

*1. Among crumbling people*

E.E.Cummings

Among crumbling people (a  
 Long ruined streets  
 Hither and) softly  
 Thither between (tumb  
 Ling) houses (as  
 the Knowing spirit prowls, its  
 Nose witness before a dissonance of  
 Rish and foses)  
 Until  
 (finding one's self  
 At some distance from the  
 Crooked town) A  
 Harbor fools the sea (  
 While emanating the triple starred hotel du golf.  
 Or ideal edifice. Situated or established  
 ...far from the noise of waters) One's  
 Eye perceives  
 (as the ego approaches)  
 Painfully sterilized contours:  
 Within  
 Which  
 "Ladies and gentlemen"  
 -under  
 Glass  
 Are: asking  
 Each  
 Oth  
 Er rub!ber q  
 Questions

**Introduction**

E.E.Cummings, Born on October 14, 1894, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, E.E.Cummings went on to become an innovative poet known for his lack of stylistic and structural conformity, as seen in volumes like *Tulips and Chimneys* and *XLI Poems*. After self-publishing for much of his career he eventually found wide recognition.

Occupation: Playwright, poet, Author

Birth Date: October 14, 1894

He wrote approximately 2900 Poems, 2 autobiographical novels, 4 Plays and Several essays. Cummings is associated with modernist free-form poetry. Much of his work has original Syntax and uses lower case spellings for poetic expression. His use of lower case extended to rendering even the personal pronoun "I" as i. Cummings was politically neutral much of his life until the rise of the Cold War when he became a Republican and Supporter of Joseph McCarthy. He taught at Harvard University.

### **Summary of the Poem**

#### **The Pitiable Crumbling People**

When the Poem begins, the poet is strolling in the streets of America witnessing the suffering of crumbling people due to the Second World War The fall of American Economy and the great depression had ruined the day to day life. While strolling towards a hotel in the harbor of a sea, the scenes on the way disturb him. The war had not only caused the loss of their possessions but also the loss of their physique and peace of mind. As the result of the devastating war, they were drawn to streets and led their life without any shelter. The war victims had insisted the poet's human concern. The milieu of the victimized was in pathetic conditions as they were left homeless. The roof of their houses was hanging in the air and they symbolized the hanging lives of the poor. It seemed as though the houses whined and cried towards the rich and their powerful people for their apathetic attitude to the poor. It also denoted apparently that the poor who lived in the house made loud cries due to distress, pain and anguish.

Passing through the crooked town, he neared the seashore and found people at some distance in the harbor. The Harbor a symbolic representation of the sheltered place of the rich who seemed to be ignorant of the conditions of the poor.

#### **Unconcern of the Rich**

The rich people fooled the sea and continued to make money. They used the lower class to work for them and as they were sheltered and fortunate never listened to the painful voice of the poor. While the lower class people were in agony for livelihood, the upper class entertained themselves in a triple star hotel of the harbor which symbolized the luxurious and lavish lives of the rich.

#### **Social Inequality**

The different attitude of the rich displayed the Social Inequality of America. The Country of Spain colonized the Native Americans who were victimized during the war. They were unemployed and found no means to elevate their lives. But the rich extracted work from them,

squandered energy for their own well being due to which prevailed social disharmony. The lower classes were not cared. They were untouchable.

### **The Sterilized Rich**

The Poet feels that the sympathy of the rich was sterilized. Their unconcern was a sterilized contour turning inhumane to the poor who sought aids and shelter. Their unconcern pains the poet. It raises his ego and emerges as the lower class was brutally victimized.

When they were in such a miserable condition, the rich consumed alcohol and stayed safe in a wealthy hotel. They were amusing themselves perching under a glass house which enabled everyone to witness the happening of the outside world. Though they could notice the woes of the poor, they just ignored them. They engaged themselves in amorous talks. They asked each other rubber questions unworthy questions.

### **Conclusion**

Thus the poet emotionally describes the ill effects of the war and the indifferent attitude of the rich towards the poor crumbling people. The upper class just exploited the poor and the labor class did not meet the basic requirement of their survival.

## *2. Anecdote of the Jar*

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Wallace Stevens

I placed a jar in Tennessee  
And round it was, upon a hill  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

## Wallace Stevens



Stevens in 1948

<b>Born</b>	October 2, 1879 Reading, Pennsylvania, U.S.
<b>Died</b>	August 2, 1955 (aged 75) Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.
<b>Occupation</b>	Poet, lawyer, insurance executive
<b>Period</b>	1914–1955
<b>Literary movement</b>	Modernism
<b>Notable works</b>	<i>Harmonium</i> "The Idea of Order at Key West" <i>The Man With the Blue Guitar</i> <i>The Auroras of Autumn</i> "Of Modern Poetry"
<b>Notable awards</b>	Robert Frost Medal (1951)
<b>Spouse</b>	Elsie Viola Kachel (m. 1909–1955)
<b>Children</b>	Holly Stevens (1924–1992)

**Signature**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wallace Stevens". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and somewhat stylized.

