

# The rainy river



Analysis On The Rainy River Tim O'Brien shares with us a sensitive story that he has not dared share with anyone else, including his parents. Tim O'Brien calls himself a coward because of the decision he made after he was confronted with a predicament. Many different factors came into play through his struggles which at any point could have changed his final decision. The reason he struggles so much is because his two options are to choose his own beliefs and be seen as a coward not only by his community but by his family as well or overlook all he has fought for and believed, to do what his family and town expect him to do and go to war. Tim had the opportunity to choose his own path and do what he felt was right.

In this story we can clearly see how outside people can sometimes influence the outcome of the decisions that we must make. Tim got a draft notice a month after having graduated from Macalaster College. Tim believed himself as a liberal and thought that he was too good to go to war. Since he didn't support it he felt that he should not be forced to go to war.

Tim describes his thoughts as he is reading the notice and immediately gets rushed millions of thoughts all at once. He was shocked to the fact that he had received the notice. that at one point he thought it could have been a mistake and goes on to say "A mistake maybe" a foul up in the paperwork (O'Brien 41). But he knew that that wasn't the case. Tim worked in a meat packing plant, with the title he believed to be dechlorator.

He recalls the unbearable stench of pig that followed him everywhere he went. No matter what he did he was unable to get rid of the smell. Shortly

after, he started having thoughts about fleeing to Canada. As he pondered what to do Tim saw images of what his future would hold if he did decide to run away to Canada. His conscience tells him to run away but he knows that such an action will only bring shame to him and that is something he can't live with. With time the constant battle that he was fighting finally got to him to the point where he just cracked. One day while working at the meat plant he just decided to quit because of what he recalls felt like a physical rupture in his chest.

Although he doesn't remember much of the details Tim drove north. He eventually stopped at a place called the Tip Top Lodge. The owner of this lodge is Elroy Berdahl. Although Elroy never asked Tim any questions, Tim had the impression that Elroy, although he might not have known all the details of why he was there, knew the basics as to know why he was there. The two of them spent six days together doing many different activities.

Throughout this time though, these two rarely talked. On the sixth day, Elroy takes Tim out to the river to fish. Tim soon realizes they must be in Canadian waters.

Tim confesses that he could not make up his mind; that he was afraid to go to war but he was also afraid of exile. In the end it would eventually come down to what he feared the most. I know some people consider him a coward for not doing what he wants but I don't really blame him. In a way I think he can be seen as a hero because he gave up his dreams and his freedom for a bigger purpose rather than being selfish and thinking for himself. His biggest fear was feeling shame. He could not bear with the guilt

of having disappointed his family. Even though trying to put myself in the exact same position as him might be hard, I asked myself what I would do if it were me.

I can seriously say that after thinking over and over again I would have fled under the same circumstances. His town might have been a traditional one but that doesn't necessarily mean that just because of that he is obligated to go down a path that goes against his morals. Tim states that he holds each one of them responsible for sending him to war. To his community the Vietnam War was just a war to stop communism, plain and simple.

If someone were to have second thoughts about fighting in a war with such simple reasons he would have been looked down upon. At last Tim gave in. Unable to take charge of his own life he was overwhelmed by his community and family.