

ee cummings
I thank you God for this most amazing
Wrap your mind around these ones!

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ee cummings -- his real name was Edward Estlin -- was born in Massachusetts in 1894. His father was a professor of Sociology and Political Science at Harvard University but who later became a Unitarian minister.

Cummings was himself a Harvard graduate, obtaining a Masters degree in English and Classical Studies in 1916. His intelligence and novel way of thinking, however, caused him to be ostracised and so he found solace in his poetry. Although he is known for his flamboyant style of writing, he also published a couple of novels and four plays -- and was an artist who excelled in both drawing and painting.

Cummings' way of thinking was often transcendental, i.e. he believed it possible to reach an ideal spiritual state by use of intuition rather than through established religious beliefs. Indeed, he reveals this concept in "i thank You God for most this amazing".

His poetry was shaped by romantic tradition -- for example, he wrote many sonnets -- but he is best known for his idiosyncratic style in which he used little punctuation, often wrote in the lowercase and jumbled up the order of words.

It has been said that his poetry often makes little sense until it is read aloud. On the other hand, several of his poems reveal his artistic flair in that they are pictures painted in words, e.g. "r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r". He was also known for his satire when addressing social issues, but he had a strong bias towards the exuberance of love, sex and spiritual rebirth.

Cummings died of a stroke on September 3, 1962. He was 68 years of age. He had won many awards for his work.

1. This poem has been described as being a sonnet. Is it indeed a sonnet? (6)
2. It has been said that the poet is often "transcendental".
 - What is meant by "transcendental"? (2)
 - In what way does an understanding of the term "transcendental" enable one to reach a richer understanding of this poem? (10)
3. How does the strange word order in this poem, and the lack of punctuation, force the reader to approach the poem differently? (6)
4. Be able to explain how the poet makes use of most novel forms of imagery to reveal his thought. (10)

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