

The Things They Carried: Writing Exercise

In “How to Tell a True War Story,” Tim O’Brien writes:

In any war story, but especially a true one, it’s difficult to separate what happened from what seemed to happen. What seems to happen becomes its own happening and has to be told that way. The angles of vision are skewed.... The pictures get jumbled; you tend to miss a lot. And then afterward, when you go to tell about it, there is always that surreal seemingness, which makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth as it *seemed*.

1. Find an instance where O’Brien’s writing reflects the surreal nature of war. Copy the passage (include page number) and write a 250-350 word response on how he achieves this effect.
2. Find a surreal piece of art that you believe reflects a particular point of view. Copy into your document and explain what you believe the message is and how the artist communicates this message. (1 paragraph)
3. Considering both O’Brien’s stories and the art you selected, answer the following question in a single, well-developed paragraph:

What kinds of truths can surrealism reveal?

Typed, 12 pt font, double-spaced. Organize as you see fit. When you are done, please submit on my website.

Writing Response: Model Format

Name

Date

Hour

Surrealism Writing Exercise (or your own clever title here)

Type the passage from the story that reflects the surreal nature of war here. Include the page number (11).

Write a response on how he achieves this effect.
250-350 words.

Paste
artwork
into your
document



Identify title and author of art you selected. Discuss the message and how the artist communicates this message. Write one well-developed paragraph.

What kinds of truths can surrealism reveal?

Compose one well-developed paragraph explaining your ideas.