

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES

“Will you please be quiet, please?”

Text guide by: Peter Allen

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PLEASE NOTE:

All page numbers provided throughout this piece are taken from *Will you please be quiet, please?* (2009) Raymond Carver, Vintage Classics.

AUTHOR NOTES

Raymond Carver was an American short-story writer and poet who is often credited with revitalising the short story in the 1980s. Carver's reputation continued to grow after his death at the age of fifty. Robert Altman's film *Short Cuts* (1993) is based on several of Carver's stories. His short fiction is often called minimalism. Carver himself did not like the label, because it "smacks of smallness of vision and execution."

Early Life

Raymond Carver was born in Oregon on 25 May, 1938 and was raised in Washington State. His alcoholic father was a sawmill worker - -and his mother was a waitress.

Carver worked with his father in a sawmill in California, and then as a deliveryman. Like his father, Carver also became an alcoholic. He met his first wife, Maryann, when she was fourteen. When she was sixteen they married and six months later, when she had turned seventeen, their daughter was born. When she was eighteen they had a son. During their marriage, she worked at various jobs, as a waitress, a salesperson, an administrative assistant and a teacher. Usually she was earning more money than he was.

Writing

Carver enrolled at various colleges, where he concentrated his studies on creative writing. At age twenty-two his first published story "The Furious Seasons" appeared in the college magazine, *Selection*. His first published poem "The Brass Ring" appeared in the magazine *Targets* in 1962.

In his late twenties, Carver filed for bankruptcy, his father died and he got his first white collar job as a textbook editor. During this time his short story, "Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?" appeared in *The Best American Short Stories* 1967, and a college press published the poems *Near Klamath*, his first book.

Carver continued to move around, change jobs, and have stories and poems published. He also began to lecture at various educational institutions. He filed for bankruptcy again and was hospitalised with acute alcoholism. In his late thirties, Carver's first collection of short stories, *Put Yourself In My Shoes*, appeared in 1974. It was followed by the collection, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976). The title story of the collection was nominated for a National Book Award. Carver stopped drinking and met Tess Gallagher at a poetry convention, after which he and Maryann separated. The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters awarded him a fellowship to write full-time. Carver received several awards, among them The National Endowment for the Arts award in fiction (1980) and a Guggenheim fellowship (1979-80). In 1983 he was the recipient of the "Mildred and Harold Strauss Livings", which was conferred by a special panel of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Death

At the age of forty-nine, doctors diagnosed Carver with cancer. They removed part of his left lung, but the cancer recurred. He had brain radiation treatment, and enjoyed a brief remission before the cancer recurred. On Friday 17th June 1988, Raymond Carver and Tess Gallagher were married in Reno, Nevada and on 2nd August of that same year he died at their home in Washington State. The *Stories of Raymond Carver* (1995) was published posthumously, seven years after his death.

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