**r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r**

**E. E. Cummings, 1894 - 1962**

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  ,grasshopper;

**STOP: think, why did the poet arrange the poem in the way that he did? Discuss with a partner before reading the explanation on the other side.**

**Draw a grasshopper below. Does the pome represent your picture?**

Take the famous grasshopper poem, for example--

[Here he quotes the poem]

 The appearance of the poem on the page does not resemble, by any stretch of the imagination, a grasshopper leaping. The important fact to grasp is that the spatial arrangement is not imitative in itself, as is the case in representational painting or drawing in which the lines and colors actually resemble some object; it is rather that the spacing is governed by the disruption and blending of syllables and the pause and emphasis of meaning which produce a figurative equivalent for the subject of the poem, as the reader reads in time. As the reader gropes and fumbles his way along this jumble of syllables and letters, his mind is gradually building up the connections which normally obtain among them--"grasshopper, who, as we look, now upgathering into himself, leaps, arriving to become, rearrangingly, a grasshopper." When the reader has reviewed the entire poem once or twice, he recreates in his mind the very effect of a grasshopper leaping, which Cummings is describing as upgathering, leaping, disintegrating, and rearranging. This effect is partially produced by the fact that the syllables of "grasshopper" are rearranged acrostically four times (including the normal spelling); partially by the distribution of parentheses, punctuation marks, and capitals; and partially by the joining, splitting, and spacing of words.

The over-all intent, then, is not primarily visual at all, but rather figurative and aesthetic: Cummings is regulating, with a view to increased precision and vividness of effect, the manner in which the reader reads. The object is, for example, to loosen up the effect of a metrical line, to suggest the thing or idea spoken of, to alter and reinforce meanings, or to amplify and retard. His is a style of constant emphasis: since he relishes each phrase, word, and letter of a poem, he wants the reader to relish them too, and many of his devices are aimed simply at slowing down the reader's intake of the poem.

from Norman Friedman. *e. e. cummings: the art of his poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1960. 123 and 124.