

"on the rainy river" by tim o'brien

Literature



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The short story " On the Rainy River" written by Tim O'Brien, is based on his life experience, when a month after graduating from Maclester College he was drafted to fight in a war. O'Brien talks about the experience of living with shame of events, which occurred during the summer of 1968. This story has great insight, in which represents the time in 1968 where many men were forced to recruited into war with the mentality that society invokes on all males. For instance, males were afraid to show fear or doubtful, which produced male to feel ashamed of making themselves ' softer.' This enforces male to sexist ideals and mindlessly submissive to the male-dominated war by demeaning them to the level of a ' woman.' This non-fiction story addresses the problems and consequences due to the war of Vietnam that male roles encountered.

At the beginning of the short story, we can see that his life is being defined by being part in war, the American war in Vietnam, and his social expectations as a male in a dominant-male environment. This is seen when he says " This is one story I've never told before. Not to anyone. Not to my parents, not to my brother or sister, not even to my wife" (O'Brien). This quote shows his level of pride as a man, in that he feels the need to keep his story from his loved ones. The war to him seemed wrong, causing unnecessary causes and effects, and not having an explanation of why he was drafted to war, which leads for his mind to go crazy.

The protoganist thought that he was too good to fight in a war, but his community pressured him to attend, making his menntality have two choices to pick from; attending war or fleeing the country to escape. As the author is told that he is recruited to fight in the war, he becomes increasingly upset.

He certainly does not want to be part of it. His initial dialogue is " I was too good for this war. Too smart, too compassionate, too everything. It couldn't happen. I was above it." This clearly displayed his passion for the war, and how much he did not feel aligned with it emotionally or morally. Which leads his to be against the war in Vietnam. He is convinced that war is wrong, but he admits that it all seems so abstract. The 1960's were a time of social upheaval, with the feminist and civil right movements were taking place as well, as the country was divided between those who supported the war and those who disagreed with the U. S.'s involvement.

" In the evenings I'd sometimes borrow my father's car and drive aimlessly around the town, feeling sorry for myself, thinking about the war and the pig factory and how my life seemed to be collapsing toward slaughter. I felt paralyzed. All around me the options seemed to be narrowing as if I were hurtling down a huge black funnel, the whole world squeezing in tight. There was no happy way out." All young men had no option to put their lives in the line for war, they had their society thinking all men must fight in the war, and if you didn't, it would make you softer and not to the standards of a woman. This quote explains the imagery behind the huge black funnel representing war and the whole world squeezing in tight representing the society forcing men to go to war to do the " right thing" which was fighting for their country.

" At night, when I couldn't sleep, I'd sometimes carry on fierce arguments with those people. I'd be screaming at them, telling them how much I detested their bling, thoughtless, automatic acquiescence to it all, their simples minded patriotism, their prideful ignorance, their love-it-or-leave-it-platitudes, how they were sending me off to fight a war they didn't

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understand and didn't want to understand." Tim O'Brien's community did not understand his point of view on war, his civil rights and the postcolonial in the government effects.