

# The Things They Carried - "How to Tell a True War Story"

## Vocabulary/words to know:

- Rectitude – n. rightness of principle or conduct; correctness
- Surreal – adj. dreamlike
- Generalize – v. to infer or assume from only a few facts or instances.
- Concord – n. agreement; harmony
- Ambiguity – n. doubtfulness or uncertainty of meaning or intention. Unclear, indefinite. Equivocal.

What a True War Story Is/Does

What a True War Story Isn't/Doesn't

## Opposites/Contrasts/Dichotomies

\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_

TRUTH (What does this story say about truth/reality?)

Vivid/Dream-like Imagery, Figurative Language (metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole)

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What happens when you "send guys to war"?
- 2) What were Curt Lemon and Rat Kiley doing when Curt stepped on the land mine?
- 3) How does O'Brien describe Lemon's death?
- 4) Why is it difficult "to separate what happened from what seemed to happen"?
- 5) What was the mission of the patrol that went up to the mountains?
- 6) What did they hear while they were there?
- 7) What did they end up doing about it?
- 8) What does Mitchell Sanders say is the moral of his story?
- 9) What does Sanders later admit about his story?
- 10) What happened to the VC water buffalo? How did this make you feel?
- 11) What did Rat do afterwards?
- 12) What does "proximity to death" bring with it?
- 13) What is the "only certainty"?
- 14) What wakes Tim O'Brien up at night 20 years later?
- 15) What did Tim think Curt Lemon must've thought killed him?
- 16) What does the nice middle-aged woman think Tim should do?
- 17) What does he want to say to her about the baby buffalo, and everything else in the story?
- 18) According to O'Brien, what is a true war story NEVER about?