



The Things They Carried

Studying Story Construction

The way a story is constructed helps convey its meaning. In *The Things They Carried*, the story/chapter titled "The Man I Killed" has a particularly interesting structure. Answer the questions below to help you closely examine this story's structure, which in turn will help you better understand why O'Brien makes the choices that he does as an author.

Once you have answered the questions, discuss your responses in a small group or as a class.

1. What two story strands does O'Brien alternate between in this chapter?
2. What are the purpose and effect of O'Brien repeating the details of how the Vietnamese man looks after he was killed?
3. What is the purpose of Kiowa's voice in this story?

4. What is the effect of not hearing directly from the narrator about how he feels about killing the Vietnamese man?
5. What aspects of the story indicate how much the narrator cares about what he has done?
6. What does the way this story is told communicate about grief?

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL. 11-12.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.