## **Anecdote of the Jar by Wallace Stevens**

*Anecdote of the Jar* by Wallace Stevens is a poem that expresses, through the story of “a jar” and “a hill,” the progressive over taking of industry over nature. In the final stanza, that over taking is revealed to be a sad and absurd prospect since Stevens’ comparisons make it clear that he believes nature is far more remarkable than industry will ever be. While there are other explanations that could be applied to this poem, the heart of the plot is a reflection of this absurdity, making the three-stanzas a combined lament of the forsaking of nature for what was misinterpreted as betterment.

*Anecdote of the Jar* Analysis :

### **First stanza**

The narrator begins the poem by the simple proclamation that he “placed a jar in Tennessee,” “upon a hill.” This is a very clear and non descriptions action, and even this “jar” is treated in a less than vivid manner. The reader does not know how big this “jar” was, what color it was, etc. Rather, the reader can only know that it was “round.” Despite the simple design and description, however, this “jar” turned into something of massive importance since “[i]t made the slovenly wilderness [s]urround that hill.”

Already, the reader might find themselves pondering a strong and reasonable question regarding how something as insignificant as “a jar” could have such an impact on “wilderness.” Because “a jar” would not physically be capable of making something like this happen—and also because “wilderness” would not be able to make a rational decision like this—the reader must look to metaphor and symbolism for an answer. It could be that Stevens is relaying a situation where perfection demands attention and admiration. This idea has support in that this “jar” was “placed” “upon a hill” so that “wilderness” would have to grow to reach its superior position, and in the notion that “wilderness” itself has been labeled as “slovenly.”

This is a general representation of the transition of the world from natural to man-made structure. “Jar” represent the industrial era and fall of “Wilderness” This “jar” could represent the progress into a more industrial era from the more natural world that once existed, and the falling away of “wilderness” as the world strove to follow this industrial pattern is revealed through the statement that “the slovenly wilderness” started to “[s]urround that hill.” Through industry, more and more became man-made, leaving less that still existed within the realm of “wilderness” territory.

The question would then become why Stevens has selected a lowly “jar” to represent all of man-made industry. The answer could be found in the progress of industry since tools and equipment would have started much simpler than they currently are in the modern world, meaning this “jar” could take the reader back to a moment of early history in industry. In this, the reader can see the beginnings of industry as a turning point of “wilderness” to witness that early struggle. Another possibility is that Stevens is showing that even the simplest of man-made items

has the ability to lure people from more natural elements, and something as non-technical as “a jar” would be a wonderful representation of that.

### **Second Stanza**

In the Second stanza, the sway of “Jar” over “Wilderness” increased. The “wilderness” did not just “surround the hill” but “rose up to” “the jar” itself. “Wilderness” was “no longer wild by the time the transition was finished. This represents the complete change of the world around technology and Industry.

The world became tame and nature was forced to change. Forests are removed for the sake of buildings and factories.

The “jar” remained unchanged. It stayed “round upon the ground,” tall and of a port in air’. It is being treated as a ruler over “wilderness” it is like royalty in a fitting choice.

### **Third Stanza**

The third stanza begins with a blunt declaration that the jar “took dominion everywhere”. The sway grew to every place; it gives the theme of the poem, universality. Ironically Stevens criticizes “the jar” by saying that it “was gray and bare” and “did not give of bird or bush” Stevens mocks that how unimpressive this “Jar” was when compared to the things around it.

It was almost boring by appearance, and it lacked the natural beauty and possibility that the “bird” or “bush” would have provided. Ironically, these “bird[s]” and “bush[es]” could have been the very things striving to be like “[t]he jar,” and that idea makes the transition feel a bit ridiculous. If “a jar” could not “give” like the “bird or bush,” there was no reason why they should have striven to be like that “jar.” In fact, if such were the case, “[t]he jar” would have had reason to envy the “bird or bush,” or anything “else in Tennessee” that could have provided natural beauty, wonder, and purpose to outshine the “gray and bare” industry that overcame nature.

This is a statement that industry itself is “gray and bare” as compared to the “giv[ing]” nature of “wilderness,” and that idea would make this poem a mocking tale of industry’s rise to reveal how lacking the world has become through the embracing of that industry.

### **Meter**

Anecdote of the jar is written mostly in Iambic tetrameter i.e. lines of four beats with each consisting of an unstressed syllable, followed by a stressed syllable.

## Theme

Anecdote of the Jar explores the struggle between humans and Nature. Nature left alone it grows continuously and existing harmoniously.

Every creature, plant and organisms in Nature Plays a role in supporting the rest of the environment.

Human, on the other hand tend to take over destroying everything, and as a result, disrupting the delicate balance.

Humans introduce artificiality into the world converting nature from its original State of vitality and freedom to one of repression and control.

