The main theme that is portrayed in the autobiographical *If I Die in Combat Zone* is that of denial. Tim O’Brien felt and believed that he would be jeopardizing his own soul by killing people in the Vietnam War, which he views as immoral. He was convinced and persuaded that war was wrong and evil, since people were losing their lives as a result of it. He makes a decision to desert due to the belief that this is the only moral choice. It is however unfortunate that O’Brien lacks the courage to desert and hence, he lets himself to be sent to Vietnam War. He denotes that “He is afraid of running away....he is afraid of what might be thought of him by his loved ones... and he ahs the fear of losing his own reputation” (O’Brien).

He cared most about what people would think about him if he failed to go to the Vietnam War. He held the view that making the decision to go was a symbol of courage and not fear. Dodging or failing to go to the war was cowardice and lack of loyalty to the society, family and his loved ones. He felt that home was the best place for him to be but not Vietnam. The evidence of his negative feelings and attitudes towards war is the daydreaming episodes of escaping and going back to his own place of origin, Minnesota. His depiction of Vietnam also illustrates his negative feelings towards the place. He depicts Vietnam as a “place where a person constantly moves in circles, surrounded by hostile population with no visible enemy in front.” (O’Brien, pp82)

Hence, dissertation is one of the critical elements if O’Brien’s war literature. It entails a confusion and conflict between dodging and going to the war. As he recounts his experiences in the war, he considers escaping. This is illustrated in chapter six of his work. O’Brien however views the act of dodging a military operation as cowardice. He thus decides to embrace courage for the sake of his loved ones. Hence O’Brien attempts to challenge the perspective of what entails an act of challenge.

O’Brien’s feelings about the war were negative since is parents has instilled in him that there
If I Die in a Combat Zone

was nothing positive that could come out of the war (O'Brien).

As his combat duty proceeded, O'Brien's experiences at the Vietnam War did not change his feelings and views about war. Throughout the memoir, O'Brien tells his stories and individual experiences as a human being and soldier. He does not attempt to make himself to sound like a great hero. From his words, it is clear that he had more interest in moving away from Vietnam than staying there. His work is an illustration of the negative feelings and attitudes that O'Brien had towards war and its consequences.

Eventually, O'Brien decides to go back to Minnesota, his home town after his constant daydreaming about dodging the war and going home. Despite fulfilling his wish of quitting, he feels saddened by the act. This is a true illustration that regardless of the fact that O'Brien disliked the war, he was surely going to miss it when he left (O'Brien).

It can be presumed that the fear of change is one of the concepts that are shown in this memoir. Initially, O'Brien was opposed to going to the Vietnam War due to the fear of the unknown and a change from the life he was used to living. He was not ready to fully embrace change and adapt to the ways associated with the Vietnam War. After all the period he had spent fighting in the course of Vietnam War, he seemed reluctant to go home because he was already used to the war. Hence, he was afraid of change regardless of the fact that it was something that he had desired to do for a very long time. Home was change since war had become more like a normal going.

It is important to note that Tim O'Brien went into the Vietnam War with great opposition and came out of the war having learnt the truth as to why he was greatly opposed to the war. He believed that dying in a combat zone was much more than a mere memoir concerning a disastrous war. Moreover, dying was like meditation of cowardice and heroism, on the human potentiality to bear the unbearable (O'Brien).
Reference