



## Literature Review

O'Brien, Carla Wolenski, and unnamed character are all seen as protagonists in "How to Tell a True War Story," "You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming" and "The Train." All these characters at one point were all affected in their lives by fear and pain, which prompted them to come up with their stories. Imminently, the two pieces, "How to Tell a True War Story" and "The Train" explain the aftermath of the Vietnam and Iraq's Wars respectively. However, the piece on "You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming" primarily centers on the challenges that are always seen in the marriage institution.

O'Brien uses a quite emotional style of writing to explain what went on during the Vietnam War in his work, "How to Tell a True War Story." Despite the fact that the author, who emerges as the protagonist, in this case, mentions that the story is true, a lot is left to be understood. One can understand that he is the protagonist when he said that "I sit at this typewriter and stare through my words and watch Kiowa sinking into the deep muck of a shit field, or Curt Lemon hanging in pieces from a tree, and as I write about these things, the remembering is turned into a rehappening" (36). He centers his story along the tragic events that affected the Vietnam War, primarily after the loss of his close friend, Curt Lemon, to a landmine accident. The latter's death marked the beginning of other unexpected and unbearable misfortunes to O'Brien and his platoon.

War emerges as a traumatic, dim ordeal that people are not intended to partake in.

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Imminently, it has never been the desire of an individual to become the victim of the aftermath of war, especially one that takes a toll on the lives of your family or close friends. As such, O'Brien so precisely outlines through his keen and striking portrayals of the landscape and occasions in Vietnam how the war was a dreaded and unfathomable stance that no one would wish to encounter. In many occurrences all through the story, he explains about the excellence of the nature and view around him regardless of the majority of the political agitation that encompassed him. By considering the shade of the sky, movement of the trees, and the positioning of the sun—O'Brien nearly forgets his goals because of nature's magnificence as he endeavors to tackle such a debilitating domain.

Kinowski explains about the bad days that the protagonist is expected to face shortly in the first sentence of the text, “On the bad days she rides the subway”. This given statement enables the reader to come to terms with the cause of trauma and uncertainty on the protagonist’s part. The latter could be seen as having a bleak future, one that is marred with desires and demands that may never be met. To heighten the protagonist’s ambiguous level, Kalinowski uses a metro-sequel writing that has its fleeting breakthrough moments, similar to the brief clarity of a particular image when a tram auto stops at a given station. In any case, then the tram moves to the next stop (or, literarily, the following section), which enables the audience to consider another part of the hero’s life. Thus, the use of the subway and the metro-sequel exposition are commensurate to each other, and which goes before the other is not all that definable.

“The Train” aims at explaining on the immovable liminality of the post trauma stress disorder through the rational of the train. In order to underline the hero’s unwavering condition of ambiguity, the story never comes to a conclusion with the realization of the targets of the protagonist. Toward the end of the story, the hero never comes to terms her goal in Vermont, where her mom was anxiously waiting to meet her. However, she remains in New York and, apparently, will keep on riding the trains with

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specific end goal to maintain a strategic distance from coming to terms with her traumatic involvement in Iraq.

Despite the fact that the language of the Kalinowski's story can be deemed as straightforward and easy to understand, various stylistic devices have been embraced to cause a state of ambiguity. Firstly, the author fails to mention the protagonist in an explicit way.

One can look at this consideration as a way of keeping the audience in suspense until the end, without understanding what would ensue in the succeeding scenes. Besides, in case the protagonist has a chance of realizing her objective and coming to terms with her mother, primarily in Vermont, the suspense or ambiguous stance portrayed by Kalinowski would have been lost. The story ends in an unexpected way, leaving the audience in suspense. Such a scenario can be compared to the subway being connoted in the story, the New York one, which probably has no ending.

"You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming" is a story by Siobhan Fallon that explains on the unhappy marriage life that befell Mrs. Carla. The latter, who hails as the protagonist, was affected by the fact that her husband, Ted, could not stay at home for a full time. Her major problem is not a matter of whether she loves her husband Ted, but the fact that the latter cannot stay with her at home and take care of their child Mimi. Despite all these, she admits that Ted needs to work so that he may be in a position to look after his family. Upon receiving a call from the city connection center, she was compelled to wake up early that day. She was never told why Ted was in there. Carla Wolenski was wondering what could have happened; she was like was it a street fight, public intoxication, quarrel or battles in the bar, urinating on the highway, actual she was perplexity about the whole story running in her head. The happenings in this scene relate to the story by Kalinowski, whereby the unnamed protagonist was in a state of dismay and confusion, and the only feeling she could relate

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to was trauma.

The institution of marriage should not be used as an oppression front. It was Christmas celebration as usual; neighbors were discussing different things about how the Aguilera Christmas was going on. Like any typical Christian Jimmy was to enjoy his with his wife, Gay-Lesley. She had a different plan for him, and she was planning to fight (she was looking for how they could fight, but Jimmy was not ready for that). Gay-Lesley's first problem with her married life is the fact that she is primarily the intruder within her and Jimmy's career path. Jimmy loves his profession of military and could go for any deployment anywhere the high commands of the army wanted him to go. The way she narrated the story to Mrs. Carla arose her bad feeling about her husband. Her mode had changed when Mrs. Gay-Lesley had told her ordeal with Jimmy. This made her start inquiring about his next move. She was filled with extreme anger. When they were in traffic, she clicked on the blinker and pushed it to repeat you as if she was carrying a strange in her car. What she continued to ask is there a court case, a letter of recrimination, is there for the layer.

This rubbish talking made Ted furious, and he shouted damned it. This was after ignoring her nagging for a while like the unusual character or a masquerade. She continued to drive so quickly that the car almost stalls out. He had spent his entire weekend training and the night preparing for Iraq war. Most of his life was characterized by preparation for the deployment in Iraq. After Carla's phone conversation with Gay-Lesley, they came to slow down so as they can stop. The tension cooled down when both Ted and Carla entered their apartment to find Mimi crying.

It is imminent that all the three pieces of works have touched on the aspect of trauma and the stress that accompanies a lonely life. However, the piece on "You Survived the War, Now Survive the Homecoming" is majorly focused on marriage issues while the other two, "How to Tell a True War Story" and "The Train" deal with the aftermath of the Vietnam and Iraq's Wars respectively.

*JK Essay*

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## Works Cited

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O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Houghton, 1990. Print.

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