



## PREPARING to *Read*

# Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

Short Story by TIM O'BRIEN

### Connect to Your Life

**Nerves of Steel?** Some people seem to have nerves of steel. They always appear calm, no matter what they are feeling inside. Most people, however, show their feelings when they are very afraid or extremely anxious. What are some ways of showing fear or anxiety that you have observed in yourself or other people? Which of them seem “normal,” and which are surprising? Discuss your responses with your classmates.

“Then they found him. Green and covered with algae.”

## Build Background

**Vietnam War** “Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?” takes place in the Southeast Asian country of Vietnam during a war in which nearly 58,000 Americans died. The Vietnam War grew out of a conflict over communism. South Vietnamese rebels, with the aid of Communist-ruled North Vietnam, began trying to take over South Vietnam in 1957. To help prevent the spread of communism, the United States entered the war as an ally of the South Vietnamese government in 1964. Between 1965 and 1973, over 2 million Americans were sent to Vietnam. Although the soldiers were given special training, few were prepared for the kind of fear and anxiety they would face in the jungles and rice fields of that unfamiliar land.

### WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

casually	elegantly	silhouetted
conical	execute	transparent
consolation	inertia	
diffuse	primitive	

## Focus Your Reading

**LITERARY ANALYSIS CHARACTER** Most stories center on the experiences and actions of one or more **main characters**. Other characters, who interact with the main characters and help move the story along, are called **minor characters**. As you read this story, notice who the main character is and identify the details that indicate that he is the focus of the story. Also notice who the minor characters are and what they contribute to the story.

**ACTIVE READING MAKING INFERENCES** When you make a logical guess about something in a story, based on information in the story and your own common sense, you are making an **inference**. As you read this story, record clues that help you understand who Paul Berlin is and what he is going through. Pay special attention to

- what he does with his body
- what he notices in his surroundings
- what he thinks about

**READER'S NOTEBOOK** Use a chart like the one shown to record your observations.

Private First Class Paul Berlin		
Statement in Story	Common Sense	Inference
“He pretended he was not a soldier.”	People pretend that things they wish were true <u>are</u> true.	Paul does not like being a soldier.