

“Why Don’t You Dance?” (1981) by Raymond Carver

Questions for discussion

1. Why did things look “much the way they had in the bedroom”?
2. What does “his side, her side” indicate?
3. In what ways could we interpret “the extension cord” as a metaphor?
4. Why doesn’t anyone stop and why wouldn’t he stop either?
5. A girl and a boy arrive. What’s the contrast between them and the man?
6. What kind of furniture do the girl and the boy first look for? What does this indicate?
7. How would you describe the boy? Why?
8. How would you describe the girl? Why?
9. How would you describe their relationship?
10. The girl says, “wouldn’t it be funny if,” but doesn’t finish her sentence. How do you think that sentence might continue?
11. Why is the man unwilling to bargain the prices of the furniture?
12. Why doesn’t the boy drink?
13. “[The man’s] cigarette dropped from his fingers and fell between the cushions.” How do we feel about that?
14. The girl didn’t know any of the records. What does this indicate?
15. The man asks them: “Why don’t you dance?” Why?
16. The man and the girl dance and they don’t care about being seen. Discuss what this shows. How do you feel about their dance?
17. Think of the last two lines. Why is it so hard for her to describe what happened?
18. How does alcohol function in the story?
19. What similarities can you find between this short story and “Hills Like White Elephants”?