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Text piece

Poetry Study Reference: i thank You God for most this amazing, E.E. Cummings

Compiled by

Imaad Isaacs

Contributors

Imaad Isaacs - Ashleigh Simon

Resources consulted

How to approach a poem, JSK Publishers

ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE

PRESCRIBED POETRY FOR NSC EVALUATION 2009

Achebe	<i>Refugee mother and child</i>
Banoobhai	<i>You cannot know the fears I have</i>
Cummings	<i>i thank You God for most this amazing</i>
Day-Lewis	<i>Walking away</i>
Dikeni	<i>Love poem for my country</i>
Eliot	<i>Preludes</i>
Ghose	<i>Decomposition</i>
Keats	<i>To Autumn</i>
Livingstone	<i>Sunstrike</i>
Mungoshi	<i>If you don't stay bitter for too long</i>
Plath	<i>Mushrooms</i>
Serote	<i>City Johannesburg</i>
Shakespeare	<i>To me, fair friend</i>
Shelley	<i>Ozymandias</i>
Yeats	<i>An Irish airman forsees his death</i>

i thank You God for most this amazing
E.E. Cummings

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CONTENT SUMMARY

The poet passionately expresses his thanks to God for the wonders and beauties of nature. The poet feels as if though he is witnessing God for the first time after being reborn. The poet thus cannot see how anyone who experiences God's wonders of nature and such beauty can doubt God's existence.

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The poem consists of fourteen lines, divided into three quatrains and a couplet. However, this is not a true Shakespearian sonnet because the rhyme scheme is rather irregular. It displays sonnet features in that it presents a progression of thought in the three quatrains. The poem concludes with a couplet that acts a neat rounding off of the thoughts expressed in the quatrains.

ANALYSIS

Stanza One

The poet thanks God for the beauties of the day he witnesses around him. The tress in their green freshness seem almost alive as they blow wildly in the wind.

“leaping greenly spirits” – possibly referring to the ancient belief that spirits resided in trees.

The poet is amazed at the beauty of nature that has no limits. He also observes the sky's blueness (“a blue true dream of sky”).

Cummings also uses a particular writing technique in which uses ***inverted word order***. Examples:-

Line one

He stresses the word “most” by placing it before the phrase “this amazing day”.

Line four

He places the word “yes” at the very end of the line. This technique draws attention to it and indicates, perhaps, that he cannot find words to accurately describe and express the enthusiasm he feels for what he experiences.

Stanza Two

The entire stanza has been placed in brackets. It may be interpreted as a type of an aside in which the poet expresses his personal response to the beauty of God's creations (nature).

“i who have died am alive again today” – through these words the poet effectively expresses the fact that he has been spiritually reborn. It may also suggest that the poet may have been in a depressed state or leading a meaningless existence.

Consequently, after experiencing the rise of the sun properly, he feels “life”, “love” and “wings” anew.

The poet’s elation is made clear in the conclusion of the second stanza. He describes the earth as an extraordinary place, it is illimitable (“gay/great happening”).

Stanza Three

The poet expresses his idea that any person, who has experienced such wonders and beauty, cannot possibly doubt the existence of God.

“lifted from the no / of all nothing” – This statement suggests that both man’s salvation and life only gains meaning once his soul has been saved (“lifted”) from his lowly-stated (“the no / of all nothing”) – in comparison with God.

The words “merely” and “illimitably” (line 8) are contrasted, thus again indicating the lofty status of God with man’s mere mortality.

“human merely being” – The poet once again uses the inverted word order technique. The manner in which this phrase is expressed is much more effective than the ordinary phrase “a mere human being”.

He uses “i” as a lowercase letter, thus also indicating the mere mortality and humility of man in comparison with God.

Stanza Four

In this stanza Cummings moves toward a personal dimension, the entire stanza is once again placed in brackets. He says that he is truly hearing and seeing the truth for the first time. It seems as if though he is not only seeing and hearing the wonders and beauties of nature but also, seeing and hearing God for the first time.

The poem is described as a “joyous celebration of life” and to paraphrase it would certainly detract from its beauty and powerful effect.

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