difficult challenges of their lives.

The Things They Carried is a thought-provoking collection of war stories that forces the reader to reflect upon what goes into writing and telling a true war story. Throughout the novel, Tim O'Brien explicitly embellishes these stories and even completely retells some to point out the limits of the truth. All of this is done to emulate what the soldiers felt while serving in Vietnam, which O'Brien masterfully proves is more important than attempting always to tell the full truth of the story.

During one story, O'Brien tells of a soldier who has returned home from the war. This chapter is especially gripping and perfectly illustrates what the veteran is going through as he drives endless laps around a lake pondering what his life could have been. After reading this section, we are forced to gain appreciation for the difficulties that come from returning home after the war. Will the soldier ever be able to get his old life back, or will he be forever trapped in his memories of the war?

"O'Brien has played so much, and so successfully, with genre that I wonder that we bother to acknowledge some of the distinctions that seem so important to the publishing sales force and the bookstore buyers and the talk-show hosts." — *The Paris Review*

"But the best of these stories--and none is written with less than the sharp edge of a honed vision--are memory as prophecy. They tell us not where we were but where we are; and perhaps where we will be." — *LA Times*



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