

# On The Rainy River

by Tim O'Brien

## **Vocabulary:**

For the following words write: *the definition, the part of speech, and a sentence using the word.*

1. Consensus: (noun) a general agreement by a group.

*At the conclusion of the meeting, the group came to a consensus about the following year's budget.*

2. Imperative
3. Fathom
4. Acquiescence
5. Platitude
6. Preoccupied
7. Reticence
8. Vigil
9. Pretense
10. Impassive

## **Thinking Critically:** Respond in Complete sentences.

1. What is your reaction to the narrator's final decision?
2. The narrator feels he was a coward for fighting in the Vietnam War. Do you share this opinion? Why or why not?
3. What do you think the narrator means when he says that Elroy Berdahl "saved" him? *Think about: the effect of Elroy's silence; his offer of money to the narrator; why he takes the narrator fishing.*
4. The narrator gives a detailed description of his summer job in a meat-packing plant. Why do you think this description is included?
5. What conviction do you think is being tested in this story? In your opinion, does the narrator "pass" the test? Why or why not?

**Journal Entries:** Choose one for a paragraph response.

- What do you think would have happened if the narrator had decided to do the “brave” thing and flee to Canada? How might Elroy have reacted? Would the narrator have regretted his decision? Give reasons to support your answer.
- Should a government be able to compel citizens to fight in wars? Why or why not?

**Active Reading:** Making Judgments

Good readers not only receive information, but they also make judgments about it. As you read this story, you will receive considerable information about the narrator and the decision he faces. In the chart below, note the reasons the narrator puts forward in support of each option facing him. What is your judgment of his options and his ultimate decision?

<p align="center"><b>Going to Vietnam</b> (What are the narrator’s reasons for going to war?)</p>	<p align="center"><b>Going to Canada</b> (What are the narrator’s reasons for fleeing to Canada?)</p>
<p>Narrator’s views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Serving in Vietnam is what those in his community expect of him.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Narrator’s Views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Going to Vietnam goes against his personal beliefs about the war.</i></li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>My Judgment and Reasons:</b> What do you think about the narrator’s decision? (Provide Reasons)</p>	<p align="center"><b>My Judgment and Reasons:</b> What do you think about the narrator’s decision? (Provide reasons)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I disagree with the narrator’s reasoning here. I think he should ignore the opinions of others, especially concerning something as serious as going to war.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>I think he is right to disagree with the war if it goes against his beliefs. A government should not force a citizen to something that conflicts with their personal or religious beliefs.</i></li> </ul>