**Book Section 1 Study Questions**

"The Things They Carried"  
Before you start, number the sections.  
  
1.     What is section 1 about? Section 2? Section 3? Do you detect a pattern? What is it?  
2.     When is Lavendar’s death first mentioned?  
3.     When is his death first described?  
4.     What were the soldiers doing when Lavendar was killed?  
5.     What is the "good luck charm" that Norman Bowker carries?  
6.     What was the young dead VC boy carrying? How does what he carries differ from what the American soldiers carry?  
7.     What did the platoon do in the village of Than Khe?  
8.     How does Kiowa feel about Lavendar’s death?  
9.     What was, "in many respects…the heaviest burden of all"?  
10. What were they more afraid of than dying?  
11. What did Cross do with Martha’s pictures after Lavendar’s death?  
12. How did his feelings for her change?  
13. What might Martha stand for or signify?  
14. How does Lt. Cross change his way of commanding after Lavendar’s death?  
  
“Love"  
1.     What could Jimmy Cross never forgive himself for?  
2.     How did Jimmy get a new picture of Martha playing volleyball?  
3.     What does Jimmy ask Tim to do when he writes his story?  
4.     What does he tell Tim NOT to mention?  
  
"Spin"  
1.     What do we learn about Azar’s character in this story?  
2.     How was the war NOT like a game of checkers?  
3.     How did the "old poppa-san" help the platoon? What was his special skill?  
4.     What does Norman Bowker wish for, more than anything?  
5.     What does Kiowa say when his rain dance doesn’t work?  
6.     What did Azar do to Ted Lavendar’s puppy?  
7.     What does Azar say about his action?  
8.     Identify in this story moments of beauty and/or serenity.  
9.     How is this story structured? What can you say about all these short sections?  
10. According to Tim, what are stories for?  
  
"On the Rainy River"  
  
1.     How did Tim feel about the Vietnam War while he was at college?  
2.     What was Tim’s job in the summer of 1968?  
3.     What were Tim’s options once he received his draft notice?  
4.     Who did he hold responsible for his situation?  
5.     Who did he think should go to war instead of him?  
6.     What did he do at work when he decided to leave?  
7.     What does Tim say is Elroy Berdhal’s role in his life?  
8.     What was the financial deal Elroy made with Tim?  
9.     Where did Elroy take Tim & Elroy on the day six?  
10. What typical images of boyhood did Tim remember about himself while on the river?  
11. Who are the following people: LBJ, Abbie Hoffman, Jane Fonda as Barbarella?  
12. What was Elroy Berdhal’s role that day?  
13. What did Tim end up doing about his situation?  
  
"Enemies"  
  
1.     Who broke whose nose?  
2.     What was the effect of the fight on Jensen?  
3.     What did Jensen finally do to resolve the conflict between them?  
  
"Friends"  
  
1.     What was the pact that Dave Jensen & Lee Strunk made together?  
2.     What happened to Lee Strunk?  
3.     What was he afraid of when he saw Jensen, and what did he make him promise?  
  
"How to Tell a True War Story"  
  
1.     What happens when you "send guys to war"?  
2.     What were Curt Lemon and Rat Kiley doing when Curt stepped on the land mine?  
3.     Why is it difficult "to separate what happened from what seemed to happen"?  
4.     What was the mission of the patrol that went up to the mountains?  
5.     What did they hear while they were there?  
6.     What did they end up doing about it?  
7.     What happened to the VC water buffalo?  
8.     What did Rat do afterwards?  
9.     What does "proximity to death" bring with it?  
10. What did Tim think Curt Lemon must’ve thought killed him?  
11. What does the nice middle-aged woman think Tim should do?  
12. What does he want to say to her about the baby buffalo, and everything else in the story?  
13. According to O’Brien, what is a true war story NEVER about?