

## ABSTRACT

### WARTALK: TIM O'BRIEN'S POSTMODERN RHETORIC OF THE VIETNAM WAR IN *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED*

This study examines Tim O'Brien's text *The Things They Carried* as a postmodern rhetoric through which O'Brien's personal experience can contribute to historical and cultural study of the Vietnam War and its impact in the United States. Making use of postmodern rhetoric, this thesis parallels O'Brien's framework for storytelling with the philosophers Jacques Derrida, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Mikhail Bakhtin to suggest that O'Brien is attempting to redefine truth in postmodern terms. This thesis suggests that O'Brien's kind of personal communication is necessary for the Vietnam veteran and also the rest of the country whose responsibility is to listen to the stories despite the impossibility of understanding their truth in an objective sense. In so doing, O'Brien's rhetoric lends space to open discussion to a multiplicity of discourses about the war.

Toby Suzan Roberts  
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