

AQA English GCSE

Poetry: Love & Relationships

Eden Rock - *Charles Causley*

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EDEN ROCK

Charles Causley

Brief Summary

It is ambiguous as to whether Causley is alluding to the prospect of joining his parents in the afterlife, or if it is a more literal retelling of a childhood memory. The poem presents Causley as separated from his parents by a stream, they are setting up a picnic blanket and some tea away from him. Causley's poem focuses on the loving familial relationship between himself and his parents.

Synopsis

- The speaker introduces his father then mother, implying there is a stagnation of time.
- The speaker's parents are pouring out tea for three people, but the son is separated from them
- It is suggested that the speaker is separated from his family by a river, and the parents call to the speaker to join them
- Speaker concludes with an ambiguous comment - "I had not thought that it would be like this" - which could be a reference to having to join his parents in the afterlife.

Summary

Context – his father died when he was young, and then his mother died in 1971, before the publication of the death of both // took many inspirations for his poems from Cornwall, where he was brought up // the collection Eden Rock is from contains a lot of religious allusion.

decade after poem written and it had an effect
Structure - exclamatory punctuation // colloquial language // stable structure // half-rhyme / ode format

Language – nostalgic imagery, familiar tone, natural language

Key Points – written from a frozen memory the speaker has of his childhood // written about the speaker's parents but not addressed to them // references the afterlife and has allusions to death.

Context

Charles Causley (1917-2003)

Causley's father died when he was young (7) due to complications after fighting in the first world war, then his mother died in 1971. Charles himself worked as a coder for the Navy during the second world war. His poetic style is iconic for his simplicity and direct messages. Causley was from Cornwall, and he drew many inspirations for his poems from Cornish folk tales, as well as the landscapes that he grew up in. He never married.

From the collection 'A Field Of Vision' (1988)

Contains a lot of **religious allusion**, and written after the death of both of his parents.

KEY THEMES	LOSS, CHILDHOOD, SEPARATION OVER TIME, REUNITING, MEMORY
RELATIONSHIP	PARENT / CHILD
LOVE	PARENTAL, ENDURING



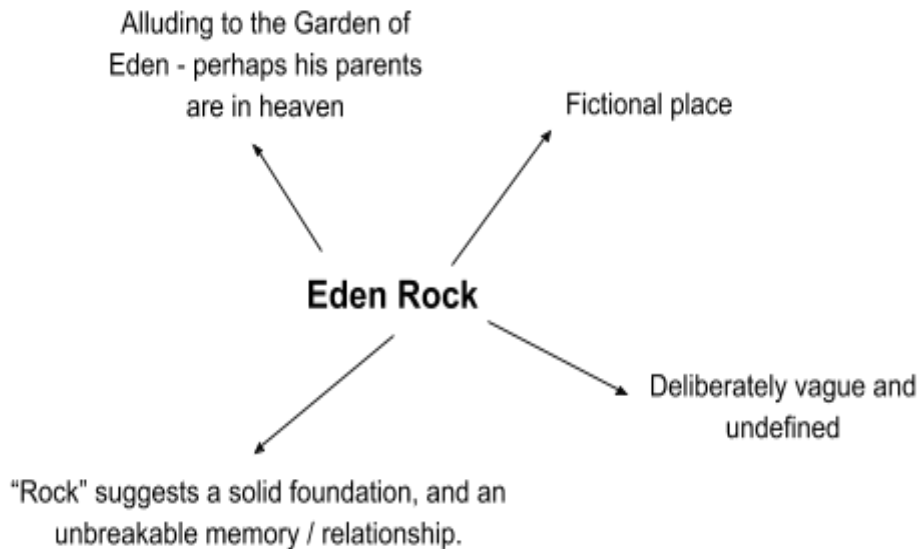
Eden Rock

Causley has written a poem which focuses on the **separation of the speaker from his parents**, in a **fictional location** called Eden Rock. Causley has suggested this place belongs somewhere in Cornwall.

It is a very **metaphorical** poem, which employs a lot of **natural imagery** to imply the significance of the parental relationship. As the poem is written after both of Causley's parents have died, in 1988, it could be assumed that he is attempting to reflect on his parents from the perspective of his childhood memories (the parents are frozen at the ages of "twenty-five" and "twenty-three") - therefore this is a very personal and intimate poem for the author to write. He could be using the poem to explore how he feels about his parents passing to the afterlife. The **stream** is often viewed as a **metaphor** for the **separation between the earth and the afterlife**.



The title "Eden Rock"



Eden Rock

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:

My father, **twenty-five**, in the same suit

Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack

Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress

Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,

Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.

Her hair, the colour of wheat, **takes on the light**.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight

From an old H.P. Sauce bottle, a screw

Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out

The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by **three suns**.

My mother shades her eyes and looks my way

Over the **drifted stream**. My father spins

A stone along the water. **Leisurely**,

They beckon to me from the other bank.

I hear them call, 'See where the stream-path is!

Crossing is not as hard as you might think.'

I had not thought that it would be like this.

The speaker's parents are described in their youth showing his idolisation of them in their prime.

The idea of the light coming through her hair creates an angelic image.

