



STUDENT PACKET

GRADES 9-12

The Things They Carried

Tim O'Brien

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

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Tim O'Brien

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NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Name _____

rectitude
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trite
imprecision
eccentricity
piasters

ordnance
adism
opaque
talisman
hamlet

Directions: Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the correct vocabulary word. Use each word only once.

1. O'Brien believes a bombing raid has the _____ purity of moral indifference.
2. When _____ are released in the brain, a person can exhibit extraordinary behavior.
3. People have a right to expect the nations' leaders to exhibit _____.
4. Those who get pleasure from hurting others are involved in _____.
5. _____ of infantrymen penetrate into enemy territory.
6. The _____ events of life often lead to boredom.
7. Many _____(s) were destroyed in Vietnam.
8. In a country torn apart by war, law often turns into _____.
9. In retrospect, many of the war scenes become _____ in the survivors' minds.
10. When listening to some of the war stories, it is important to separate the _____ from the truth.
11. Kiowa feels that establishing a fortress in a _____ is sacrilegious.
12. _____ was used to blow away trees in the mountains of Vietnam.
13. South Vietnamese used _____ to purchase various items.
14. Heavy smoke will form an _____ cover over the terrain.
15. A person's quirky behavior may seem like an _____ to others.
16. Infantrymen must carry heavy _____ into battle.
17. A _____ word or phrase becomes stale.
18. Speaking with _____ causes lack of trust in a person's words.
19. A rabbit's foot is a _____ for some people.
20. Inconsistencies and _____ in a story can cause the listener to lose his/her train of thought.

Name _____

9. *Activity: Begin a list of literary devices in the novel. Examples: Metaphor—Imagination: a killer; Simile—They moved like moles (p. 15).

Pages 27–38

1. *Why do you think O'Brien switches from third person to first person?
2. Who comes to visit O'Brien at his home in Massachusetts? What does this visit reveal about the two men?
3. *How does Jimmy Cross want to be remembered? Why do you think this is important to him?
4. *Identify two examples of terror and violence in the story "Spin." What do you think is the most poignant memory? Why?
5. *Identify two examples of sweetness and gentleness in the story "Spin." Which do you find the most touching? Why?
6. *Activity: Write a metaphor or simile poem based on the statement, "Stories are for eternity."
7. *Activity: Add two similes and one metaphor from this section to your list of literary devices. See pp. 34, 33, 34, 37.

Pages 39–66

1. Why hasn't O'Brien ever told the story "On the Rainy River"? Why does he decide to do so now?
2. How does O'Brien feel when his draft notice arrives in 1968? What does O'Brien discover about himself?
3. Explain O'Brien's reaction to the Vietnam War before and after his draft notice arrives.
4. *Describe O'Brien's summer job. Why do you think he gives such a graphic description of his work?
5. What options did those of draft age have during the Vietnam War? What is the only option that is feasible for O'Brien? Why?
6. What does O'Brien decide to do? Explain his emotional conflict over this decision. How does he react physically? mentally?
7. Who is Elroy Berdahl? Why is he influential in O'Brien's life?
8. *What does O'Brien decide to do about fleeing to Canada? Explain his moral dilemma and why he makes this choice. Explain why you do or do not think he made the right decision.

Name _____

Sorting Characters

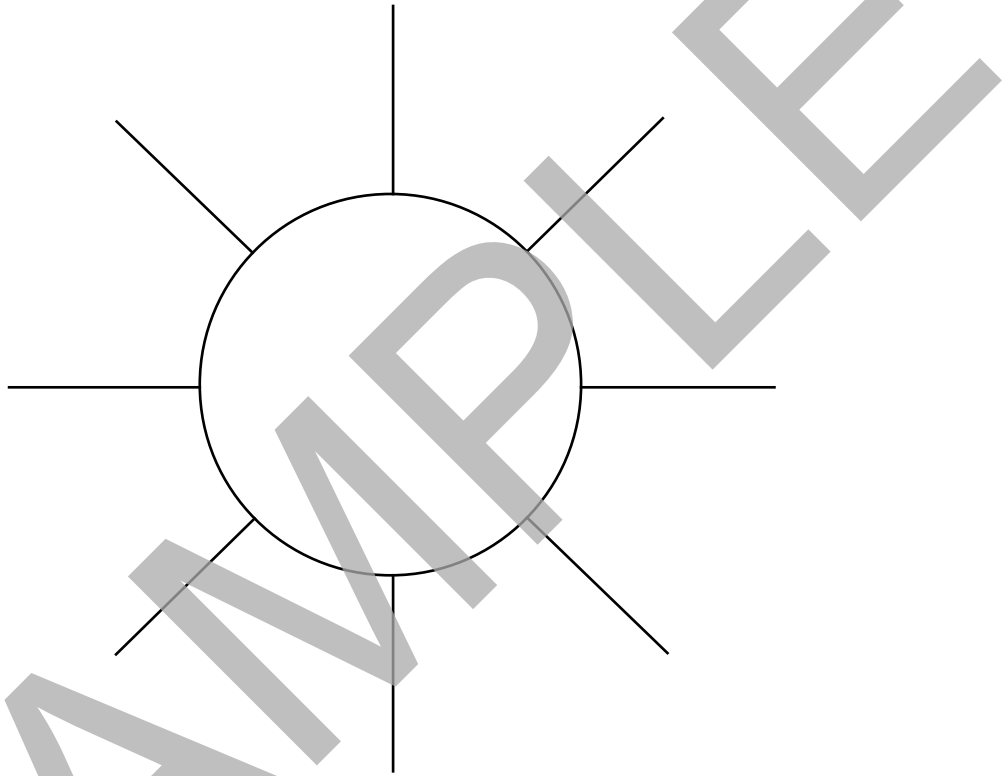
Directions: Similarities among characters are sometimes a clue to themes in the story. Place the book's characters in one or more of the groups below.

Victims	Victimizers	Fighters
Peace-lovers	Conformists	Self-directors

Name _____

Theme Analysis

Directions: Choose a theme from the book to be the focus of your word web. Complete the web and then answer the question in each starred box.



★ What is the author's main message?

★ What did you learn from the book?

Name _____

Cause/Effect Chart

Directions: Make a flow chart that shows the decision one of the characters made, the decisions the character could have made, and the results from each possible decision; for example, O'Brien's decision to get revenge on Jorgenson. Use your imagination to speculate on the results of the decision O'Brien could have made.

