



Enormous Smallness: A Story of E. E. Cummings

Matthew Burgess , Kris Di Giacomo (Illustrations)

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Enormous Smallness is a nonfiction picture book about the poet E.E. Cummings. Here E.E.'s life is presented in a way that will make children curious about him and will lead them to play with words and ask plenty of questions as well. Lively and informative, the book also presents some of Cummings's most wonderful poems, integrating them seamlessly into the story to give the reader the music of his voice and a spirited, sensitive introduction to his poetry.

In keeping with the epigraph of the book -- "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are," Matthew Burgess's narrative emphasizes the bravery it takes to follow one's own vision and the encouragement E.E. received to do just that.

Matthew Burgess teaches creative writing and composition at Brooklyn College. He is also a writer-in-residence with Teachers & Writers Collaborative, leading poetry workshops in early elementary classrooms since 2001. He was awarded a MacArthur Scholarship while working on his MFA, and he received a grant from The Fund for Poetry. Matthew's poems and essays have appeared in various journals, and his debut collection, *Slippers for Elsewhere*, was published by UpSet Press. His doctoral dissertation explores childhood spaces in twentieth century autobiography, and he completed his PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center in June 2014.

Kris Di Giacomo is an American who has lived in France since childhood. She has illustrated over twenty-five books for French publishers, which have been translated into many languages. This is her sixth book to be published by Enchanted Lion Books. The others are *My Dad Is Big And Strong, But . . .* , *Brief Thief, Me First!* , *The Day I Lost My Superpowers*, and

Enormous Smallness: A Story of E. E. Cummings Details

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From Reader Review Enormous Smallness: A Story of E. E. Cummings for online ebook

Natalie Sapkarov Harvey says

I love everything about this book. The text and illustrations are married so perfectly. The choice of poems. The changes in font and size. Such a beautiful design. So fitting for the subject. I'm happy dancing inside. :)

Sue says

Listed in CCBC Choices 2016 under The Arts. I didn't know much about poet, e. e. cummings, before reading this book. It is a picture book for older readers, which is often a hard sell. This book really lends itself to the picture book format. I love how his poems were integrated throughout the book. Great supportive parents as a youngster in the early 20th century. Sweet Spot: Grades 4-8

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I knew nothing about e.e. cummings until I read this book, and hadn't read any of his poetry since I was a teenager, so this was a refreshing reintroduction. He started composing poems when he was 3 years old! Lucky for us that his mother thought to write them down. I had forgotten how experimental and different--even by today's standards--his poetry was. Author Kris Di Giacomo tells the story of cummings' life in rhyme and free verse, and also provides us with samples of some of his best-known poems. What makes a person think of alternate forms of poetic expression? He surely had a playful mind! According to the chronology of his life at the end of the book, he was also an artist, a painter. Di Giacomo was focusing here on his poetry, but I wish she had provided an example or two of his paintings. I must look them up. In the author's note at the back of the book Di Giacomo states:

"In many ways, Cummings was a champion of the small. He wrote about birds, grasshoppers, snowflakes, and other everyday pleasures. He frequently used lowercase letters, and he became famous for his use of the small 'i'. At a time when many of his contemporaries believed it was necessary to write a 'long poem' to become established as a major poet, Cummings preferred smaller forms."

I wonder if the subjects of his paintings are equally small and everyday. I think young readers will be inspired to want to read more of his poems, and perhaps to try writing some "small poems" themselves. Recommended!

David Schaafsma says

"To be nobody but
yourself in a world
which is doing its best day and night to make you like
everybody else means to fight the hardest battle
which any human being can fight and never stop fighting."

“I will take the sun in my mouth
and leap into the ripe air
Alive
with closed eyes
to dash against darkness”

“I’d rather learn from one bird how to sing
than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance”

“I thank you God for this most amazing day, for the leaping greenly spirits of trees, and for the blue dream of sky and for everything which is natural, which is infinite, which is yes.”

“The snow doesn't give a soft white damn whom it touches.”

Edward Estlin Cummings became e. e. cummings.

This is a non-fiction picture book, and a biography for kids and all ages about a wonderful poet, with gorgeous artwork to match the wondrous poetry. You must read. I love the playful text, capturing the playful life he lived, where his mother encouraged the imagination, and his father was (okay, played) an elephant.

See Melki’s review for images from the book, so lovely.

Trinity says

Informative and beautiful.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

ah, e e cummings
how i have
loved
you since 7th grade you took me by
surprise
and now enormous smallness your biography
in small form
lovely lovely lovely
yes i say yes
read this book

Darwin8u says

*"Inside an enormous city
in a house on a very small street,
there once lived a poet
I would like you to meet."*

- Matthew Burgess, enormous smallness: A Story of E.E. Cummings

I bought this illustrated, small, children's biography of E.E. Cummings for my wife, my lover, my best friend since childhood. We were raised reading E.E. Cummings. We passed his poems back and forth in high school. I mimicked E. E. Cummings in love poems I would send to Jeni as a heart sick college student. The words and |?riT?H?m| of E.E. Cummings poems are etched in our lives.

