

Choose a story from Raymond Carver's *Cathedral* that you like. It should have an ending you understand and that you believe somehow distills the essence of the story.

To do your analysis, you'll want to look back into the body of the story to isolate a specific element or set of related elements *in the writing* you think helps explain or crystallize the ultimate meaning of the story. The elements you examine should be formal ones – irony or paradox, tone, point-of-view and speaker, tension and opposition, ambiguity. In a **5 page (minimum)** essay, discuss how the formal element or set of related elements you have discovered in the text eventually help to resolve the core meaning you identified from the end of the story.

Your thesis statement should make a single assertion about how Carver does something in his story to achieve a given effect. You should structure your thesis statement in a "X yet Y" or "Although X, Y" construction, where one oppositional aspect of the text is subordinated to but unified by another, as in:

"Although Carver never even reveals the name of his very unsympathetic protagonist in "Cathedral," this character is arguably the one person who becomes the most tragically human by the end of the story."

You are pointing toward a central ambiguity in the text and describing how it relates to and helps lay the foundation for the final resolution of the story. The central question you're asking for this assignment is, essentially, this: How do the parts relate to the whole?

Use the "How to" sections I've pointed out in *Texts and Contexts* to help you with this assignment. This is fundamentally an exercise in figuring out how the formal elements of a story help structure and explain the ultimate meaning of the work. I want you to look hard at *how* Carver achieves the kind of "transcendent" meaning or truth that he so often does at the ends of his stories, and *show* that structure to me. This is supposed to be a formal examination of how, specifically, you think Carver has achieved the overall impression a given story leaves in your mind.

- Remember to fully introduce *and* summarize the story you're analyzing *and* the major tenets of New Criticism before you begin your analysis
- Be specific in your argumentation: Develop a sound thesis statement in your first paragraph that revolves around a single point you wish to make about the selection
- Develop your body paragraphs by **positing** a single supporting point, then by **introducing and inserting** a textual quotation to provide evidence of your point, then by **explaining and discussing** that evidence and **tying it back** to the main point of your paragraph
- As always, write only in the 3rd person (no "I," no "you") and use only the present verb tense
- Cite your sources with a page number in parentheses after the quotation, and follow all other formatting guidelines outlined in my syllabus and on the Sample Format page available on the website under the "Resources" tab
- Do a Works Cited page for this assignment – see the MLA Primer and the Sample Works Cited List, both of which are available on the website under the "Resources" tab, for a reminder of how to do this
- The final version of this assignment must be **5 pages (minimum)**, no less (though you're always welcome to write more!)