

# **ASM TUITION ACADEMY**

## **EDEN ROCK POEM**

### **Poem: "Eden Rock"**

By Charles Causley

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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, they spread  
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.

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### **Analysis of "Eden Rock"**

Charles Causley's "**Eden Rock**" is a reflective and poignant poem that imagines a serene reunion between the speaker and his parents in the afterlife. The poem explores themes of memory, family, loss, and the transition from life to death, all wrapped in a gentle and nostalgic tone. The title refers to an idyllic place that symbolizes heaven or paradise, echoing the biblical Garden of Eden, which adds a spiritual dimension to the poem.

### **Themes:**

1. **Memory and Nostalgia:** Causley evokes a vivid memory of his parents in their youth, setting a peaceful scene where the speaker recalls them as if they were frozen in time. His parents are presented as vibrant and youthful, a memory untarnished by the passage of time. This nostalgic tone suggests a longing for the simplicity and comfort of childhood.
2. **The Afterlife and Death:** The imagery of the parents waiting "somewhere beyond Eden Rock" suggests that they have already crossed into the afterlife and are waiting for the speaker to join them. The "drifted stream" acts as a metaphor for the boundary between life and death, evoking the classical image of crossing a river to reach the afterlife (like the River Styx in Greek mythology). The peaceful invitation from the parents, "Crossing is not as hard as you might think," adds to the serene portrayal of death, suggesting that it is a natural and gentle process.
3. **Family Bond:** The poem emphasizes the deep, unbroken bond between the speaker and his parents. They beckon him to join them, offering comfort and assurance. The family scene, with the parents laying out a picnic with familiar objects (a "stiff white cloth," a "Thermos," and "tin cups"), reflects the enduring connection between the speaker and his parents, showing that love transcends death.

### **Tone and Mood:**

The tone of "Eden Rock" is calm, peaceful, and reflective. There is no fear or sadness associated with death, only a sense of longing and peaceful anticipation. The gentle imagery of a picnic by a river, the soft lighting, and the parents' leisurely actions all contribute to an idyllic and comforting mood. The final lines introduce a note of quiet surprise and realization as the speaker reflects on the nature of crossing into the afterlife: "I had not thought that it would be like this." This suggests a contemplative acceptance of death and reunion.

### **Structure and Form:**

1. **Stanza Structure:** The poem is structured in five quatrains (four-line stanzas), with a steady rhythm that mirrors the calm and tranquil tone of the poem. The regularity of the quatrains reflects the serene, orderly nature of the memory being recalled, as well as the peacefulness of the afterlife setting.
2. **Lack of Rhyme Scheme:** The poem is written in free verse, with no consistent rhyme scheme. This lack of formal structure reflects the fluidity and naturalness of memory, as well as the speaker's reflective and introspective tone. The absence of rhyme also contributes to the quiet, understated nature of the poem, allowing the imagery and emotions to take centre stage without the distraction of rhyme.
3. **Imagery:** Causley's imagery is simple but powerful, drawing on domestic and pastoral scenes to evoke a sense of peace. The details of the picnic—such as the "Thermos," "H.P. Sauce bottle," and "tin cups painted blue"—are mundane objects that ground the memory in everyday life, making the scene feel familiar and comforting. At the same time, these details also take on a symbolic meaning, representing the simplicity and beauty of family life.

The image of the "drifted stream" serves as a metaphor for the boundary between life and death, while the description of the sky "whitening as if lit by three suns" suggests a celestial, otherworldly light that adds to the heavenly quality of the scene.

4. **Symbolism:**

- **The Stream:** The stream is a classic symbol of the divide between life and death, an obstacle that must be crossed to reach the afterlife. Its presence in the poem emphasizes the idea of transition and journey, but the calmness of the scene and the parents' assurance suggest that crossing is gentle and natural.
- **Light:** The "light" that reflects off the mother's hair and the sky being lit by "three suns" suggests a divine or spiritual presence. Light is often used as a symbol of purity, transcendence, and the afterlife, and in this context, it reinforces the idea of peace and eternity.
- **Eden Rock:** The title itself, "**Eden Rock**," can be interpreted as a metaphor for paradise or the afterlife. The name "Eden" refers to the biblical Garden of Eden, a place of innocence and peace, symbolizing the idealized place where the speaker's parents await him.