I figured since I bought it for her, and she had already read it, it was probably
ok
if
I
borrowed it back and gave it my own read.

This is an illustrated and short book, but the illustrations are beautifully done. I can't imagine a book about E. E. Cummings NOT including art, paintings, illustrations or exaggerations. Anyway, a nice introduction to his art and life. If you aren't new to E.E. Cummings, think of it as a poetic Valentines card that costs \$17.95 plus tax.

Bettie? says

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/03...>

Melki says

**may my heart always be open to little
birds who are the secrets of living
whatever they sing is better than to know
and if men should not hear them men are old**

Welcome to the life of Edward Estlin Cummings.

You may know him better as e. e. cummings.

Learn all about his enchanted childhood in Massachusetts, where his mother encouraged his poetry and his father was happy to be a pretend elephant. Much time was spent bird watching, star gazing and drawing in a spectacular tree house.

This is just a beautiful book. Burgess's text is poetry in itself. The layout is imaginative and Di Giacomo's artwork simply stunning.

This is one to treasure and keep handy for whenever you need a small dose of magic in your life.

**His poems were his way
of saying YES**

**YES to the heart
and the roundness of the moon,
to birds, elephants, trees,
and everything he loved.**

Jamie says

A whimsically illustrated and recounted tale of e.e. cummings's life.

Mary Lee says

The wheels are turning...thinking about a picture book biography unit for next year...

Kerry says

I read this after getting a recommendation from a lovely-friend. She had slogged through my Swedish mystery recommendation (gave it a tepid 3, btw, don't think I missed that) and my movie recommendation and song recommendation. So it would certainly be a lovely-friend foul if I shirked on her suggestion for me to read a mere 62 page children's book.

Indeed, I don't know how often I recommended/loaned a book to somebody but they do not read it . It is like my bookish suggestions is a kiss of death, and that once praised, they will in fact now NEVER read the bloody book. So with respect and affection I read Enormous Smallness: A Story of E. E. Cummings?

What a great book! Totally charming. A biography of E.E. Cummings of all things. And at only 62 pages you can cheat and read in at the BN while the kids argue over who gets Thomas the Engine in the kid's section play area. But why cheat, it is really nice (though you can still hedge and get it from library.) I admit, I had to resist the urge to write my review with *rhythm* and *rhyme*, but how long did I want to spend trying to work in *forgiven* in *time*.

Besides, the author Mathew Burgess follows that urge and weaves in some fine writing that children will take to easily. Kris Di Giacomo's artwork is fun and clever palate for the poems, and remains close to the story, so a child who still can't read can easily follow along and 'read' it alone later. Adults will enjoy the images of early 20th century America as well.

One of the things that struck me was how Edward Eslin's parents started to record his musings long before he could write them himself. He lived with a loving extended family that went to to great efforts to provide wonderful creative places, like a tree house.

But the best part is the inspiring hopeful and carefree poetry. The opening lines is a good message for the little ones (and big ones, too) "... it takes courage to grow up and become who you are."

If you are unfamiliar with e.e.cummings, he really was the first to use the page/canvas as a place to display the words he loved. He used small letters in place of capitals and left large spaces between words, among other things. (modern internet writers, i suspect, could love his loose regard of trad. writin' conventions, lol)

love is a place
& through this place of
love move
(with brightness of peace)
all places

yes is a world
& in this world of
yes live
(skillfully curled)
all worlds.

And I daresay, saying 'yes' to my lovely-friend's suggestion to read this book, I discovered a lovely world for children and adults alike.

Tania Roberts says

I need more than 5 stars to rate this book. It is the incredible, true story of E.E. Cummings. Filled with creative illustrations and a variety of fonts and letter alignment, it keeps the reader engaged from beginning to end. Interspersed throughout the book are snippets of E.E. Cummings poetry and writing. The end of the book contains a full chronology of Cummings' life and two pages of his poems. This book is chalked full of details about Cummings' life but written in a way that makes the pages come alive and whiz by without feeling like you are being "bogged down" with nonfiction reading. It does an excellent job of pushing the underlying message of E.E. Cummings' life to persevere no matter what anyone tells you.

Liz says

I was captivated by this beautiful picture book...a glimpse into the life and poetry of e. e. cummings. The poetic writing of author, Matthew Burgess, combined with the lovely collages of Kris Di Giacomo, and snippets of Cummings' work, captured the spirit of a young boy whose wonderings were encouraged and whose writings beautifully and playfully communicated his thoughts and imaginings. I know e. e. cummings as a famous poet, but I didn't really know much about his life or many of his poems. Now I do! This book is one to be explored again and again! Here's hoping it inspires other young dreamers and writers!

Skip says

This picture book biography of e.e. cummings is an excellent debut for author, Matthew Burgess. Nice artwork by Kris Di Giacomo and lyrical writing are combined to tell the life story of one of the great, inventive American poets from his early childhood in the 1800s until his death in the 1960s. Edward Estlin Cummings started writing at age three, and was always a "color outside the lines" guy, who refused to follow convention and expressed himself in words and art. I really liked one reviewer's observation that "the book invites young readers to view their own world with wonder," as e.e. Cummings did throughout his life.
