

GENERAL QUESTIONS for POETRY

Jodie Morgenson in response to “**anyone lived in a pretty how town**” by **e e cummings**

1. What type of poetry is this? *avante garde*, free verse (with cummings’ own invented regularity), experimental
2. What is its rhyme scheme? It is unique. I see it as follows:

aaxx*
bbcc**
ddxx

eexx
xxxx
ff**xx

gg**xx
hhxx
ijj**

*no detectable rhyme pattern
**slant rhyme

3. What is its meter? I can discern no organized/standardized meter; however, my ability to decipher a poem’s meter is, admittedly, a weakness of mine.
4. Who is the speaker of the poem? an outside observer, who inserts him or herself only briefly in line 25
5. To whom is the poem addressed? It seems to be a message to the world in general.
6. What is the tone of the poem? It depends on how you read the message of this poem. I’ve interpreted it a couple of ways. (See below.) Interp 1 would suggest a hopeful tone; interp 2 suggests a drearier outlook.
7. What is the mood of the poem? The mood, like the tone, can be interpreted a couple of ways. It depends on the meaning you pull from it. (See below.) If you go with interp one, the mood is a bit depressing at first, but twists to a lighter, happier mood once the two lovers discover one another. If you go with interp 2, the mood stays consistently depressing, unless you are comforted by routine and drudgery – in that case the mood is soothing.
8. Discuss the imagery and figurative language in the poem.

The image of the four seasons paired with images of sky-based entities (sun, moon, stars, rain) repeat throughout. The two sets of images correspond with one another. One could pair the summer with the sun, the autumn with the moon (think of a harvest moon), the winter with stars (stars and snowflakes are visually similar when viewed from varying vantage points), and the spring with rain. The seasons are often associated in literature with the

stages in life, with spring being representative of birth, summer—youth, fall—adulthood, and winter—death. So, the repetition of these images throughout suggests that the characters within the poem are trudging through the natural stages of life, which is cyclical, and in death, we are reborn (thus ending with spring or its agent of representation—rain). Life goes on.

9. What is the meaning of the poem?

Two separate interpretations jump out at me:

Interp 1. Most people are comfortable with the status quo, so much so that they dislike those who “march to the beat of their own drums”. However, even those who do their own thing, can find love, so there is hope for everyone. In fact, those who stand apart from the so-called crowd may be more likely to find a kindred spirit in another unique individual than the drones who go about their routines without original thoughts in their heads or without the desire to pursue individual thoughts.

Interp 2. The character, *anyone* stands for any individual man. The character *noone* stands for any individual woman. If you look at what these names (the denotation of the words themselves) mean, the message is that no one loves anyone in this world. We are all selfish beings, so self-involved that we are truly only concerned with ourselves. Life is futile in the way it marches on.

10. Other relevant comments:

e e cummings is known for his disregard of traditional grammatical features. This poem is no exception.