

Following Questions

by Sean Ziebarth

1. Describe Howard's relationship with his wife.
2. Does Howard love his wife? Use specific examples of Howard's words, thoughts, and actions to support your answer.
3. Can the property line between Howard and his neighbor be considered a symbol? Why, or why not?
4. If the property line is a symbol, what about the neighbor girl's window, the flickering candle in her room, her black cotton panties? How important to the story are these objects? Do they appear more than once? Are they described in detail? Do they appear at climactic moments?
5. What details make clear the neighbor girl's attitude toward older men? What is the reason for her attitude? When does her attitude change?
6. For what reason does Beverly keep asking Howard if he'd like to go to bed? Characterize the tone of his response.
7. Note the religious diction, especially words like "beguiled," "iniquity," and "crucify." What does this language reveal about Beverly? What does it reveal about her view of her husband?
8. Sketch out the story using Freytag's Pyramid. Identify each point within the story (exposition, rising action, complication, climax, etc.).
9. What values animate Beverly's behavior and feelings? What values underlie Howard's treatment of her?

10. We never really know the cause of Howard's death. What do you think happened? How does it relate to the overall theme of the story?

11. Why is Chastity, the neighbor girl, aptly named?

