

Tim O'Brien admits in the last chapter of his book "The Things they Carried" that "stories can save us." This story did save me. It was a typical Ohio winter and I hustled down into my first college English class, excited to be taking a real college course. As I looked around the room at my small class I thought to myself, "I've finally made it." I guess to most of the students this was just another day, like last semester, and the one before. For me this was it, I felt like I'd been through so much. In the classroom I was handed an essay from Tim O'Brien that has reassured me that I'm not the only one fighting the war, I'm not alone. I will always carry this book.

My English teacher sat an essay from "The Things they Carried" on my desk, finding her own solitude in bringing the characters back to life. We only read one essay from "The things they carried", but I was hooked. I waited patiently for the class to end and grabbed the book off the nearest shelf. It was my bible in times that seem to surely be ending. As I sat on my bed with my book, I felt myself traveling back and fourth through time. The main character, Jimmy cross has become a part of me, someone I felt like I could turn to. This is a book about war and what men carried to survive. When I read about Jimmy's war I feel like I could stop pretending my life was never anything significant. I had fought a war, and I could finally admit it.

When I was young my mother was incarcerated for crimes I'll never really understand. I tried not to think about how horrible her war was, I just needed to get through mine. Jimmy Cross and his men needed to get through their war. This book showed me that everyone is fighting a personal war. One minute you might be reading a letter from a love far away, drifting into another world, and the next minute your knee deep in a shit field holding onto to things you can't even see for dear life. I held onto my brother when I was sinking and he pulled me back up, I realized he was a soldier in my war and how honest and safe I felt when he saved me. Courage is something that comes and goes in war. Jimmy wasn't a hero in a good old' fashioned American war. He was just a boy trying to survive, shifting through courage, strength and fear. I am just a girl who got thrown into a war I never even wanted to fight. I shifted through the emotions I carried too. I wanted my mother. I wanted to tell her that I loved her without using words. Together I feel like Jimmy and I fought wars we knew nothing about, but they are our wars. We couldn't even justify the fighting that came as a necessity to our survival.

Luitenant Jimmy Cross carried letters to get him through the war. His men carried their worlds in so many forms. Its funny how one mans bible is another mans pipe. I felt the weight of what we all carried. Jimmy and his men had letters from home, bibles, food, water, hope, despair, ammunition, whatever it took to stay alive. It was where we got strength. It's where we got weak. You are expected to be something you're not, even with resistance, when your fighting a war you become the soldier you were never meant to be.

Jimmy Cross wrote letters to his love Martha and I wrote letters to my mother. Sometimes saying things that held me down in my war "I don't even know you." In war what carried you through the toughest of times also held you down the most. Jimmy loved and hated Martha the way I loved and hated my mother. I felt like he guided me through those times opening windows to myself that I didn't even see. Jimmy burned his

letters from Martha, a girl he was in love with. When Jimmy burned his letters it gave me the strength to open my own. I needed the letters the same way he needed to let his go. The runs of ink from my tears were on those letters. I could have sworn they were a part of my body, or even my soul.

Jimmy got rid of his letters and moved on alone. Even with all of his men he was so alone. I was alone, crowds of high school students around me, everyday life laying on top of my surface. I wanted to cry everyday, but I couldn't let these enemies see that I was even fighting a war. Marching through the halls to my class were like the battle fields Jimmy's men lost their lives on. "Where's your mom", the enemies would drop their words like bombs into my war. And I would look away and silently mourn the loss of one of my best men. I wished my mother could be there to retaliate with me.

Like Jimmy, I was alone in that war and needed to be strong, we had to trick ourselves. We had to pretend like there was a justifiable reason to be there. The cold truth is that we would have done anything not to be in our war. This is called growing up. Jimmy cross sat at the edge of freedom and chose to fight. I was just another girl fighting my silent war. I read my letters still to remember faces and feelings that can fade away. After my war I don't feel like I've won, I have nothing tangible I've gained. We all fight because we have to. But I got through because of "The Things they Carried". It conveyed to me a message I'll never forget. Even long after your war, You never really stop fighting.