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Buffalo Bill's
E. E. Cummings

Buffalo Bill's
defunct
who used to
ride a watersmooth-silver
stallion
and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat
Jesus

he was a handsome man
and what i want to know is
how do you like your blueeyed boy
Mister Death

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Teaching *Buffalo Bill's*

The vocab in this poem is pretty basic and straightforward, and it's fairly short, so it's a good one for concentrating on how the poet uses structure to get his message across.

Read the title. What do you and your tutee know about Buffalo Bill? (He was a sharpshooter, cowboy, hero of the American West, etc). This is pretty important to the understanding of the poem, so be sure to share this information with your tutee before you start reading. You also might want to define "defunct", as dead.

Read through once for "main idea" and to hear the music of it.

The second time, stop at "watersmooth-silver stallion". Close your eyes. What image comes to mind? What do you see? What do you think "watersmooth" means? There's no right answer- the poet made the word up- so say what comes into your head.

In the next section, stop at onetwothreefourfive. Why are all these words run together? What about pigeonsjustlikethat? What does it make you think of? Speed? What does this tell you about Buffalo Bill's sharpshooting?

How do you think the poet feels about Buffalo Bill dying? Is this a sad poem? A proud poem? Can a poem be proud and sad?