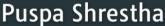
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4

Who are you, little i?

E. E. Cummings

Before Reading

Answer these questions.

- a. Have you ever looked out through a window and taken pleasure in what you saw? If so, what did you look at?
- b. Which beautiful scenes do you think would make you want to look out through the window?
- c. Do you write the pronoun 'I' capital or small in writing?

E(dward) E(stlin) Cummings (1894-1962), often styled as e e cummings, was an American poet, painter, essayist, novelist, and playwright. He wrote approximately 2,900 poems, two autobiographical novels, four plays, and several essays, as well as numerous drawings and paintings.



He developed the style of poetry writing for which he became renowned, with its unconventional use of capitalization, punctuation, spacing, and structure. He is regarded as an eminent voice of the 20th century English literature.

Cummings' poem 'who are you, little i' describes a child looking out a window at the end of the day. It is about nature and the effect it has on the speaker. The speaker of the poem is the person "voicing" the words, recalling a childhood moment closely connected with nature. Perhaps the speaker is Cummings.

Reading

who are you, little i
(five or six years old)
peering from some high
window; at the gold
of November sunset
(and feeling: that if day
has to become night

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this is a beautiful way)

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

- a. Who can be the speaker of this poem?
- b. What is "little i" doing?
- c. What can be the relationship between "little i" and the speaker of the poem?
- d. What is the speaker remembering from his childhood days in the poem?
- e. What attitude does the speaker seem to have toward the child in the poem?

Reference to the context

- a. Why do you think Cummings has placed a semicolon between the words window and at?
- b. If the speaker is the child grown up, why does he ask, "who are you"?
- c. In this poem, an adult reflects on the childhood experience. Based on that, what might be the theme of the lines: "(and feeling: that if day / has to become night / this is a beautiful way)"?
- d. What is the rhyme scheme used in the poem?
- e. Explain the pun in "little i" that is related to what he is doing.
- f. How does Cummings's use of lowercase letters affect your understanding of the poem? Explain.

Reference beyond the text

- a. How does nature inspire the speaker in "who are you, little i"? Explain.
- b. Recall a childhood moment when you felt closely connected with nature. Describe the time and place as well as your feelings and thoughts about it.
- c. Interpret the poem in any way you like.