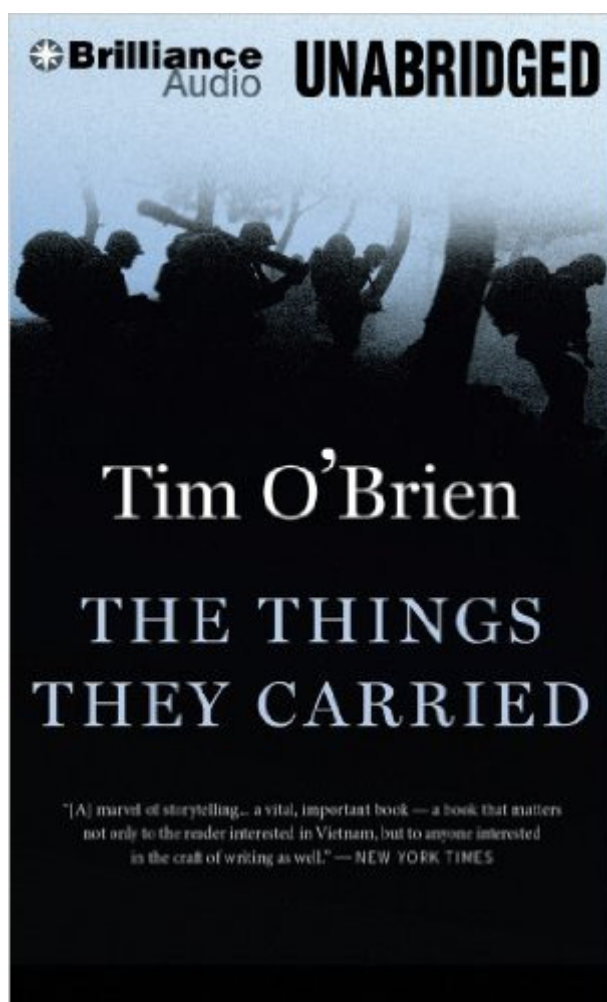


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# The Things They Carried



## Synopsis

This modern classic and New York Times bestseller was a finalist for both the 1990 Pulitzer Prize and National Book Critics Circle Award and has become a staple of American classrooms. Hailed by The New York Times as "a marvel of storytelling", *The Things They Carried*'s portrayal of the boots-on-the-ground experience of soldiers in the Vietnam War is a landmark in war writing. Now, three-time Emmy Award winner Bryan Cranston, star of the hit TV series *Breaking Bad*, delivers an electrifying performance that walks the book's hallucinatory line between reality and fiction and highlights the emotional power of the spoken word. The soldiers in this collection of stories carried M-16 rifles, M-60 machine guns, and M-79 grenade launchers. They carried plastic explosives, hand grenades, flak jackets, and landmines. But they also carried letters from home, illustrated Bibles, and pictures of their loved ones. Some of them carried extra food or comic books or drugs. Every man carried what he needed to survive, and those who did carried their shattering stories away from the jungle and back to a nation that would never understand. This audiobook also includes an exclusive recording of "The Vietnam in Me," a recount of the author's trip back to Vietnam in 1994, revisiting his experience there as a soldier 25 years before, read by Tim O'Brien himself. *The Things They Carried* was produced by Audible Studios in partnership with Playtone, the production company headed by Tom Hanks and Gary Goetzman, and the creator of the award-winning mini-series *Band of Brothers*, *John Adams*, and *The Pacific*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" is a book that transcends the genre of war fiction. Actually,

it transcends the genre of fiction in general. Although labeled "a work of fiction" on the title page, the book really combines aspects of memoir, novel, and short story collection. I think you could use Audre Lorde's term "biomythography" to describe this book. The first-person narrator of this book (named, like the author, Tim O'Brien) is a writer and combat veteran of the Vietnam War. The book actually deals with events before and after the war, in addition to depicting the war itself; the time span covers more than 30 years in the lives of O'Brien and his fellow soldiers. "The Things They Carried" is an intensely "writerly" text. By that I mean that O'Brien and his characters often reflect directly on the activities of storytelling and writing. As a reader, I got the sense that I was being invited into the very process by which the book was created. This is an extraordinary technique, and O'Brien pulls it off brilliantly. This being a war story, there are some truly disturbing, graphic, and violent scenes. But there are also scenes that are haunting, funny, surreal, or ironic. O'Brien depicts a memorable group of soldiers: the guilt-wracked Lieut. Cross; Kiowa, a Native American and devout, Bible-carrying Baptist; the sadistic but playful Azar; and more. While this book is a complete and cohesive work of art, many of its component stories could stand alone as independent pieces of literature (in fact, I first encountered the title story in an anthology). But however you classify it, I consider "The Things They Carried" to be a profoundly moving masterpiece.

I was first introduced to this book as part of a U.S. & Vietnam History course in college. The other novel the course required was *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene. Tim O'Brien's book is every bit as good as Greene's, and all the more timely. As a former soldier, and a veteran of Desert Storm, whose father avoided the draft during the Vietnam War, the book taught me that no matter what other people say about the war, no matter what I learn, I can never make any value judgements on an individual level. I was not there, and for better or worse, I am only a specator. I am currently re-reading the book, which I often use in teaching my creative writing class. I share the story-chapter, "Style" every year with my students. I also find the book essential to learn about the nature of fiction, which O'Brien challenges with every page of this book. For anyone looking for a book to read on the Vietnam experience, this book makes my short list every time. Not only of "Vietnam" books, but of any book worth reading. This book is simply essential.

I was born in 1969. I missed Vietnam. The war was over and I never knew about it. For an event that had such significance in American history, it was as though it had never happened. When I was in High School and we studied American History, our class always ended with WWII. We never discussed "modern" events -- the 60s, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement. When I got to

college, I made a point of taking a class on the 60s. Still though, I gained a textbook introduction to the Vietnam war -- I never had a true sense of what the horror was, why people protested, why it was such an important historical event. My generation has never faced a war in which we were drafted to fight. And then I read "The Things they Carried"...This book was/is an education for me. Visceral, haunting, provoking, gripping -- the stories Tim O'Brien tells rip into you. He puts you on the front line facing the man you just killed -- on the Canadian border deciding that you aren't brave enough to escape to Canada to avoid the draft -- back in Vietnam watching your best buddy slowly sink into a field of mud as sniper fire rains all around you -- back at home with no sense of purpose surrounded by people who don't know how to welcome you home. This book is the best education on Vietnam this literal child of the 60s ever received. If, like me, you don't understand what all the fuss is about, read this book and you will...

I am writing this review about a month or so after having read it. I am a veteran of the Vietnam war and after serving two tours with the U.S. Navy in the Mekong Delta..found this book to be very good at pulling you inside out...taking someone who hasn't been there and transporting you to walk the trails and carry the weight of being a soldier. Tim O'Brien is an outstanding author, he captures your imagination and doesn't let go until his fascinating stories have drained you of any resistance against reading on till the end. I'm not a big reader and certainly NOT into war books. But this book tells so much more about the characters lives and how they were forever impacted by there experiences. I have recommended to some fellow comrades who also served in the Nam to read it. My own personal experiences still haunt me, the memories and nightmares continue..and reliving some of the experiences though somewhat different...the "feel" of Mr. O'Brien's book, has given me a somehow more settled attitude. I highly recommend that anyone who has either been to war, know's or is related to anyone who served in the Nam or any other war...do yourself a big favor ~ READ THIS BOOK! Don't miss it...it's worth every minute spent. A real winner!

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