### **Final Stanza and Interpretation:**

In the final stanza, the parents beckon to the speaker from "the other bank" of the stream, calling him to join them. The words "Crossing is not as hard as you might think" suggest that the speaker has yet to cross into the afterlife but is being reassured that the transition will be easy. The final line, "I had not thought that it would be like this," implies a sense of surprise or realization on the part of the speaker, as if death and the afterlife are different from what he expected—gentler, more peaceful, and less frightening.

### **Conclusion:**

"**Eden Rock**" is a delicate and moving meditation on memory, family, and the afterlife. Through its simple yet evocative imagery, Charles Causley creates a sense of peace and acceptance surrounding death, presenting it not as something to be feared but as a reunion with loved ones in an idyllic, timeless place. The poem's calm tone, symbolic imagery, and free verse structure all contribute to its reflective and serene atmosphere, making it a poignant exploration of love, loss, and transcendence.

## **COMPARISON OF EDEN ROCK WITH FOLLOWER**

Seamus Heaney's "**Follower**" and Charles Causley's "**Eden Rock**" both explore themes of parent-child relationships, memory, and the passage of time, but they do so in distinct ways. While Heaney's poem deals with admiration, aging, and role reversal between father and son, Causley's "**Eden Rock**" offers a serene reflection on the afterlife and a peaceful reunion with deceased parents. Comparing the two highlights how each poet addresses the emotional complexity of familial bonds and the inevitable changes brought about by time.

### **Themes of Parent-Child Relationships**

1. **Admiration vs. Peaceful Reunion:** In "**Follower**," Heaney's speaker reflects on his father's mastery of farm work, focusing on his admiration for his father's strength and expertise. The poem conveys a sense of awe and aspiration, as the son desires to follow in his father's footsteps but is unable to match his father's skill. The parent-

child relationship is characterized by admiration but also by a recognition of the gap between them.

In contrast, **“Eden Rock”** presents a more serene and spiritual depiction of the parent-child relationship. The speaker remembers his parents as youthful, calm figures waiting for him in an idyllic afterlife. There is no tension or struggle to live up to parental expectations, as in **“Follower.”** Instead, the relationship is peaceful, with the parents offering gentle reassurance that the transition to death is not something to fear. The bond between the speaker and his parents in **“Eden Rock”** is marked by love, acceptance, and the anticipation of reunion.

2. **Role Reversal and Aging:** One of the key themes in **“Follower”** is the inevitable role reversal between parent and child. The once-strong father becomes frail with age, stumbling behind the son who now leads. This reversal reflects the passage of time and the shift in dynamics that often occurs as parents age and become dependent on their children. The relationship between father and son evolves from one of admiration and dependence to one of caretaking.

In **“Eden Rock,”** however, there is no mention of aging or decline. The parents are depicted in a timeless, youthful state, frozen in the speaker’s memory or imagination. The poem does not explore the physical frailty of aging but instead focuses on the enduring, unchanging nature of familial love, even after death. Unlike **“Follower,”** where the physical realities of life and aging are central, **“Eden Rock”** emphasizes the spiritual and emotional connection between parents and children, transcending time and physicality.

## Themes of Memory and Time

1. **Nostalgia and Reflection:** Both poems rely on memory as a central theme. In **“Follower,”** the speaker looks back on his childhood with a mixture of nostalgia and regret. He recalls his father’s strength and skill in farming but reflects on his own inadequacy in following in his father’s footsteps. The memory is bittersweet, combining admiration with a sense of loss as the speaker realizes that time has changed both him and his father.