"three suns" can be taken to represent the family triangle: mother, father and speaker. Symbolic of purity and the concept of the holy trinity.

"Leisurely" doesn't imply a time pressure on Causley to enter the afterlife, if we take the metaphorical meaning of the poem as Causley's parents attempting to convince him to join them in the afterlife. Also slows down the rhythm of the poem, showing the reluctance of Charles to follow his parents.

Third person plural pronouns distances the speaker from his parents "Beckon" relates to temptation and persuasion, referencing reuniting the family and is a positive embrace.

The enjambment creates caesura, which highlights the relaxed pace of this section of the poem.

"drifted stream" implies that the memory is hazy for the speaker.

"Crossing" into the afterlife. Reference to a journey / travel / movement. Crossing between time periods, or a generational divide, or simply different locations?

Charles could be questioning the process of death

The last line is separate from the rest of the poem to symbolise the separation the speaker experiences from his parents.



Perspective

The poem is **semi-autobiographical**, so the speaker in this case is the poet, Causeley, addressing his dead parents. It is **narratively structured** which is atypical compared to many of the other poems in the anthology. It is written in **present tense**, but the speaker does not refer to his parents with direct address.

Structure

Exclamatory punctuation

Causeley employs **exclamatory punctuation** in the line **“see where the stream-path is!”** to connote **enthusiasm** which juxtaposes with the **morose tone** of the poem.

JUXTAPOSITION | Comparing two concepts, characters, or clauses, in close proximity in a passage for the effect of contrast.

Stable structure

Causley uses a fixed structure of **quatrains** throughout the poem. However, the final line of the last stanza has been separated. except for the last stanza where the final line has been separated from the other lines which could **symbolise the gap between life and death**, the physical stream presented in the poem, or the separation between the speaker and his parents. The stream could be referencing the **River Styx**, which is mythically where individuals would cross to enter the afterlife.

Each quatrain has roughly **ten syllables per line (iambic pentameter)** which creates a steady tone: this may reflect the stable relationship between the writer and his parents.

Half-rhyme

Causley uses **half-rhymes** such as **‘dress’** and **‘stress’**, and **‘hat’** and **‘light’** which could **reflect an incomplete nature of their relationship**. This may relate to the separation of the speaker and his parents in the poem. They also create the feeling of immediacy to the **tone** of the poem, as full rhymes would perhaps make the tone too jovial.

Elegy / Ode Form

The poem as a whole could be considered an elegy or an ode, as it is written largely about Charles’ dead parents.

Language

Nostalgic imagery

Causley’s use of **colloquialisms** such as **“H.P sauce bottle”**, **“tin cups painted blue”**, **“of Genuine Irish Tweed”** create a sense of **nostalgia**. The images are used to emphasise how much the speaker



cares for and remembers his parents. It also could mean that these small details are helping to ground the poet in his memory.

COLLOQUIALISM | An informal phrase common at its time of utterance.

Familiar tone

The language used within the poem creates a **tone of familiarity**, which lends itself to suggesting the poem is recounting a memory.

Natural language

Natural language is used to enhance the vivid scene, such as **“grass”**, **“colour of wheat”**. When considered in conjunction with the theme of death and the afterlife, Causley may be suggesting that death is inevitable and how there’s no way to stop the natural progression of life. Alternatively, it could be a suggestion that you don’t stop loving someone after they die, and that love can easily transcend death.

Comparisons

Eden Rock	Love’s Philosophy
“grass”	“waves”
“colour of wheat”	“sunlight clasps the earth”
“drifted stream”	“fountains mingle with the river”
Extensive natural imagery used to provide comfort to the speaker, but also help them rationalise their respective situations within their relationships.	

Eden Rock & Before You Were Mine

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both poets present speakers who have fond memories of their parents, and speak with a tone that suggests that love transcends the death of a loved one. Both can be viewed as semi-autobiographical poems, if we examine the similarities between the authorial context of the poem and the poem’s content. Both connote the afterlife - in BYWM, Duffy mentions her mother’s “ghost” (though this could be a reflection of who she was before she had a child) and Eden Rock seems to use the “drifted stream” as a metaphor for the river Styx and “crossing is not as hard as you might think” as passing through to the afterlife.
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ER’s speaker discusses a memory in the present tense, from the perspective of still being in childhood, however BYWM flits between different frames of memory, and goes beyond the speaker’s childhood memories. Duffy’s speaker addresses her mother directly, using the pronouns “you” and “your”, which may show more intimacy than Causley’s speaker, who



	refers to his parents as “ they ”, which implies that there is more distance between them.
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Eden Rock & Follower

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both poems, an undeniable admiration for the speaker’s parents is a key theme, and both poems are written from the perspective of a male child reflecting on childhood memories. • Both parents provide support and encouragement to their child. • Both poems employ an orderly structure of four line stanzas, arguably reflective of the stable parental relationships explored in each poem. • Both poems appear to end vaguely - “<i>I had not thought it would be like this</i>” and “<i>not go away</i>”.
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst Eden Rock focuses on a speaker mulling over a specific childhood memory, Follower explores the speaker’s relationship during his childhood in general.

