

Decisions: Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried Essay

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Everyday individuals face decisions in which they must choose whether to do what is appealing to them or to choose a more suitable and compliant choice. In the fictional work of 'The Things They Carried' by Tim O' Brien, certain characters such as Tim O' Brien himself must face decisions similar to these. The novel demonstrates that when an individual is faced with a decision in which there is a choice that he may have to conform, the individual tends to conform due to not wanting to embarrass themselves or to not be portrayed as a coward to others. However when the individual is challenged with these types of decisions, the choice does not matter since the outcome will be what the individual was trying to avoid. That is to say that in the excerpt "The Rainy River" Tim O' Brien was going through a conflicting decision on whether or not he should go to the war. Yet, as we see it turns out that either choice will lead to either [shame](#) or cowardice. If he goes to the war he feels that he will be a coward and that he gave up his own morals and values and accepted something he does not believe in, but if he does not go to war he will be shunned by society and will be labelled as a coward because he will not fight for his country. Initially, in the chapter "On the Rainy River" we see O'Brien's first interaction with his

decision on whether he should go to the war or not, when he receives his draft letter. Immediately he has made up his mind not to go since he believes the war is immoral and that he is too good, too smart and too compassionate for this war. He later lists many accomplishments in his senior years such as being “the president of the student body, and his full-ride scholarship to Harvard” (pg.41), to show how much of a bet...

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...rien’s decision should be taken as the whole and complete truth is the fact that he chose to write about it. Normally people would not share such a personal story with the public but O’Brien felt the need to as a form of literary catharsis. This whole event that played out in his life was so very important to him that he needed everyone to know the full details of the story, and only he can tell us that. It obviously has affected O’Brien so deeply that he needs to justify his actions and to make sure that nothing in the story has been left unaccounted for.

References: Gardner, Dan. “The Missing Piece to the Gang Violence Debate.” Essay Writing for Canadian Students with Readings. 7th Ed. Roger Davis, Laura K. Davis, Kay L. Stewart and Chris J. Bullock. Toronto: Pearson, 2013. 234-236. Print.
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