Note: make a discussion and a respond assay for these answers, use your own words, (250- 350) words

1. Soldiers handle death differently throughout the text. Some carry ghosts, while others seem not to be impacted at all by the deaths of their fellow soldiers. Analyze how one characters deals with death, and discuss the specific ways in which death does or does not explicitly impact him or her.

Answer:

Death is handled very differently by every person; I imagine soldiers are very desensitized to death, but all still react very differently towards it. Within the story written by Tim O’Brien, ‘The Things They Carried’, I chose to analyze the character known as Kiowa and how he reacts to the death of Ted Lavender. In the beginning of the story, the second paragraph, the reader is given an insight about who Ted was and how he died, however the reader does not know at this point when Ted had passed. By the 27th paragraph the reader learns exactly when and what was going on when Ted died, and this seemed to take shock over Kiowa. Although there was reaction from everyone, Kiowa seemed most affected because he could not stop taking about it. We later learn this in paragraphs 40, 44-50 when Kiowa is continuing to speak about it, annoying soldier Norman Bowker. The fact that it was so quick, instantaneous, perfect, was something that Kiowa had a challenging time getting over. Now, after reading the essay excerpts about the story, I learned Kiowa dies in another story; this to me shows weakness and the weak die-off. That sounds terrible, I’m sure, but it’s like Darwinism, survival of the fittest, the one’s with the most commonsense and ability to endure!

I will mention, a very important paragraph displays how the majority reacted while in war, paragraph 66-67. “They found jokes to tell.” “…it wasn't quite dying, … it seemed scripted, irony mixed with tragedy…” (Pg. 720). The norm’ was to keep going and act like nothing tragic had just occurred. This is where desensitization is strongly apparent.

I think the death of Lavender caused Kiowa to find the fear that was strongly brainwashed and tucked away for so long. I think this made Kiowa weak, letting his guard down just slightly, then dying in the other story, I believe ‘The Lives of the Dead.’ I feel like he was affected strongly and because of holding those emotions in, and especially fear, drove him to his death as well.

Bottom of Form

2.  Close read “The Things They Carried” to extend, refute, or complicate the interpretations of O’Brien’s fiction in the one critical article: Susan Farrell’s “Tim O’Brien and Gender,” Steven Kaplan’s “The Undying Certainty of the Narrator in Tim O’Brien’s ‘The Things They Carried,’ ” and Lorrie N. Smith’s “ ‘The Things Men Do.’ ” Do you agree with the thesis of the piece you selected? Why or why not?

Answer:

Group B, Susan Farrell:

As I began to read the essay/ critical article from Farrell, I quickly understood it would be about the gender inequality during the Vietnam war. Farrell introduces two major works published in 1989 amplifying her proof of “feminist criticism” (740). Farrell then goes on to talk about how men loved war and enjoyed it as a career, lifestyle, a choice not a duty. I disagree that women were not sought after for the war; women had already served in WWII and shown their “man power” the previous years. I also disagree yet agree at the same time about men loving war. My grandpa, for example, served in WWII and the Korean War, and it was not that he loved war, 1- It was mandatory for him at his age, the Draft, and 2- It made him feel proud to serve and protect his country, and most importantly his family. A lot of men were proud to serve but I don’t think many, if any, loved war.

Farrell then goes on to describe the story ‘The Things They Carried’ and correlates it to women unable to do what men can. At the time this was a stereotype on women, but the actuality was women were just as good if not a little better in certain aspects and careers, even positions within the Military/ Army then men. ‘The Things They Carried’ goes on to be depicted and broken down by Farrell: there are two competing narratives with one compelling plot line, “…it is about the inevitable guilt… and what soldiers did with that guilt.” (741). Both women and men carry guilt and both women and men can be desensitized, everyone is capable. Farrell does explain that the soldiers often had to make jokes and find reasons for the death of others, it would make them more bearable and less tragic. I do support this point because war was stressful and challenging, so to survive and push on, joking and coping was the name of the game. We read throughout the story about jokes and morbid comical relief thorough the journey of war, paragraphs 71 and 28. Paragraph 28 more so explains about a time the men came across a dead body in the irrigation ditch and they cut off his thumb and kept it. Morbid and gross, but they claimed at the time this was how they could detach and desensitize themselves to survive and move forward; keep fighting.

Next, Farrell explains the story ‘The Lives of the Dead’ and starts to say it “…is as much a love story as it is a war story.” (742). Not having read this story I may not have critical examples, but it is linked and ties into ‘The Things They Carried’ especially Jimmy Cross’s love for Martha. The ending story is talked about, the death of a 9-year-old girl who died from a brain tumor, and all is wrapped together by love. It is talked about and displayed that everyone carries things, particularly the men are carrying everything during war like their uniforms and necessities including guilt, fear, and love, women are carrying the fear of their partner not returning safe and in one piece, but they are also carrying the burden of not being men and facing that every day with society, children carried disease and burden when they should have been living happy and carefree, others carried life and death while trying to maintain families and jobs.

I agree with statements made by Farrell for the ‘The Lives of the Dead.’ She points out O’Brien worked very hard to connect war experience to human experience, also does not seem like O’Brien is oppressing women. (743). And she ends with a very good quote from ‘The Lives of the Dead,’ “You don’t have to be in Nam to be in Nam.” (55). This is very clear to me that everyone faces and lives their own war, every day and I do agree with that. Life is challenging and I can only imagine what it would be like in war.