

UNIT 8 Social Transitions
Early Contemporary Era 1960 to 1980

A STEEM school
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



ambush

WITH
JIM SOTO



SPEAK YOUR MIND

Dilemmas.

Often we find ourselves in situations in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives that are more or less equally undesirable. Most of them entail transgressing a moral principle.

How do you handle a moral dilemma?

What factors do you consider when making your decision?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.

WAR IS HELL

According to Tim O'Brien, "*The best literature is always explorative. It's searching for answers and never finding them.*" This approach sums up his short story collection **The Things They Carried** (1990), stories about a platoon of Vietnam soldiers. In "Ambush," a child asks her father if he ever killed anyone in the war. This tough question forces him to relive a moment when he killed a man with a grenade. The narrator grapples with his past moral decision and his justification for it.





Many characters in O'Brien's **The Things They Carried** are struggling with **posttraumatic stress disorder** (PTSD), a condition that often occurs after a traumatic incident. The disorder came to the forefront after the Vietnam War, when at least 30 percent of returning soldiers, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, were diagnosed.

These signs and symptoms include flashbacks, sleep disturbances, feelings of isolation and guilt, depression, anxiety, and angry outbursts. Physical problems may result, as well. Possible treatments include therapy and medication.



ANTI-VIETNAM WAR



The Vietnam War was a divisive conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States. The conflict was intensified by the ongoing Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Many Americans opposed the war on moral grounds, appalled by its devastation and violence. Others claimed it was a war against Vietnamese independence, or an intervention in a foreign civil war; others opposed it claiming it lacked clear objectives and appeared to be unwinnable.



The largest and most organized anti-war movement in American history arose during the this war. After the escalation of bombing of North Vietnam, protests questioning the war's morality sprouted on college campuses in 1965 as faculty and students staged “teach-ins” with anti-war seminars replacing regular classes.

The Vietnam War had a profound effect on Americans. It changed the way we viewed our government, the media, and our Constitutional rights. Because of this shift in perspective, the country was torn apart and yet still came together in new and different ways.

LITERARY ELEMENTS

Realism

Refers to the attempt to achieve, in a work of art, an accurate portrayal of the world.

Climax

Is the high point of interest or suspense in the development of the plot.





The term ambush refers to the platoon's stake-out for enemy soldiers. In the story, the word refers, as well, to the daughter's unexpected, perhaps unwelcome question about whether the narrator killed somebody in Vietnam. Prepare a chart to note the underlying meanings of events and details.

ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 725-730 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
 - **Realism and Climax** - What elements of realism did you identify in reading "Ambush"? How would the story be different if the narrator had used a more formal, less conversational style and fewer naturalistic details? How is O'Brien's use of realism appropriate to his purpose in telling the story?
 - What is the climax of this story? What events lead up to this decisive moment, and what events follow it? In what ways is this a turning point?



Jim Soto © 2023