
A Review of both external and internal Conflicts in The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

Internal Conflicts

"The Things They Carried" is a story of two friends O'Brien and Kiowa during the Vietnamese war. At the beginning of the story, O'Brien was in a dilemma to make a decision on whether to go to the war or not (O'Brien, 2009). His decisions were influenced by his desire to avoid shame and impress his family. The life of Tim took different twists at the course of the war. The author of this story employs different literary elements such as conflict, complication and the moment of change. This discusses conflicts, complication and moment of change that can be identified in the story.

The conflict in the story is both internal and external. Vietnam War is the most obvious conflict that can be identified in the story. The idea of going engaging in a physical conflict contributed philosophical conflict within the United States between two different factions, those who supported the war and those who opposed. At the beginning of the story, the author of the story was undergoing mental conflict as he had to make a decision on whether to go to the war or not. During his childhood, he was against the war and the Vietnamese war led him to weigh in on whether to avoid going to the war because he is against it, or whether he should go to the war to impress his family and home town the residences (O'Brien, 2009). He was aware of the consequences of his decisions and so he chose the latter. The story has focused on internal conflicts which includes mental and psychological perspective of the author in regard to war such as shame, blame, courage, making right decisions.

The complication in the story is the turning point where the author had to make a decision to overcome his dilemma situation (Iwata, 2009). At the beginning of the story, the author who has been against the idea of going to war had psychological and mental conflicts in a decision whether to go to Vietnam. The author had to weigh in between going to the war and escaping to avoid going to the war (O'Brien, 2009). Faced with pressure of avoiding shame and blame, O'Brien was able to make a decision to go to the war, and it is the turning point of the story. The author had no choice; he had to go to Vietnam to address both internal (mental dilemma) and external conflict (physical war).

The moment of change in the story is evident during the course of the war when protagonist was wounded. The moment of change is unexpected change inside a story (Plummer, 2002). There was a different experience between being a soldier and being a civilian. After Tim was injured, the story took a long twists as he felt more like a civilian ounce again, an experienced which he had missed. After the incident where Tim got an injury, the authority transferred him to lighter duty and he felt more like a civilian (O'Brien, 2009). This moment of change had significant impact on the Tim's character. He felt he didn't belong to the military anymore and was angry against the America move to take them to a war zone. At first, the experience of war had changed Tim to an extends where he felt he was not part of American society. His injury led him to change his perception about the war and began to hate his identity as a soldier.