

E. E. Cummings Poetry Questions

“anyone lived in a pretty how town” WS

1. The hero of the poem is “anyone”; “noone” is the heroine. a. What do the names “anyone” and “noone” suggest about what kind of people they are? b. What two meanings are suggested in line 12?
- 2a. What does “anyone” do in the “pretty how town”? b. What, as suggested by lines 7 and, do the rest of the townspeople (“women and men”) do with their lives? c. What do the other lovers, “someones” and “everyones” do in the town?
- 3a. What happens to the children in the “pretty how town” as “up they grow”? b. What happens to them “with up so floating many bells down”?
- 4a. What happens to “anyone” “one day i guess” that eventually also happens to “noone”? b. What do the “busy folk” do with them and what happens to them “by April”?
- 5a. What does the repetition of the seasons, bells, and celestial objects suggest in the poem? b. Why is this necessary to the theme of the poem?

“somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond” p. 810

6. Describe the effect the speaker's beloved has on him in the poem.
7. In the first three stanzas, what figures of speech show how the speaker feels about his love and how she affects him?
8. Explain what you believe Cummings means by “death and forever” in stanza 4.
- 9a. How can the rain be said to have “small hands”? b. What is the speaker suggesting about his love by using this beautiful and mysterious metaphor?

“what if a much of a which of a wind” p. 807

10. What does the speaker of “what if a much of a which of a wind” suggest about the human spirit?
11. What does Cummings mean by the last two lines of the poem?
12. What do you believe is the tone of the poem? Explain.
13. Cummings opens each stanza with a question and a different image of destruction. a. What are the questions presented? b. How is destruction described in each stanza or what is being destroyed?

“pity this busy monster, manunkind” WS

14. Cummings attacks what he calls “progress,” which he sees as the problem in much of modern life. a. To what condition does he compare progress? b. What does the word “manunkind” suggest is the cause of this condition? c. Why should we not pity the victim?
15. What two examples of technological progress does Cummings use to show “manunkinds” warped sense of reality and self-importance?
16. What do the words “hypermagical” and “ultraomnipotence” suggest about “manunkind”?
17. What might Cummings mean by the “good universe next door”?

“anyone lived in a pretty how town”

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did

Women and men(both little and small) 5
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few 10
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief 15
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then)they 20
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess 25
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep 30
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came 35
sun moon stars rain

“pity this busy monster, manunkind”

pity this busy monster, manunkind,

not. Progress is a comfortable disease:
your victim (death and life safely beyond)

plays with the bigness of his littleness
—electrons deify one razorblade
into a mountainrange; lenses extend
unwish through curving wherewhen till unwish
returns on its unself.

5

A world of made
is not a world of born—pity poor flesh

and trees, poor stars and stones, but never this
fine specimen of hypermagical

10

ultraomnipotence. We doctors know

a hopeless case if—listen: there's a hell
of a good universe next door; let's go