

# The Rich Brother



## Introduction

This is a response paper on the story, 'the rich brother' which is authored by Tobias Wolff. This is a short story which clearly brings out the following themes: family relationships, sibling rivalry and the definition or meaning of success. The story circulates around two brothers: Pete and Donald. The two are depicted differently even in their physical characteristics. Carefully analyzing the story this paper will show that actually the two brothers depend on each other.

## The Rich Brother Story

Pete, the older brother, is depicted as a successful businessman with good amount of wealth. This is in total contrast to his brother Donald who is depicted as a poor fellow without any job and always depending on his big brother for livelihood. The story opens with the young brother seen as a dependent on the big brother. This is made clear when Pete goes to pick his young brother who has just been thrown out of a communal farm and has no where to go.

On the way back to Pete's house, three events take place which gives deep information about these two brothers. On their drive to Pete's house, Pete gives Donald a hundred dollars. They talk about their childhood

stories from which one deduces that their rivalry might have started early enough. Donald seems to know the fact that despite the property materials which Pete owns there is something he lacks which he fails to admit openly. At this point the story unfolds the weakness of Pete especially his emotional weakness.

Another person is introduced in the story; Webster. The author depicts Webster as a cunning person who is able to take advantage of situations. He actually succeeds to get the hundred dollars from Donald which Pete had given him. At this point we see a deep contrast among the two brothers; Pete craves to his property and values much what he has worked for while this is exactly the opposite of Donald. Actually the giving away of money by Donald makes him to be kicked out of his the car.

At this point one needs to take a deep look at the family connections and sibling rivalry. Pete does not seem as a person who hates his brother otherwise why did he have to go and pick him after he was thrown out of the communal farm? Why did he give him the hundred dollars especially when one considers the fact that he craves to what he has worked for? One may ask, is it love or is it because he also depends on him? If it is true that Pete depends on Donald then how?

Reading through the story, one will get the feeling that Pete somehow experiences some emptiness within him. This he tries to cover up by using his external wealth. Unlike Pete, Donald seems to be well settled emotionally despite his lack of wealth. On page 295 the author shows Pete's urge to make fool of Donald. This is clearly shown when he asks Donald, "You won't pay me back. You can't. You don't know how". These

remarks are meant to raise Pete's worth by lowering Donald's. In this sense it is seen that actually Pete uses Donald to attain some self emotional satisfaction which he longs for. Therefore it can be said that equally Pete depends on Donald for some emotional support.

## Conclusion

This story clearly depicts the complexities of family relations. It shows the coexistence of love, hate and dependence. It should be noted that this often occurs in the real life situations. Dependency among siblings is a common occurrence among siblings.