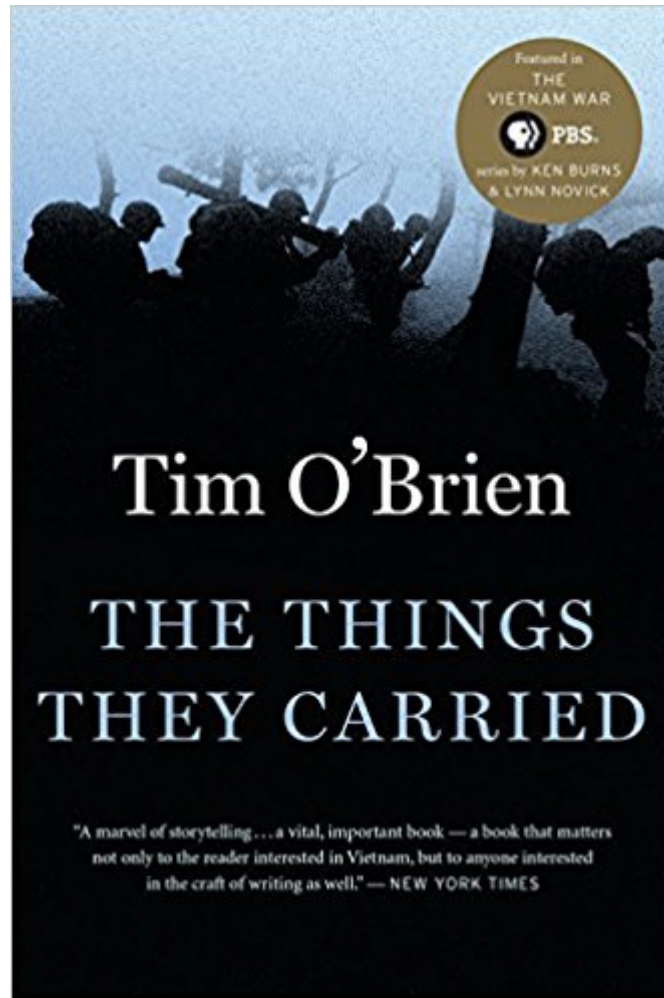




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# The Things They Carried



## Synopsis

A classic work of American literature that has not stopped changing minds and lives since it burst onto the literary scene, *The Things They Carried* is a ground-breaking meditation on war, memory, imagination, and the redemptive power of storytelling. *The Things They Carried* depicts the men of Alpha Company: Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa, and the character Tim O'Brien, who has survived his tour in Vietnam to become a father and writer at the age of forty-three. Taught everywhere—from high school classrooms to graduate seminars in creative writing—it has become required reading for any American and continues to challenge readers in their perceptions of fact and fiction, war and peace, courage and fear and longing.

## Book Information

Paperback: 233 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books (2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544309766

ISBN-13: 978-0544309760

ASIN: 0618706410

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 2,470 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #159 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > War #7 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Short Stories #18 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary

## Customer Reviews

"They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing--these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice.... Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to." A finalist for both the 1990 Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award, *The Things They Carried* marks a subtle but definitive line of demarcation between Tim O'Brien's earlier works about Vietnam, the memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone* and the fictional *Going After Cacciato*, and this sly, almost hallucinatory book that is neither memoir nor novel nor collection of short stories but rather an artful combination of all three.

Vietnam is still O'Brien's theme, but in this book he seems less interested in the war itself than in the myriad different perspectives from which he depicts it. Whereas *Going After Cacciato* played with reality, *The Things They Carried* plays with truth. The narrator of most of these stories is "Tim

Weapons and good-luck charms carried by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam here represent survival, lost innocence and the war's interminable legacy. "O'Brien's meditations--on war and memory, on darkness and light--suffuse the entire work with a kind of poetic form, making for a highly original, fully realized novel," said PW. 60,000 first printing. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Overall a well written book. Being a Vietnam vet myself I could relate to a lot of it. Especially the challenges experienced by young men of the sixties before, during and after the war. And the part about being more afraid to admit the fear than the actual fear itself. I thought the interaction among the fellow soldiers could have been more humane at times. And the parts about blowing up and shooting innocent animals didn't add anything unless O'Brien was insinuating this particular soldier was a psycho or trying to convince himself that he had no feelings left for anything. It made me wonder if he ever did? And the girlfriend ending up in the jungle with her soldier boyfriend was a little bizarre. Also Tim's inner conflict about responding to his draft notice or running for Canada was a highlight. Although I wouldn't have thought it was so over whelming considering his job in a pork processing plant which sounded pretty gruesome in itself. Kind of made me wonder why he hadn't volunteered for a less risky branch earlier such as the Navy or Air Force.

