

“Cathedral” + “What we talk about when we talk about love”



Introduction

In an interview with Gail Caldwell, one of the last of his life, Raymond Carver said that he didn't find his stories to be bleak. "I still think it's a bitter—a grim scene out there," he said. "But I feel a little more affirmative, a little more cheerful." As you reflect on these two stories about relationships, do you agree with Carver's statements about his work?

Later in the same interview with Caldwell, Carver says that most of his stories could take place anywhere: "...it's an emotional landscape I'm most interested in. These four people in 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love' could be sitting around a table in Albuquerque, or El Paso—but they could just as easily be in Wichita or Syracuse." What do you think that Carver means by "emotional landscape?"

Response

As you begin your response to these texts, think about the way in which Carver explores the "emotional landscape" between the characters in these stories. Do you believe that they paint a positive—if somewhat grim—picture of the world "out there?"

Your response should include:

- An analysis of each text.
- An analysis (not a summary) of at least two characters.
- A discussion of the emotional landscape of each piece.
- Clear evidence and commentary