

**“ Lifers are a breed. A lifer is anybody who abuses authority he doesn’t deserve to have.”
(Gustav Hasford)**

“ A short-timer is one who is approaching the end of his tour duty in Vietnam, usually one year ”;

The Short-Timers (1979) is a partially autobiographical novel by Gustav Hasford, an American ex marine, who tells about his experience in Vietnam;

The novel is divided into three parts: 1) “The spirit of the bayonet”, the chronicle of the training period of James Davis; 2) “Body Count”, in which Hasford describes James’ s job as a war-correspondent at Hue, a Vietnamese province; 3) “Grunts”, in which James is expelled from the journalists’ unit because he wears on his helmet a peace pin near the writing “Born to kill”;

- **Vietnam war fiction is a mixed lot: it cannot embrace “victory”, but it can at least fall back on totalizing notions of “brotherhood” and “defeat with honor”;**
- **The Short-Timers interrogates western notions on history, and in particular the notion of history as fixed and stable;**
- **One way the novel interrogates history is by demonstrating the power and danger of metaphors: everything in this novel is or becomes a metaphor;**
- **Some things have been metaphors so long, like honour or justice, that we have forgotten they are metaphors: what happens in Hasford’ s novel is that characters take metaphor for truth;**
- **Power is linked to who names things, like Gomer Pyle or lifers, who succeed in creating the dominant metaphors;**
- **Another way used to undermine fixed notions of history is through repetition: this repetition bring a sense of difference; history cannot be exactly written because it is contaminated by excess: what you get is a monument;**