In a word, real. The gift of Tim O'Brien is his ability to use stories which may or may not be true with characters that may or may not be made up to shine light on very real aspects of humanity. Reading this book plays with ones emotions. While reading, your mood will turn sad... the horrors of Vietnam will easily do that. But this is the type of book that stays with you. Reflecting on the stories afterward makes you appreciate life in a new way. Small things, minor details, become of great importance. Staring out a window and watching an airliner fly by in the distance suddenly becomes a peaceful event that one should feel grateful to take part in. This book will make you feel alive. It will make you feel the anxiety of a college student suddenly drafted into a war a world away. It will make you feel the hopelessness of life in a place where death surrounds you. It will make you feel the confusion of soldier returned to normal life. This book will make you feel human.

For a long time I didn't want to read about what happened in Vietnam, but a good friend of mine who did serve there and dealt with the aftermath when he returned to the USA said that this is the best "first person" book written. It has been beautifully written by someone who survived and has been blessed with the ability to write about the war.

Books that I have ever read. I am an English teacher and I have read a lot of books. This one is so pertinent and impactful. Even for my non-readers, this book is easy to pick up. It is a series of vignettes, so the chapters can be read out of order. PLEASE read this book.

This is the third time I have read this book. The first reading was in my youth . . . the memory of the Vietnam war still fresh and painful in my mind.. The second was for an Honors English class. I reviewed it so I could "teach it effectively," I told myself. I looked at it clinically, assuming the role of medic trying to put the pieces together. But this time was nostalgia, or so I thought. The memory of Vietnam was hazy. My classroom days were over. I thought I could read it and simply enjoy it. But as I moved through it was still as dark, as bitter, as painful as going to the funerals of my friends that died there. I had hoped to gain so e great insight into the human spirit and all I saw was, in most cases, the ability to stay afloat. It did not speak to the indomitable strength of the human condition, but rather the ability we all have to survive almost anything. When I finished the book, I was drained. It had dragged me back to a difficult time of my life and made me relive it. I would not say I loved it, but, like the war to the author, it made me a better man.

They were all just kids trying to make it through another day. I still can't imagine what it was like but Tim O'Brien's book gets me as close to Vietnam as I'd ever want to be without being drafted myself. In a strange way, it makes me wish I was born back in those simpler times and gives me a new appreciation for the vets of that awful war or any war for that matter. The struggles they faced day in and day out in the line of duty stay with them long after the battle is over, for some it seems, it is actually when the real battle began. O'Brien's writing flows and I found it very easy to read chapters at a time (which for me is a rarity). A must read for anyone wanting a look into a tour in Vietnam and a glimpse of an American boy growing up to be a good man.

Am I the last person to read *The Things They Carried*?! Heard about it through a teenager in advanced English in High School. A story written 24 years ago and now a modern American classic. I liken it to Hemmingway's *The Old Man and The Sea* and Heller's *Catch 22*. Did the things REALLY

happen or were they in the mind of the author? I don't know, I do know the story is now in my mind and it won't let go. I read it on my Kindle in two days and ordered the print version when I finished. I just wanted to hold onto it, feel the pages with the real words on pages I could touch. I will be reading it again and loaning it to friends - most of which are of the Viet Nam era. Is it a war story? Yes. But, so much more, the story of each of us and the things we carry. Thank's Tim O'Brien for letting me know why I carry my P-38 from 1962 to this day, Thanks for reminding me of the things I carry

Wow - I can't believe I just read this book now. My high school son read it as a optional book selection, and since I bought it on Kindle for him, I decided to read it too. It is about a soldier's time in Vietnam and all that he and his team wrestled with. As I thought of my seventeen year old son who will head off to college in another year, the book made me so glad that we are not using the draft right now. What a fantastic novel - it is one I will carry with me for many years.

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