*The Things They Carried*

Tim O’Brien

**Chapter 1**

**Questions for Discussion**

1. According to the narrator, "The things they carried were largely determined by necessity" (¶ 2), were "partly

a function of rank, partly of field specialty" (¶ 6), "varied by mission" (¶14), and "were determined to some

extent by superstition" (¶ 19). Which is the strongest factor in determining what they carried? Do you find

any **irony** in the things they carried?

1. Why do you think the medic would need "M&M's for especially bad wounds" (¶ 9)?
2. After studying terminally ill patients, psychologist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross described five stages in the process of

dealing with death:

1. denial, or "this isn't happening";
2. anger, or "why me?";
3. bargaining, or "I'd do anything";
4. depression, or "I give up"; and
5. acceptance, or "It's okay."

Do the soldiers facing death in this story display these behaviors? Which stages do you notice, and in what circumstances? Which stage seems most prevalent? Why do you think that is?

1. In paragraph 26, the narrator says, "They carried the soldier's greatest fear, which was the fear of blushing." Why do

you think the soldiers were more afraid to blush than to die?

1. What opinion do you think O'Brien has about the soldiers, the war, and, specifically, Lieutenant Cross? Support

your **inferences** with specific references to the text.