



*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien  
Reviewed by Jade



Psychological Fiction/War Story

### **Give a summary without spoilers!**

The book takes place in Vietnam during the war, and follows a group of soldiers throughout their time being stationed. The narrator is a soldier who served during this time, and is retelling the events that occurred from his perspective. A big part in understanding the story is understanding the things the soldiers carried, both physically and mentally, because it reflects their identity. With many deaths and tragedies happening, the narrator emphasizes the desensitization that he, and other soldiers had to put themselves through, in order to serve their country without being overcome by emotion. The main idea of the book is to read the stories, without knowing if they are true or not. The narrator clarifies that some stories may be true, and some may be pure fiction, but that is the key component to creating a true war story. This idea is taken from the fact that as the war carried out, the soldiers became delirious, and sometimes they couldn't separate illusion from reality because of the trauma they had been through. Mimicking that experience for the reader allows them to develop a greater comprehension, and greater sense of empathy for the soldiers. Overall the story provides an insight of war from a first hand perspective, and allows the reader to grasp the emotional/ psychological state of a soldier in the midst of combat.

### **What drew you to this book?**

What drew me to this book was the style of storytelling. From beginning to end, O'Brien grasps the reader's attention by making them feel like they are a part of the story just as much as he is. The graphics he uses make the story come to life, as well as creates a strong emotional hold on the reader because of the constant tragedy and guilt that is brought up. I also enjoyed how he went into depth with each character's personality, but did not allow it to consume too much of the plot. Creating a relationship with the characters allows the reader to understand their actions more, and get a better read out of the story.

**Did it remind you of something that you've previously read?**

It reminded me of the movie platoon which is a film about war and shares similar characteristics to the book. Both Platoon, and The Things They Carried dive into the reality of war and how it can take a toll on the mental state of the soldiers.

**To whom would you recommend this book?**

The Things They Carried would be a great book for someone who enjoys books about mental health, or even a more detailed action story. It is an insightful read about mental health, but also details the realities of war and has plenty of action and liveliness to keep the reader engaged. There are a lot of characters to keep up with, but their importance to the plot makes them valuable, and worth getting to know.

**Overall, did you like it and would you recommend it to others?**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would definitely recommend it to others. Even for someone who may not be a fan of war stories, or graphic books, the deeper message behind this story is truly insightful. At a time where psychology and mental health were still in the unknown and developing, this book provides a first hand account of experiences that were kept from the public for a long time, considering the sensitivity of the war.

**Anything else that you would like to add to this review? What made you choose it? Did you like the cover? Was it recommended to you? Did you find it at the library?**

It was recommended to me by a friend, who read it and enjoyed it just as much as I did. I chose it because I was trying to work on expanding my genre interests, and I was pleasantly surprised.