The Things They Carried
“The Things They Carried,” “On the Rainy River,” “How to Tell a True War Story”

Comprehension/Analysis

Directions: To help you understand all aspects of the novel, respond to the following prompts for “The Things They Carried,” “On the Rainy River,” and “How to Tell a True War Story.” Write your responses on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

“The Things They Carried”
1. How many narrators are there in the chapter? Name or describe each of them.
2. What is the meaning of the chapter’s/novel’s title?
3. How and why does O’Brien use repetition of ideas and events in this chapter?
4. What event in this chapter proves ironic? Why?

“On the Rainy River”
1. Identify three historical events and/or people Tim references in this chapter. Use your article, “The Vietnam War and America in the 1960s” to look them up and explain why he is referencing them.
2. A dilemma is a situation in which a choice must be made between two unfavorable outcomes. What is Tim’s dilemma in this chapter, and how does he decide upon his choice, which is still unwanted?
3. Why is Elroy Berdahl an important person to Tim and a key character for O’Brien to develop?
4. Why is Tim’s job in the meat packing plant included in this chapter?
5. What is the purpose of the scene Tim imagines on the banks of the Rainy River?

“How to Tell a True War Story”
1. What story does Rat Kiley tell? What does the story show about Rat’s character?
2. What is Mitchell Sanders’ story about? Why does he tell it?
3. Tim gives several definitions for what a true war story is and is not. Identify two definitions Tim offers. Which do you prefer?
4. What war story haunts Tim’s dreams?
**The Things They Carried**

“Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong,” “Speaking of Courage,” “In the Field”

**Comprehension/Analysis**

**Directions:** To help you understand all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions for “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong,” “Speaking of Courage,” and “In the Field.” Write your answers on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

“Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong”

1. Who are the Green Berets, or “Greenies”? How are they different from other soldiers?
2. What first impressions does Mary Anne Bell make on the men in the detachment?
3. What criticism does Mitchell Sanders have about Rat Kiley’s storytelling?
4. How and why does the relationship between Mark and Mary Anne change by the end of the story?
5. What does Rat Kiley say that people should learn from a person like Mary Anne?

“Speaking of Courage”

1. Identify three repeated observations Norman makes as he drives around the lake multiple times.
2. Explain the meaning of the chapter’s title, “Speaking of Courage.”
3. Which award is Norman sorry not to receive? How many other medals did he receive?
4. What flashback occurs within the chapter? Why is it significant?

“In the Field”

1. Summarize the thoughts running through Jimmy Cross’s mind throughout this chapter.
2. How does Azar’s perspective change in this chapter? What causes the change?
3. What does the unnamed soldier discuss with Jimmy Cross?
4. How do the characters in the chapter cope with Kiowa’s death?
The Things They Carried
“The Ghost Soldiers,” and “Lives of the Dead”

Comprehension/Analysis

Directions: To help you understand all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions for “The Ghost Soldiers,” and “Lives of the Dead.” Write your answers on a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

“The Ghost Soldiers”
1. Why does Tim compare Bobby Jorgensen to Rat Kiley?
2. How does Tim’s new assignment change his relationship with Alpha Company?
3. What is Tim’s plan to get revenge on Bobby? What is the outcome?

“The Lives of the Dead”
1. This chapter has two storylines: one of Tim as a soldier in Vietnam and the other of Tim as a child in Minnesota. How does he connect these two storylines in the chapter?
2. How is Linda represented as both real and imagined in this chapter?
3. What new story does Tim tell about Ted Lavender’s death?