**Response to 2007 prompt—character’s relationship to the past.**

**Intros: 1—acknowledge prompt, state title and author (2) 2—3 sentences of plot summary, incorporating the details you will use (3) Thesis statement that refers to theme.**

**In The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien uses Tim’s relationship to the past to convey the lingering, burdensome effects of war on the individual. Throughout the novel, O’Brien presents many situations which have long-lasting effects on Tim. The story of the soldier he killed, the tale of the baby water buffalo and the death of Norman Bowker all suggest a desire to reconcile the past and move on, a notion symbolically displayed when he releases Kiowa’s moccasins into the river. In this way, O’Brien reveals the need soldiers have to make peace with the past.**

**Plan:**

1. **Discuss the soldier Tim killed**

**Key points—he tells the story several times (shows an attempt to come to terms with it). He lies to his daughter about killing the soldier (shows denial)**

1. **Baby water buffalo**

**Torturing the animal shows how soldiers dealt with**

**the terrors of war. O’Brien tells the story not just to tell it, but to give readers a sense of the impact of war’s cruelty on the soldiers.**

1. **The story of Norman Bowker’s suicide**

**O’Brien says several different soldiers feel guilt over Norman’s and Kiowa’s deaths. Tells the story to show that some soldiers never recover from war.**

1. **Final scene—releasing Kiowa’s moccasins**
   1. **Water suggest rebirth or cleansing so placing the moccasins in dirty water suggests that while returning soldiers can find a modicum of peace, they are forever changed by war**

**Bottom line (conclusion)—War, like any adversity, changes the people involved in a profound way. Some have trouble forgiving themselves for their participation in it (Bowker); others live with the guilt and find a way to manage the memories. The book shows that the way individuals respond to trauma vary as much as the people do.**