The Things They Carried
Pre-Reading Activity: Discussion Questions

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1: The primary “just cause” for going to war is to correct a wrongful act or to prevent it from happening. What is a wrong that you believe needs to be corrected? Can it be righted by any means other than war? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION QUESTION 2: In many other countries, two or more years of military service are required upon completion of high school. The reasoning behind this is that military service provides young men and women with opportunities to learn and mature that they cannot gain elsewhere. How would you respond if such a policy existed when you graduated from high school? Explain.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD for short, is the condition of extreme anxiety that occurs after one or more emotionally disturbing experiences. It can last for a very brief period or for a lifetime, depending on the extent of trauma experienced. What are some examples, real or fictional, of post-traumatic stress disorder? How was the person or character affected?

DISCUSSION QUESTION 4: Consider the meaning of the following statement by historian Jacob Bronowski: “War is a highly planned and cooperative form of theft.” How do you interpret what Bronowski means? Do you agree or disagree with him?

DISCUSSION QUESTION 5: What do you believe is the most honorable thing a person can do in his or her life? How did you arrive at this belief?

DISCUSSION QUESTION 6: Those who protest war argue that violence will never provide a workable solution to the problem. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Provide an example from your experience, studies or previous knowledge to support your argument.