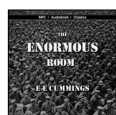


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**THE  
ENORMOUS  
ROOM  
E. E. CUMMINGS**

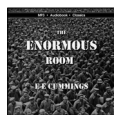
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**The Enormous Room**

*E. E. Cummings (1590 - 1657)*

Read by: Multiple readers                      Language: English  
 Length: 10 hours 42 minutes                  Style: Solo  
 Genre: Non-Fiction, History, Memoir

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*The Enormous Room*, the title of poet E. E. Cummings’ 1922 autobiographical novel of World War I, is both literal and allegorical. Cummings served as an ambulance driver during the war and was arrested, along with his colleague William Slater Brown, by French authorities suspicious of anti-war sentiments found in some of Brown’s letters. Upon the arrest in late August 1917, he was held at La Ferté-Macé, a French concentration camp, arriving five days after the local commissioners responsible for trials and pardons had left. When they returned in November, they granted Cummings, an official “suspect”, supervised release to the remote commune Oloron-Saint-Marie. In the meantime, the French sent a letter to his father stating that Cummings had been lost at sea, with no further explanation. The title phrase refers to the large room where Cummings lived with some thirty other prisoners, and

to the mental repository he created to house his memories of the characters and various adventures from his four-month imprisonment. The book has been described as a “latter day Pilgrim’s Progress” and is considered a classic of the period. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, “Of all the work by young men who have sprung up since 1920 one book survives—*The Enormous Room* by e e cummings... Those few who cause books to live have not been able to endure the thought of its mortality.”

**Edward Estlin “E. E.” Cummings** was an American writer and painter regarded as one of the most important 20th century American poets. He also wrote essays, two novels, and four plays. He is well known for his idiosyncratic syntax and use of the lower case in his poetry, which became quite popular; he was considered the second most read poet after Robert Frost. He was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts to Edward Cummings, a Harvard professor and Unitarian minister, and the former Rebecca Haswell Clarke, and raised in the company of family friends such as philosophers William James and Josiah Royce. His ambition to be a poet took root at a young age and he wrote poems every day from the ages of 8 to 22. After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard he worked for a book dealer and worked at modern poetry before enlisting in Ambulance Corps in 1917, which led to the experiences that he described in *The Enormous Room*. His collections *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923) and *XLI Poems* (1925) established his reputation as an avante garde poet. In 1926 his parents were in a car crash that killed his father and severely injured his mother, an event that had a profound effect and intensified his work. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1934, The Charles Eliot Norton lectures he gave at Harvard in 1952 and 1955 are collected in *I: six nonlectures*.