**“Eden Rock,”** on the other hand, presents an idealized memory of the speaker’s parents. The memory is serene and peaceful, with no sense of regret or inadequacy. The parents remain unchanged in the speaker’s memory, creating an image of an eternal, unbreakable bond. The poem evokes a deep sense of nostalgia but without the emotional complexity of **“Follower.”** Instead, **“Eden Rock”** focuses on the comfort and peace of reuniting with loved ones, suggesting that memory and love endure beyond death.

2. **The Passage of Time:** In **“Follower,”** time is a force of change and decay. The father, once a figure of strength, has grown old and weak, stumbling behind his son. The passage of time is portrayed as inevitable and somewhat painful, marking the decline of physical abilities and the shifting roles in the parent-child relationship.

In contrast, **“Eden Rock”** portrays time as something that stands still. The speaker’s memory of his parents is untouched by the passage of time, and the scene of their

reunion is frozen in a state of eternal youth and peace. The poem suggests that in the afterlife, time ceases to have meaning, and the relationship between parent and child remains unchanged. Whereas “**Follower**” grapples with the effects of time on the living, “**Eden Rock**” imagines a world where time no longer exerts its influence, and love and memory exist outside of temporal constraints.

## Tone and Mood

1. **Bittersweet vs. Serene:** The tone of “**Follower**” is bittersweet, blending admiration with sadness. The speaker’s memories of his father are filled with awe but also with a sense of inadequacy and, ultimately, loss. The recognition that the father is now frail and dependent adds a layer of melancholy to the poem, as the speaker confronts the inevitability of aging and death.

In contrast, “**Eden Rock**” has a calm, serene tone. There is no sadness or regret, only a peaceful acceptance of death and the hope of reunion. The mood is meditative and tranquil, as the speaker imagines crossing into the afterlife to join his parents. The poem offers comfort in the face of mortality, suggesting that death is not an end but a continuation of the familial bond.

## Imagery and Symbolism

1. **Earthly vs. Ethereal Imagery:** In “**Follower**,” the imagery is grounded in the physical, earthly world. Heaney describes the father’s labour in vivid, concrete terms, using images of ploughing, earth, and fields. The tactile nature of the imagery reflects the physicality of the father’s work and the son’s attempts to follow him. The poem’s focus on farming highlights the connection between the father and the land, emphasizing the tangible, real-world setting of the relationship.

“**Eden Rock**,” by contrast, uses more ethereal and spiritual imagery. The riverbank where the parents wait for the speaker is almost otherworldly, with soft light and peaceful surroundings. The imagery of crossing a “drifted stream” suggests a boundary between life and death, while the whiteness of the sky evokes a heavenly or spiritual atmosphere. The focus is not on physical labour or struggle but on peace, eternity, and the afterlife.

2. **Symbols of Transition:** In both poems, transition is a key symbolic element. In “**Follower**,” the transition is from childhood to adulthood and from dependence to leadership. The father, once a symbol of strength, is now frail, representing the inevitable decline that comes with age. The son must take on the role of caretaker, reflecting the natural progression of life.

In “**Eden Rock**,” the transition is from life to death. The parents beckon the speaker to cross the stream, symbolizing the journey from the physical world to the afterlife. However, this transition is not portrayed as difficult or frightening; instead, it is depicted as a gentle, peaceful crossing. The stream represents the boundary between worlds, but the parents’ calm demeanour and invitation suggest that this crossing is part of a natural, serene process.

## Conclusion:

In summary, “**Follower**” and “**Eden Rock**” both explore the deep emotional connections between parents and children, but they do so in markedly different ways. “**Follower**” focuses on the physical and emotional realities of aging, as well as the shifting roles between parent and child over time. The tone is bittersweet, filled with admiration but also the pain of loss and change. “**Eden Rock**,” on the other hand, presents a more idealized vision of the afterlife, where the bond between parent and child is eternal and unchanging. The tone is calm and reassuring, offering comfort in the face of mortality. While both poems reflect on memory and the passage of time, “**Follower**” is rooted in the tangible, earthly world, while “**Eden Rock**” transcends the physical realm to evoke a sense of peace and eternity.

