

The Things They Carried "The Things They Carried"

1. What do the following words or acronyms refer to? RTO, Grunt, KIA, PFC, SOP, "freedom bird," "hump."
2. Why do you think Rate Kiley, the medic, carries M&M's for "especially bad wounds"?
3. What does Lt. Cross think about all the time?
4. What were the soldiers doing when Lavendar was killed?
5. What is the "good luck charm" that Norman Bowker carries?
6. What was the young dead VC boy carrying? How does what he carries differ from what the American soldiers carry?
7. What did the platoon do in the village of Than Khe?
8. How does Kiowa feel about Lavendar's death?
9. What was, "in many respects...the heaviest burden of all"?
10. What were they more afraid of than dying?
11. What did Cross do with Martha's pictures after Lavendar's death? How did his feelings for her change?
12. How does Lt. Cross change his way of commanding after Lavendar's death?

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Answer one question from A, B, C, & D. Then answer Question E. Answer in complete sentences.

- A. In the list of all the things the soldiers carried, what item was most surprising? Which item did you find most evocative of the war? Which items stay with you?
- B. How is the idea of weight used and developed in the story? How do you, as a reader, feel reading those lists of weight? What effect does it have on you?
- C. In what sense does Jimmy love Martha? Why does he construct this elaborate, mostly fictional, relationship with her: What does he get out of it?
- D. Why do the soldiers tell jokes about the war, about killing?

- E. How has Jimmy changed by the end of the story? How will he be a different person from this point on? What has he learned about himself? Or to put it another way, what has he lost and what has he gained?