

Analysis of anyone lived in a pretty how town essay



**ASSIGN
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In the poem *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* E. E. Cummings plays with jumbled syntax, a seemingly random rhyme scheme, and the paradox of non-identical repetition to convey his message about the ordinariness of daily life, the passing of time, and the inclusive anonymity of people we encounter in our lives. *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* describes the daily lives of the people who live in a certain, nameless town. The town is not named and neither are any of the townspeople, other than to give titles such as “ man,” “ woman,” “ child.

These anonymous people living in the anonymous town do nothing notable; in fact, they are all fairly unremarkable as they go about their daily lives. The poem addresses all the seasons of life that the townspeople experience as the seasons, “ spring summer autumn winter” pass in the same manner year after year. *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* speaks of the town’s naive young children who did not understand, since they were “ apt to forget to remember,” the complexities or significance of individual moments in their lives.

Cummings also describes children guessing the point of life and their place in the world “ as up they grew. *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* also refers to grown “ men and women (both little and small)” who, although in a different stage of life than the children have not yet accomplished anything particularly noteworthy. This is evidenced by Cummings’ description of the adults as still “ little and small,” since he suggests that while they appear to be grown up they still have a long way to go. The everyday actions of the townspeople are monotonous and do not advance them or the town since

they only “ sowed their isn’t they reaped their same,” gaining nothing from their tedious daily work.

The people of the town continue to advance through the stages of life as they grow older and eventually die. Cummings also mentions times of dancing, joy, laughter as well as times of sorrow and tears throughout the years. Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town is made up of nine stanzas with four lines each. Within these nine stanzas Cummings employs a number of literary and poetic devices; syntax, rhyme, rhythm and repetition to convey his message through the townspeople. When reading Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town the reader will notice the jumbled syntax and order of words.

Cummings has taken poetic license to make the standard order of words normally used to express an idea irrelevant by mixing them in different ways. An example of this is the reoccurring “ with up so floating many bells down. ” At first glance things do not appear to be entirely coherent and the reader may stumble over the unexpected syntax, especially if reading out loud. This is exactly Cumming’s intent, as it further conveys his message. The reader is not able to handle the poem in the same thoughtless manner that the townspeople handle everyday life.

The townspeople live each day, season and year without much thought, acting as though, in the grand scheme of things, none of the events of their lives are particularly significant. This slightly apathetic attitude causes the townspeople to live life as if it does not matter, and none of their actions will bring about change. The jumbled syntax causes the reader to have to put

extra thought into the reading and interpretation of the poem, presenting an irony between the effect of the structure of Cummings's poem and his characters.

The majority of *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* is written with the rhyme scheme of A, A, B, C; five out of nine stanzas employ this scheme. Once the reader has become familiar with the rhyme pattern of the poem, Cummings adds two stanzas that seem not to follow any pattern, and then concludes with a stanza in the form of A, A, B, B. This structure also contributes to Cummings ideas about life in this "pretty how town." As with life, no one stays completely the same throughout it. Even without huge defining life events people grow and mature because of the everyday things that they experience.

People may follow one path in their life only to discover that they need to slightly adapt their ideas or plans in order to survive. Cummings begins with one rhyme scheme to represent the way we try and make it through life with one set of ideas, but then completely abandons his original pattern to show the disillusionment of necessary change and adaptation. In the end the rhyme pattern, A, A, B, B is only slightly different from the A, A, B, C form that Cummings used in the beginning, which shows the subtle changes that occur in each of us as we mature.

This poem has a beautiful rhythm that resembles a bouncy piece of music and its accompanying dance. In *Anyone Lived in a Pretty how Town* life is portrayed almost like a piece of music with a definite structure to it. The words "floating," "dance," and "sing" all appear in the poem and add to

the idea of a piece of music. A piece of music has an introduction, verses, choruses and an ending, just as life has seasons that all last a certain amount of time and follow a particular sequence.

Each step in life is not particularly impressive if seen in exclusion from the others, but when one looks back on an entire life there is more to appreciate. The different seasons, “ autumn winter spring summer,” all mold together to show the passing of time that forms an entire life. There is a paradox in the way that Cummings uses repetition in his poem because the repetition is surprisingly not identical each time it is repeated. There are many groupings of words that are repeated in the poem, but in each repetition the order of the words is varied ever so slightly.

For example, he ends the 2nd stanza with “ sun moon stars rain,” and begins the 6th stanza with “ stars moon sun rain. ” Essentially the repeated words in varied orders all say the same thing, but this also points to the idea of the process of time passing. When, as people age and they move from one life event to another, things will change slightly. It may be so slight that the change is barely noticeable, but in reality, especially for the anonymous people of the “ pretty how town” nothing really changes.

Situations may appear to be different, the people experiencing may not be the same “ anyones” and “ noones” as last time, but still, as time passes, the main ideas and lifestyle of the town is the same. I really enjoyed Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town. From the beginning, it pulled me in with its lively rhythm and unanticipated imagery. I felt like I was almost stumbling over the poem the first time I read through it because of the chaotic use of syntax,

but on a second, closer reading of the poem I saw that Cummings had a lot to say though his use of words and order.

I enjoyed the frequent references to seasons, and seeing how they could be related to the seasons of our lives. Still, my favorite part about Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town is its inclusive anonymity. The only character that is “named” anything other than “man,” “woman,” and “child” is “anyone.” This makes the poem very inclusive and lets the reader sympathize with the townspeople and the author, and further illustrates the similarities among all people as we grow and experience life.