

1. Select a theme that you believe this novel addresses. Craft a two to three page analysis of this theme, discussing how the theme is developed, and what the novel ultimately says about it. Then make a short video (to be presented to the class) which also addresses the same theme.
2. We've discussed that it hardly seems to matter if anything in this novel actually happened. What is O'Brien's purpose in rendering the actual truth of what happened irrelevant? Furthermore, how does he manage to do this?
3. O'Brien discusses, at length, the qualifications of a "true war story," giving the reader a significant list of rules which a true war story must adhere to (see reverse). Which of his stories actually qualify as "true war stories?" Which don't? What do you believe his purpose in crafting his stories in his way is? **See reverse for a list of qualifications.**
4. Compare *The Things They Carried* to a Vietnam era film of your choosing. In what ways are they similar, and in what ways are they different. **Note: Films must be approved prior to beginning work.**
5. Another essay of your choice. Please confer with myself prior to beginning to agree on a grading schedule.

Grading Rubric

	1	2	3	4
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title/Thesis Missing Focus not on thesis No quotations/citations Does not demonstrate understanding of the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title shows little thought Thesis too broad or vague. Focus strays from thesis. Quotations provide limited connection to thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title appropriate and reflects content. Thesis clear and limited. Quotations provide clear connection to thesis. Understand of texts clearly evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title appropriate and interesting. Focus remains on thesis. Writing shows in-depth interpretation of resources. Quotations clearly connect with thesis and help develop meaning.
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors are significant and detract from understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors are frequent, but do not significantly detract from understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper is virtually error free (3-5 minor errors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One to two minor errors present.
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 1 or 2 paragraphs in length. No transitions Paragraphs have no internal organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-paragraph paper, but leaves out information. Thesis improperly placed. Internal organization confusing. Transitions repetitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-paragraph paper. Thesis placed properly. Internal organization faulty. Transitions connect main ideas and paragraphs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-paragraph paper. Logically organized. Body paragraphs use topic sentences. Transitions vary and guide the reader.

A war story is...

"A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. As a first rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil..."

You can tell a true war story if it embarrasses you. If you don't care for obscenity, you don't care for the truth; if you don't care for the truth, watch how you vote...

In any war story, but especially a true one, it's difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way...When a guy dies...you look away and then look back for a moment and then look away again. The pictures get jumbled; you tend to miss a lot. And then afterward, when you go to tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard an exact truth as it seemed.

In many cases a true war story cannot be believed. If you believe it, be skeptical. It's a question of credibility. Often the crazy stuff is true and the normal stuff isn't, because the normal stuff is necessary to make you believe the truly incredible craziness.

You can tell a true war story by the way it never seems to end. Not then, not ever.

In a true war story, if there's a moral at all, it's like the thread that makes the cloth. You can't tease it out. You can't extract the meaning without unraveling the deeper meaning. And in the end, really there's nothing much to say about a true war story, except maybe 'Oh.'...

True war stories do not generalize. They do not indulge in abstraction or analysis.

For example: War is hell. As a moral declaration the old truism seems perfectly true, and yet because it abstracts, because it generalizes, I can't believe it with my stomach. Nothing turns inside.

It comes down to gut instinct. A true war story, if truly told, makes the stomach believe...

Often in a true war story there is not even a point, or else the point doesn't hit you until twenty years later, in your sleep, and you wake up...And then for a long time you lie there watching the story happen in your head...The war's over. You close your eyes. You smile and think, Christ, what's the point?...

You can tell a true war story by the questions you ask. Somebody tells a story, let's say, and afterwards you ask, 'Is it true?' and if the answer matters, you've got your answer...

You can tell a true war story if you just keep on telling it...

And in the end, of course, a true war story is never about war. It's about sunlight. It's about the special way that dawn spreads out on a river when you know you must cross the river and march into the mountains and do things you are afraid to do. It's about love and memory. It's about sorrow. It's about sisters who never write back and people who never listen."