

Questions on *Cathedral* by Raymond Carver:

1. In the first few sections of the story, what do the narrator's remarks about the visit of the blind man, about his wife's history, and about himself suggest about what kind of person he is? How would you characterize this narrator's worldview? His values? How is our vision of the narrator influenced by *how* he speaks, by Carver's relentlessly simple sentences, by the narrator's attributing a word such as *inseparable* to his wife, for example? Is the narrator a sympathetic character? If so, why? What makes him sympathetic?
2. What is the narrator's attitude toward the visit of the blind man? Why is he so threatened by the idea of that visit? How might the blind man threaten his worldview and / or values? What do you make of the narrator's not being named in the story?
3. What is the significance of the fact that the narrator reacts so strongly and so imaginatively to the idea of the death of the blind man's wife? What does this reaction suggest about him? How and why might it change our view of the narrator?
4. What literally happens in the final section of the story? What happens symbolically? Does the narrator seem to be changed? How and why? What does he mean when he says he feels as if he is not "inside anything"?
5. Carver's title suggests that it is significant that Robert and the narrator draw a cathedral together. Why and how is this so significant? What other references to religion appear in the story? How might they help you understand the significance of the cathedral?
6. What does "blindness" symbolize in our culture? How does Carver's story reinforce or undermine that symbolism?