*The Things They Carried* Outline – Rat Kiley

**Rat carries...**

-morphine, plasma, malaria tablets, surgical tape (5)
-comic books (5)
-M&M's for especially bad wounds (5)
-"All the things a medic must carry" (5)
-brandy and M&M's candy (9)
-“Worms, Rat Kiley said. Right out of the grave. F----' zombie" (12).

-"The guy's dead" (12)...

-"They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die" (20).

"Rat had a reputation for exaggeration and overstatement..." (76).

-"Just the opposite: he wanted to heat up the truth, to make it burn so hot that you would feel exactly what he felt" (85).

**Introduction**

Set the context and introduce my character/what he carries. As a medic, Rat Kiley carries all of the things that should heal and take away the hurt. List items (page 5).

Thesis: Rat Kiley is a medic and carries death, stolen innocence, and the need to tell his story and make his voice heard.

**Idea #1: Rat Kiley carries death.**

Rat Kiley carries "[all] the things a medic must carry" (5). The medical items he carries mean that he is constantly dealing with blood and guts and gore and wounds, many that he undoubtedly cannot heal or treat, hence the reason for the M&M's he "carried for especially bad wounds" (5). But he also carries death because no matter where they travel and what they do, Rat cannot escape the reality of his situation. Rat's job means that he is responsible for helping people live, but he sees "[too] many body bags, maybe. Too much gore," and that is why he carries death (209). Rat has to cope with wounds and worries that many other men do not have to deal and live with every single day.

While he struggles with this challenge later in the novel, one example that brings attention to Rat's ability and skill in dealing with death is when Tim is shot. “Thank God for Rat Kiley. Every so often, maybe four times altogether, he trotted back to check me out. Which took courage. It was a wild fight, guys running and laying down fire and regrouping and running again, lots of noise, but Rat Kiley took the risks” (180). Rat is not afraid to risk his own life in order to check on and save that of one of his fellow soldiers. Many people do not cope with injury or death in this way, yet Rat does. He has courage. He has no fear and no thought of the perils to his own life, yet he effortlessly comes to check on Tim not once or twice but four times. This speaks volumes about Rat’s devotion to his job but, more importantly, raises awareness of Rat’s repeated and relentless exposure to the wounds and decay that eventually drive him to madness. “War makes you a man; war makes you dead” could not ring truer for Rat Kiley (77). Unfortunately, Rat does not leave the war a man who is intact; he leaves it a dead man.

**Idea #2: Rat Kiley carries stolen innocence.**

Because Rat carries death, he also must carry stolen innocence due to the fact that he longer possesses his own. The comic books Rat carries show that he is not grown up, not mature, and not a man. He enjoys them because he is still a boy and because he is clinging to the role he should still be filling. He carries them because they allow him to escape reality and forget the innocence he can never regain because of what he has seen.

 “It was very sad… The things men carried inside. The things men did or felt they had to do. ” This quote relates to Rat Kiley in that he must deal with situations he has no control over, and this is what contributes to the Rat Kiley’s stolen innocence. On the surface, just as the previous example with Tim highlights, Rat looks like he handles the trauma and stress of injury and death very well, but the true nature of his character is revealed soon after Curt Lemon is killed. Curt Lemon is a friend of Rat Kiley’s, and they are playing catch when Lemon steps on a booby-trapped 105 round and is blown up (74). Soon after Lemon dies, the troop (wc?) come upon a baby water buffalo, and Rat Kiley can no longer hide his pent-up frustration, regret, and rage over the loss of one of his friends. One incident that highlights Rat carrying stolen innocence is when he shoots the baby water buffalo. He takes innocence from a baby water buffalo and murders it, just as his innocence is murdered when he becomes a medic and must carry the responsibility of death and decay, unfair circumstances he has no power to change.

After stroking its nose and even offering it some food, Rat steps back and shoots the baby water buffalo through the knee (75). He continues to shoot it, but it is important to note that "It wasn't to kill; it was to hurt" (75). He does not wish to kill the baby water buffalo; he only wants to hurt it, just as he has seen his friends hurt and tortured by a war he cannot control. Part of Rat has died in Vietnam due to the constant pressure and torment, and the baby water buffalo allows him to express his grief over his innocence being stolen. Rat should not have to deal with what he is experiencing, and the baby water buffalo allows him to release some of the death he carries inside of him. As a result, he shoots it all over its body—in the right front knee, the ear, the hindquarters, the little hump at its back, the flanks, the mouth, the tail, the chunks of meat below the ribs—and then Rat goes to “automatic” (75). Rat is determined to make this animal feel as much pain as possible, just as the pain and death he experiences affects him.

 Even while Rat is tormenting the baby water buffalo, though, "there wasn't a great deal of pity for the baby water buffalo" because all of the pity is for Rat and what he is going through (75). After Rat shoots the baby multiple times, "Rat Kiley was crying. He tried to say something, but then cradled his rifle and went off by himself" (76). The others marvel at Rat’s behavior, yet it is critical to note that none of them stand up to Rat and try to stop him. They can see the toll that injury and death have taken on Rat, and they have no right to prevent him from dealing with his pain in his own way, a way that, for now, is not destructive to him, at least on the surface. Even after Rat finishes his rampage, his comrades “sat waiting for Rat to get himself together" (76). They do not go to him and comfort him, likely because they, too, do not want the stink of death on them. They want to maintain their innocence as long as possible, turning a blind eye to the ravages that Rat, as a medic, cannot.

**Idea #3: The need to tell his story.** Prove that he is a man. Show that he has value and an opinion.

“I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth.”

"'It's a fact.' Rat's voice squeaked a little. He paused and looked at his hands" (86).

The fact that Rat looks away and fails to make eye contact shows Rat's hesitance. His non-verbal cues give away the lack of truth in his words.

"'No lie,' he muttered" (86).

"As Rat described it" (87)

"Rat said" (88)

"The way Rat told it" (89)

Use??? Rat Kiley carries the shock of unfairness. It is unfair that he loses his best friend to this war. It is unfair that he unloads on his friend's sister and she never writes back. It is unfair that he must resort to shooting himself in the foot in order to escape the war.