

# Short story analysis: they're not your husband essay sample



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The short story "They're not your husband" by Raymond Carver focuses on multiple different themes. Earl is a jobless salesman who is embarrassed with the appearance of his wife Doreen and becomes very controlling over her. The conversation between two men talking about the way that his wife looks triggered his behavior and led him to become so possessive of his wife's appearance. Earl sees his wife more as an object than a person and also as a way to cover up his insecurities.

From the beginning of the story the theme of embarrassment was explored. When Earl showed up to Doreen's job he was embarrassed by the comment made by two men. The two men stated "Some jokers like their quim fat" (Carver 18), Earl was extremely embarrassed by that remark to the point he left. It seems as if Earl is very insecure due to the fact that he was being called a joker for having Doreen as his wife. His wife's appearance relates back to him, because they technically represent each other. This is definitely a form of insecurity because he does not say anything to them rather just leave. It seems as if he was mostly worried about himself rather than his wife Doreen. Earl lets people's opinions of him play a part on his life, as if he needs someone's consent on whether or not his wife looks good.

Physical appearance is a recurring theme in this story. Earl was so bothered by the remarks made about his wife that he demanded that she go on a diet and lose weight. Even though Doreen didn't really want to go through with it he insisted that she did. Rather than accepting her for the way she is and the way she looks he tried to change her instead. That is how Earl copes with his insecurities. He forces his wife to lose weight to make him feel better about himself and for his pride. It seems as if he doesn't really

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have much love or respect for his wife, which is pretty clear when he insisted that she went on a diet.

If he truly cared for her like a husband is supposed to care for their wife, then he should have stood up for his wife when the men were making fun of her appearance. Instead, he hid away in shame and embarrassment. He frowned when he saw the veins in her leg. This shows how uncomfortable Earl is with Doreen's appearance. This shows how Earl does not accept his wife for who she is. Throughout the whole time Earl never ask Doreen how she is doing.

As the story continues the reader also senses that Earl has become obsessional. Doreen seems very respectful. She does whatever Earl asks of her regardless if it's what she wants. When Earl suggests that she go on a diet, he proclaims that " I've never felt it was a problem before" (Carver 19). Doreen didn't feel as if anything was wrong with her body, but she agreed to diet because she noticed Earl got upset when she didn't want to. This obsession is noticeable by the continuous marking down of Doreen's weight. Every morning he checks his wife weight and watches what she eats. One morning she gets caught eating eggs and bacon, he was very upset at her and calls her a slob. Towards the end of the story, Earl asks another man what he thinks of Doreen and her new body. The man ignores the question and does not answer Earl. He does not pay any attention to Doreen, but Earl needs immediate approval from the man to say that she looks good. The man never comments on Doreen and her appearance.

The ending of the story really tells you all. We notice through the encounter Earl had with the man at the bar that he is only worried about the way Doreen looks. It seems as if he needs other people's approval on Doreen. That is his way of coping with his insecurities and the fact that the two men from the beginning of the story practically called him a joker. One thing that caught my attention was when Doreen's colleague asked her who he was and she replied " He's a salesman. He's my husband" (Carver 24). Carver tells his readers that Earl views his wife more as a product than an actual human being.