### *MIRROR*

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Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
Whatever I see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful,  
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.  
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.  
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long  
I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.  
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.  
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

## INTRODUCTION

Plath was born on October 27, 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts. Plath was a gifted and troubled poet, known for the confessional style of her work. Her interest in writing emerged at an early age, and she started out by keeping a journal. ... Soon after, Plath tried to kill herself by taking sleeping pills.

**Death Date:** February 11, 1963

**Birth Date:** October 27, 1932

**Education:** Smith College, Cambridge University

### **Plath's Mirror - Analysis of First Stanza**

This poem is all about appearances and the search for the self. The fact that the mirror is the voice and has the starring role is a little odd, but Sylvia Plath wanted to show just how powerful an object the mirror is in people's lives.

In particular, she wanted to highlight the issue that some females have with their image, and the inner turmoil that can be caused as the aging process picks up its pace. The poet's own struggle for a stable identity only adds to the idea that the face in the mirror must stay young, pretty and perfect.

#### **Lines 1 - 3**

The opening lines introduce us to the passive rectangle of silver, the glass and the shiny surface which only tells the truth and has no other purpose. Mirrors have no prior knowledge of anything; they simply are.

Note the use of the verb "swallow" which suggests that the mirror has a mouth and can digest whole images instantly, like a creature.

#### **Lines 4 - 6**

This objective theme continues as the mirror reinforces the idea of neutrality—it simply tells the story as it is, no fuss, no elaboration, no fabrication. And it is this quality of truthfulness which allows the mirror to declare itself as the eye of a little god; an all seeing minor deity holding disproportionate power over its subjects.

To strengthen its position within the room, the house, and the host's mind, it does little but "meditate on the opposite wall." Like some open-eyed, staring sage, the mirror sits contemplatively.

### **Lines 7 - 9**

The wall is pink, speckled, and is now an integral part of the mirror's heart, suggesting that this silver-eyed god has gained a feminine side to its persona. Pink is associated with girly things, but the connection isn't that clear. There are uncertain faces coming between it, and the wall of pink

### **Analysis of Second Stanza**

Whereas the first stanza concentrates on the exact truthfulness of the mirror and its ability to reflect precisely, the second stanza sees a transition: the mirror becomes a liquid; it gains depth and a different dimension.

### **Lines 10 – 12**

With god-like, medium-shifting power, the mirror becomes a lake. In it is reflected the image of a woman (the poet? Any woman?) And she is bending over as one would over the surface of a lake to see the reflection in the water.

Seeing her reflection, the woman is uncertain of herself and needs to find out who she really is. But can a person truly find out who they are by merely peering into a lake? Don't forget, this type of water can swallow any image it comes across. Didn't Narcissus look into a similar lake, and was so overcome with his own beauty that he fell in and drowned?

The woman isn't interested in beauty, it seems. Perhaps she's more intent on learning about her emotional responses to her former self. Candlelight can't help her cause because it's a deceptively romantic way of looking at things, and the moon, likewise, governs only madness and the haunting of the blood. The woman realizes that she can't dwell on the past.

### **Lines 13 - 15**

Nevertheless, the mirror "sees her back," which is what the eye of a little god would do, and holds the image, as always.

The woman weeps, which pleases the mirror, perhaps because the tears replenish the water in the lake, or maybe because the mirror is happy that it has done its job of faithful reflection and feels rewarded.

But the woman is clearly upset because the past holds such powerful memories, not all of them positive. This part of the poem is crucial, for we discover the mirror's aim: to disturb the woman. The deity has control of the human, which is how traditional stories often pan out.

### **Lines 16 - 18**

The mirror believes it is important to the woman, and so it appears relentlessly. The woman looks at herself in the mirror each morning, so reliant has she become.

The revelation, hardly a shock, is that the woman's younger self is dead, drowned by her own hand. Replacing the girl on a daily basis is the face of an old woman, surfacing "like a terrible fish."

Imagine the horror of facing the mirror each morning and confronting an inner demon, which is what the poet conveys through her poem. The innocent, romantic, crazy girl floats lifeless in the water. And out of her there raises, from the (emotional) depths, a hagfish, a monstrosity.

### **Personification**

"Mirror" is a personification poem. That is, the poet has given the mirror a first-person voice. So the poem begins:

*I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.*

This is the mirror speaking. It is direct, objective and open. It has personality. This device allows the mirror to address the reader (and any individual) at a personal level. You may know of a similar mirror in the fairytale *Sleeping Beauty*, where the vain, Wicked Queen looks in to her mirror to ask, "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

In a sense, Plath is asking the same question, but she does not receive a flattering answer.

### **Metaphor**

In the first stanza the mirror declares:

*I am not cruel, only truthful,*

*The eye of a little god, four-cornered.*

So the mirror becomes the eye of a little god, metaphorically speaking. And at the start of the second stanza (*Now I am a lake*) the poet uses metaphor again, as the mirror becomes deep, reflective water.

### **Simile**

The final few words (*like a terrible fish*) constitute a simile

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