

7 Another person that the war will bother for eternity is my friend Arthur. He is an American veteran of the Vietnam War who is devoted to obtaining an education and helping his fellow veterans. After leaving the war, he suffered for many years. In spite of the trauma *plaguing* Arthur, he fights the pain with optimism, which has gotten him through all his days.

**Pause** What question does Arthur illustrate?

8 One day, I asked him about his time in Vietnam. He smiled and joked about the “lousy” food he ate and the deep forests he had been through. But just like my uncle, he would not talk about the enemies he faced and how he fought. Again, the war remains hidden! How amazing it is that two individuals from two opposite cultures, who fought on opposing sides in a horrible war, share the same feelings.

9 Throughout the event, these experiences and connections were running through my head, and the stories were capturing me in the invisible circle. I wondered why, when Tim O’Brien was speaking about his own experiences, I couldn’t get away from the similarities to my own experiences. The presentation came to an end, and I decided to stay afterward. I joined the line, which was meant for Tim O’Brien to sign his books, even though I didn’t have one of his books and couldn’t buy one, either. I just thought that I had to talk to him.

10 While I was waiting in line, memories again encircled me, and many thoughts came into my mind. I kept thinking about my grandfather who passed away. He was a general in the American War, and if all the soldiers I know keep the war hidden, my grandfather—who had more war stories than anyone in my family—also had more secrets as well. Then my mind wandered to my high school literature teacher who lost her whole family in the war and was disabled by a bomb in 1972. I also recalled a taxi driver whom I met last year, who was laughing when he told me that the Vietnam War cost him his two brothers. And right before I got to Tim O’Brien, I thought about my friend Arthur, who came back with a hidden part of his life which he barely shares with others. I wanted to tell Tim O’Brien all I knew and to express to him all my emotions. But once I came up to him all I could say was my name and that with all that I have heard, we, both Vietnamese and Americans, share the same feelings. The moment was unforgettable. We hugged each other, and just like the shared emotions, we both cried.

11 I was drawn to Tim O’Brien by an invisible circle of war experiences and memories, probably because I somehow felt its existence by my own experiences and memories. He was the first one to open up and share such intensive stories of the war, and gave me the emotions that I have been searching for.

**Pause** What is the author’s grandfather’s name? How does the author’s grandfather’s experience affect her perception of the war?