

## Study Questions for Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*

In O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, please read:

The Things They Carried  
On the Rainy River  
How to Tell a True War Story  
Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong  
Style  
Speaking of Courage  
Notes  
In the Field  
The Lives of the Dead

1. How did you learn about the “flip side” of Hayslip’s experiences from O’Brien’s novel? Give very specific examples. Keep in mind that soldiers like the ones that O’Brien describes did inhabit the same environment as did Hayslip.
2. For the soldiers in these stories, what does it mean to be a man? What function do women serve for them? Are their relationships with each other important in their sense of masculinity? If so, how?
3. How do the Vietnamese appear in these stories? The Vietnamese landscape? How does this compare to the portrayal of Americans in Le Ly Haislip’s book?
4. After reading “How to Tell a True War Story”, how do you think Tim O’Brien defines “truth”? Do you find any sort of truth in this collection of stories? If so, explain. If not, why not?
5. What is the importance of listening in these stories? What do the American soldiers hear? How does it affect them?
6. How do the characters in O’Brien’s novel cope with their memories? How does this compare with Le Ly Haislip’s methods of doing so? With the different collective memories (and forgetting) of the 1898 wars? Of the different ways of remembering and silencing the Camp Grant massacre of Apache in 1871?