



The Things They Carried Military Lingo

Obtaining a better understanding of the military lingo O'Brien uses throughout *The Things They Carried* will help you better comprehend the text as a whole.

Columns 1 and 2: List some of the military lingo from the text and the page number on which each term can be found.

In column 3: Before you begin reading, record the definitions for terms you already know. As you read, use context clues to help you define more words and revise your initial definitions.

In column 4: When you are done reading, record the meaning of the term as it appears in a dictionary.

After filling out the chart, respond to the questions below. Discuss your responses in a small group or with the whole class.

Military Term	Page Number	Your Definition	Dictionary Definition
C-rations	2		
SOP	2		
legs	3		
hump	3		
grunts	3		
PFCs or Spec 4s	5		

KIA	6		
Bouncing Betties	9		
chopper	19		
LZ	63		
LP	63		
RF's or PF's	87		
ARVN	87		
NCO	87		
EM Club	88		
VC	92		
R & R	108		
MP	110		
LT	159		
hootch	227		

1. What, in a general sense, is the purpose of lingo?

Lingo provides a shorthand for common terms used in a particular group or profession. Knowing and using the lingo reinforces a sense of belonging to that group or profession.

2. What is the effect of the use of military lingo in *The Things They Carried*?

3. Why use lingo in a story when not every reader will be familiar with the lingo?

4. What lingo do you use? To what is it connected, and what is its purpose?

L.11-12.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

L.11-12.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11-12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

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.

Answer Key

Military Term	Page Number	Your Definition	Dictionary Definition
C-rations	2		combat rations; canned meals for use in the field. Each usually consisted of a can of some basic main course, a can of fruit, a packet of some type of dessert, a packet of powdered cocoa, a small pack of cigarettes, and two pieces of chewing gum.
SOP	2		standard operating procedure
legs	3		slightly contemptuous term used by airborne-qualified troops when they are talking about regular infantry
hump	3		march or hike carrying a rucksack; to perform any arduous task
grunts	3		infantryman; originally slang for a Marine fighting in Vietnam, but later applied to any soldier fighting there
PFCs or Spec 4s	5		Private First Class Specialist 4th Class; an Army rank immediately above Private First Class. Most enlisted men who had completed their individual training and had been on duty for a few months were Spec 4s. This was probably the most common rank in the Vietnam-era Army.

KIA	6		killed in action
Bouncing Betties	9		antipersonnel mine with two charges: the first propels the explosive charge upward, and the other is set to explode at about waist level
chopper	19		helicopter
LZ	63		landing zone; usually a small clearing secured temporarily for the landing of resupply helicopters. Some become more permanent and eventually become base camps.
LP	63		listening post; a two- or three-man position set up at night outside the perimeter away from the main body of troops that acted as an early warning system against attack; also an amphibious landing platform used by infantry for storming beaches from the sea
RF's or PF's	87		Regional and Popular Forces; the South Vietnamese National Guard-type units. Regional Forces were company-size and protected district areas. Popular Forces were platoon-size and guarded their home villages.

ARVN	87		Army of the Republic of Vietnam; the South Vietnamese Regular Army
NCO	87		noncommissioned officer; usually a squad leader or platoon sergeant
EM Club	88		enlisted man club
VC	92		Viet Cong, the National Liberation Front
R & R	108		rest and recreation; a three- to seven-day vacation from the war for a soldier
MP	110		military police
LT	159		lieutenant
hootch	227		a hut or simple dwelling, either military or civilian; also spelled hooch