

Explain why you believe that a character in your favorite assigned reading acted the way he or she did. Make sure you can support your explanation.

Student 1

The character of Kiowa in "The Things They Carried" reflects on the death of Ted Lavender and the effect it has on Lieutenant Jimmy Cross. Kiowa himself speaks of the incident and how straightforward and unemotional Lavender's death was; fast, no drama. His overall attitude is that of numbness. How can this be? This man was in his unit, maybe even a friend. I believe his actions are central to a main theme of the story. War is an unreasonable environment that reasonable people are added into; many of the social norms that we have become accustomed to struggle to survive in this setting. If a person is to make it though their experiences in war they must adapt themselves both physically and emotionally. Kiowa and Cross represent two ends of the spectrum. One is overwhelmed with grief and guilt while the other is void of any and all feelings. Kiowa is unable to conjure up the emotion he recognizes in Cross; emotion he feels should be natural. Although he wants to care for Lavender, he is more focused on himself and happy to be alive. The war has hardened him and altered his natural tendencies for grief. I don't believe that Kiowa is a terrible person for the way he thinks. He knows he should feel something but is unable. I have spoken to many people who have developed this same emotional emptiness over the years. They have developed it as a coping mechanism, as a way to keep their sanity. They usually develop it without even knowing. Kiowa is representative of many of the soldiers we have in our ranks who have lost friends time and time again. It's amazing what someone can become used to. Fortunately, however unfortunate it is, there are few outside our military that fall into this category.

Student 2

Your posting was quite touching and deep. From how I percieve it, it seems as though Kiowa was so overwhelmed that he is uable to show his true emotions. You made such a good point stating that "reasonable people are added to an unreasonable environment". It is true in reality that when people experience so many different emotions and they see the same thing over and over, they do harden up from it. They move on because it so redundant. They can cry, mourn or be hurt, but it will not change a thing; it will just happen again.

Excellent post!

Student 1

I appreciate your thoughts. I think this character demonstrates how a person can adapt to their environment. What is common and socially acceptable in one part of the world can be totally obscene and outrageous in another.

Student 3

This is a very good post. I didn't even think about Kiowa in that way. You really touched deep on his character. It makes sense that he played a vital role in the story because he kept them grounded. Lt. Cross was able to come to his senses after remembering some of the things that Kiowa says.

Student 1

Thanks. I found it interesting that while Kiowa may have been a little upset with himself at his inability to show the same emotions the Lt. he was in fact showing his ability to remain balanced and realistic in the face of a terrible situation.