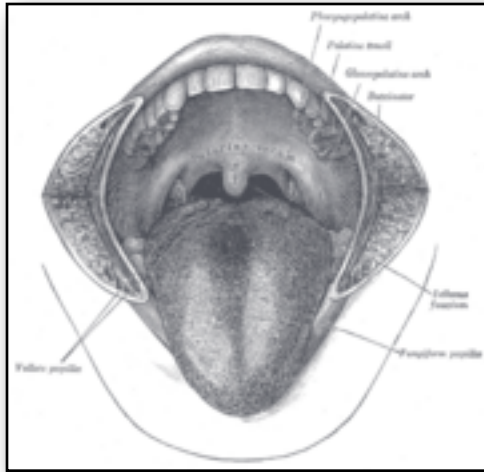


The Things They Carried - The Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong



“She was part of the land. She was wearing her culottes, her pink sweater, and a necklace of human tongues. She was dangerous. She was ready for the kill.”

Metaphor and Symbolism

1. There seems to be a dominant symbol in this chapter of tasting and eating. What do you believe this may be symbolic of?
2. What do you believe the symbolic connotation of the woods, mountains, and jungle is? What idea might they stand for?
3. Mary Anne disappeared often, and ultimately disappeared completely. In what symbolic ways could her disappearance be read?

Analysis

1. Rat Kiley, while telling his tale, stops “almost in midsentence,” (112) to the profound irritation of Mitchell Sanders. Sanders says to him, “You can’t do that...you can’ say, Hey by the way I don’t know the *ending*,” (113). Kiley tries to tell the ending, basing it largely on information that he received second-hand from Eddie Diamond, but all he manages to say is that Mary Anne Bell “walked off into the mountains and did not come back,” (115). Her end is surrounded, it would appear, in statements of doubt.
 - Do you believe that the ending of this story actually matters at all? Why or why not?
 - What are some of the potential themes in this story? Brainstorm two (2) potential themes for this piece and explain what you think the story is saying about those themes.

Describing the indescribable - or at least trying to.

1. Think of an experience you’ve had that you absolutely had to have been there to understand. What tastes, smells, colors, and sensations define the experience? Is there any way to adequately describe that experience to another person, or do you think that Rat Kiley is right and that there are experiences that other’s will “never understand, not in a billion years?” (113)
2. Describe, using vivid imagery, the taste of chocolate.