

“400-Meter Freestyle”

By Maxine Kumin

THE GUN full swing the swimmer catapults and cracks
s
i
x
feet away onto that perfect glass he catches at
a
n
d
throws behind him scoop after scoop cunningly moving
t
h
e
water back to move him forward. Thrift is his wonderful
s
e
c
ret; he has schooled out all extravagance. No muscle
r
i
p
ples without compensation wrist cock to heel snap to
h
i
s
mobile mouth that siphons in the air that nurtures
h
i
m
at half an inch above sea level so to speak.
T
h
e
astonishing whites of the soles of his feet rise
a
n
d

salute us on the turns. He flips, coverts, and is gone

a

l

l

in one. We watch him for signs. His arms are steady at

t

h

e

catch, his cadent feet tick in the stretch, they know

t

h

e

lesson well. Lungs know, too; he does not list for

a

i

r

he drives along on little sips carefully expended

b

u

t

that plum red heart pumps hard cries hurt how soon

i

t

s

near one more and makes its final surge. TIME: 4:25:9

“i was considering how”

By E. E. Cummings

i was considering how

within night's loose
sack a star's
nibbling in-

fin 5

-i-

tes-

i

-mal-

ly devours 10

darkness the
hungry star
which
will e

-ven 15

tu-

al

-ly jiggle

the bait of

dawn and be jerked 20

into

eternity. when over my head a
shooting

star

Bur s 25

(t

into a stale shriek
like an alarm-clock)

Directions: After reading, annotating, and analyzing the poems, answer the following questions **on a separate piece of paper**. Be clear and do your best with the annotations. It will help you answer the questions.

“400-Meter Freestyle” Questions

1. A) How many lines of the poem are there and why? B) What do the words in capitals at the beginning and end of the poem signify?
2. A) What is the significance of the 3 letters broken at the end of each line? B) Why does the poet alternate (move back and forth) the position of these letters?
3. A) What does the speaker mean when she says of the swimmer’s “Thrift is his wonderful secret”? B) What examples does she give of this “thrift”?
4. A) Find a line that shows either **alliteration** or **assonance** to make the lines move with force and strenuousness, like the swimmer. Copy and explain it.

“i was considering how” Questions

1. What is the speaker considering in the poem?
2. A) What does the speaker mean when he says the star is “nibbling...in night’s loose sack”? B) Why is the word “infinitesimally” broken up?
3. There is a fishing metaphor used in the second part of the poem. A) What is the star “fishing” for? B) Why is the word “eventually” broken up in this part of the poem?
4. What breaks the speaker’s daydream “like an alarm-clock”?