

Discuss how the author's craft in one of the stories you read affected your understanding of the story. What literary devices did the author use to craft the story? How did these devices influence your ability to construct meaning? Use evidence from the text to support your thoughts.

Student 1

The author's technique in "The Things They Carried," is very direct in the sense of speaking, a soldier carries items of necessity such as, can openers, pocket knives heat tabs, wrist watches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, water, weapons, ammunition, etc. Lt. Cross carried shame, hate for himself, hurt, blame, guilt, and grief he was feeling for the death Ted Lavender, and the love he would never receive from Martha.

One of the literary devices used by the author to construct the story was allegory. This device was used to describe everything the soldiers carried, representing something else being carried inside of each one of them during this battle. The use of this device impacted the reader in a way to see the weights carried by the soldiers. Another device the author used was character. The character device describes each of the soldiers functions as a group, in the story as a whole. O'Brien also used conflict as a device. The conflict was within the opposing forces of what was going on inside of Lt. Cross, the love (Martha) he left behind, and the responsibility he held as a lieutenant to lead his troops through war. The imagery device O'Brien brought forth to the reader was incredibly strong throughout the story. He described the conditions the soldiers were faced with in grave detail, from the actual weight of each item they carried, to the killing of Ted Lavender—"Zapped while zipping." Meaning, he was killed by enemy fire while urinating. And finally, Lt. Cross made it clear that laxity would no longer be accepted. He told the troops from that point forward they would not abandon any equipment, and they would clean their acts up. Lt. Cross could not face the daunting task of losing any other troops.

Student 2

Allegory is a very interesting technique. It makes the story very complex and that much more interesting to read.

Student 3

Seem kinds of weird but the reason descriptions of war are what they are because they are not ordinary, and in the death of a soldier I have always tried to lighten it like "zipping".

Student 4

Sometimes we have to use other things to get our point across and the author done an excellent job in relaying this to the reader.

Student 2

The use of the author's specific craft was most evident for me in "The Things They Carried". The author used symbolism very heavily throughout the story. He kept referring to the things they physically carried along with the things they mentally carried. He made sure to point out that both were heavy on the soldiers and along the way they dropped things to lighten their load.

Lieutenant Cross carried letters and pictures from Martha, the woman he loved; while these things were not physically heavy they weighed very heavily on the Lieutenant's mind and interfered with his ability to do his job correctly. He later burns these letters because he cannot bear the loss of another soldier because his mind is burdened. The loss of Ted Lavender also weighs heavy on his mind. Even Ted Lavender carried several ounces of "dope" because the worry of being killed or injured weighed so heavily on his mind.

The symbolism the author uses is very important to the story. If he did not use the symbolism the story would only be about objects rather than the feelings of these men. There would be no meaning behind the title of the story. It would simply be about the items they carried. There would be nothing to relate to. We can all understand that carrying several pounds and marching is not easy, but neither is carrying emotional baggage.

The author also uses a lot of military jargon. If the foot notes were not at the bottom, the story would be difficult to understand. At the same time, if he did not use the words at all it would take away from the meaning of the story. It would not seem as authentic. When you read and understand the words that are used you are able to identify more closely, even if you do not have a military background.

Student 1

I agree with you that symbolism was heavily used by the author. The weight the soldiers carried throughout the war represented both physical and emotional.

Student 3

The military has it's own set of words which make things sound important, and hard to understand, as confusing as death.

Student 4

This is very touching being away from someone you love. You try to hold on to something that will allow you to concentrate on the memories you have together. There were a lot of things going on in which everything weighted heavy on the mind, body and soul.

Student 3

Instead of talking about The Things They Carry, I enjoyed the short story A & P the most. A & P starts with a reaction and ends with a reason why growing up in not easy. In society today we have many decisions to make that are difficult and most assuredly the majority of them are incorrect but do not have the propinquity or extent the decision the youngster Sammy made that could invariably effect the rest of his life psychologically and physically.

In A&P the main character Sammy tells us a story of a day when he stands up for what he believes is right. Symbolism used to describe everything around Sammy was grey (the color) except for the three girls. A teenagers mind often wrought with obsession especially for girls and nothing else was used in this story to help experience his coming of age with him, and yes even though his fixation with the girls is typical; the fact that the rest of the “grey” world did not understand “color” nor beauty. Most things in this story and our own world mirror because what stands out as odd or independent has to be ridiculed because our worlds collide as the symbolism of sheep is used to describe his; sheep do not do what they’re not told to. The three girls who were described in color are opposing what the society of the story is determined to be and only Sammy recognized it for what it was. The girls are an oddity and are shunned by authority and policy. What Sammy decides in the end to protest or change is a metaphor the story uses to display that the right course of action also has many implications, mostly bad. Sammy wanted change as most of our country wanted a while back. What we have to determine is not all change is a good decision which Sammy, being a young man, recognized but could not fully grasp, and neither did we.

Student 2

The description the author used to paint the blandness of the supermarket and vividness of the three girls was very helpful in bringing the story to life.

Student 1

I agree with you that symbolism was used heavily throughout the entire story. I think the use of symbolism gave us all something we could relate to in some way.

Student 4

Sammy was an interesting character and I think we all have some Sammy in us. That is trying to make someone feel that they are important. The story added a lot of details of the way Sammy viewed that day when the girls walked inside which led up to him doing the unthinkable.

Student 4

The story in which the author's craft affected my understanding is "The Story of an Hour". I really liked this story the best. The story started off with a devastating tragedy of a man being killed in a train crash. Because of the severity and unexpectedness of the incident it was felt by friends that the pain would be too much to bare for the wife. The friends were hesitant to tell her worried of her health condition of a bad heart. Once the word of her husband's death was received it was expected of the grief she would endure.

The literary devices used in this were "figurative language" which I feel lead readers to there own interpretation of how the wife felt at the news. I felt the wife was grieved to death because of the news received about her husband. There were instances in where in the first few paragraphs after she received the news about her husband that "she wept at once in wild abandonment, in her sister's arms." After the initial shock of news she went to her room and began to reflect on never seeing her husband again. The story states she "sank" in the chair with physical exhaustion. I believe the wife was over spent of exhaustion from all of the crying she was doing.

The story goes into talking about how she was gazing out of the window and seeing the coming of spring in the air. Then it says a "sob came in her throat and shook her". I believe this started the process of her beginning to die. She starts to reflect on the way life would have been without her husband and she was yet excited but also afraid of what is to come. As it was coming to the end of the story when she opened her bedroom door and clasp her sister's waist this was the time that I believe she moved onto death.

Student 2

I agree with you about the author using figurative language. When you read other people's posts, you see that everyone has come to a slightly different conclusion.

Student 4

You are right, Student 2, everyone did see something a little bit different.

Student 1

The author's use of figurative language in the story added interest, and kept me yearning for more.

Student 4

Yep, Student 1, I felt the same way waiting to see what was next.

Student 3

It's unique that we all read the same stories but come up with different interpretations, I think authors also believe this way and that's why they write these types of stories. Right wrong or indifferent, very thought provoking.

Student 4

I guess it is only the author who can give you a true meaning of what the story portrayed.
