

How to Tell a True War Story – Study Guide Questions (pgs 67-85)

- 1.) Who does Rat Kiley write a letter to?
- 2.) What sort of things does Rat write about his friend – Curt Lemon?
- 3.) What did his friend do on Halloween?
- 4.) What happens when he sends the letter?
- 5.) List at least four elements of a “true war story”.  
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- 6.) What happened to Curt Lemon?
- 7.) In a true war story, why is it hard to separate what happened and what seemed to happen?
- 8.) Why can a true war story not be believed?
- 9.) Summarize Mitchell Sander’s story about the six men patrol that goes up to the mountains for a listening post operation.
- 10.) What does Rat Kiley do to a baby buffalo? How do you explain his actions?
- 11.) The narrator quotes the familiar “war is hell” but adds that it is “not the half of it.” What does he mean?
- 12.) Why does the woman cry over the buffalo but like the grenade story? What is the deeper meaning of his saying that she wasn’t listening?
- 13.) What does the narrator mean by saying that the story was a love story and that stories are “never about war”?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Hour \_\_\_\_\_

Type out answers to questions 1-4 on a separate sheet of paper  
(Add Paradox Part II)

### **How to Tell a True War Story Discussion Questions**

1. Underline a sentence or two that you find particularly powerful. Share with your group.
2. The narrator retells the story of Curt Lemon's death several times. How does it change with each retelling? How does retelling that scene in different ways contribute to the story as a whole?
3. Why do you think Rat Kiley shoots the baby buffalo in the manner he does? The whole scene never happened—the narrator tells us that in the end—but is it *true*? Why do you think O'Brien depicts this scene? Why is it a baby buffalo? What details does he seem to want the reader to focus on? Why?
4. So, how do you tell a true war story, according to O'Brien? List his "rules" (e.g., "Often there is not even a point, or else the point doesn't hit you until twenty years later..." and "You can tell a true war story by the questions you ask...").