## COMPARISON OF EDEN ROCK WITH BEFORE U MINE

Seamus Heaney’s “**Follower**” and Carol Ann Duffy’s “**Before You Were Mine**” both focus on the complex dynamics of the parent-child relationship, but they approach these dynamics from different perspectives. While “**Follower**” explores a son’s admiration for his father and the role reversal that occurs with time, “**Before You Were Mine**” delves into a daughter’s reflection on her mother’s lost youth before she became a parent. Both poems highlight themes of memory, generational change, and the evolving relationship between parent and child, but they differ in tone, perspective, and the nature of the relationship they portray.

### Themes of Parent-Child Relationships

1. **Admiration for the Parent:** In “**Follower**,” the son admires his father’s skill and strength in farm work. The father is depicted as an expert who works with precision and power, and the son dreams of following in his father’s footsteps. However, the speaker also recognizes his own inadequacies in comparison to his father’s mastery, and this creates a sense of distance between them. The admiration is tinged with a feeling of failure, as the son stumbles and falls while trying to keep up with his father’s pace.

Similarly, in “**Before You Were Mine**,” the daughter expresses admiration for her mother, but it is focused on her mother’s life before she became a parent. The speaker imagines her mother as a carefree, glamorous young woman, dancing and laughing with friends. The daughter’s admiration is for a version of her mother that she never knew, which creates a sense of nostalgia for the life her mother gave up to become a parent. The speaker’s admiration is for her mother’s lost youth and independence, a time before the responsibilities of motherhood.

2. **Role Reversal and Change:** In “**Follower**,” Heaney portrays the role reversal that happens as parents age. The strong, capable father, who once led the son with confidence, is now old and stumbling, following behind the son. This reversal highlights the inevitable passage of time and the shifting dynamics in the parent-child relationship as the child takes on a leadership or caretaking role.

In “**Before You Were Mine**,” Duffy addresses a different kind of role reversal—one that is not about aging but about the transformation of identity that occurs when a woman becomes a mother. The speaker reflects on how her mother’s carefree life was

replaced by the responsibilities of motherhood. The daughter acknowledges the sacrifice her mother made, and there is a sense of guilt or loss as she realizes that her birth marked the end of her mother's youthful freedom. The role reversal here is not about physical care but about how motherhood changes a person's identity and role in life.

3. **Generational Tensions:** In "Follower," the tension between father and son is subtle, rooted in the son's feelings of inadequacy. He longs to match his father's skill but repeatedly stumbles, unable to live up to the high standards set by his father. This generational tension is about expectations and the desire to follow in a parent's footsteps, even when it seems impossible.

In "Before You Were Mine," the generational tension is more about the daughter's awareness of the life her mother gave up to raise her. The daughter imagines a glamorous, lively version of her mother who is now overshadowed by the demands of motherhood. The tension here arises from the daughter's realization that her existence changed her mother's life profoundly, and there is a bittersweet acknowledgment of the freedom her mother lost.

## Tone and Mood

1. **Bittersweet and Reflective:** Both poems have a reflective and somewhat bittersweet tone. In "Follower," the speaker looks back on his relationship with his father with a mix of admiration and regret. The father, once a figure of strength, is now old and dependent, and the son is left with memories of his own clumsy attempts to follow in his father's footsteps. The tone is tinged with sadness, as the son recognizes the changes that time has wrought.

In "Before You Were Mine," the tone is also reflective but with a stronger sense of loss. The speaker reflects on the life her mother had before she became a parent, imagining her as a vibrant, independent young woman. There is a sense of longing for a time the daughter never experienced, and an awareness that her birth changed her mother's life forever. The tone is nostalgic, with an undercurrent of guilt as the daughter realizes the impact of her presence on her mother's youth.

2. **Admiration and Melancholy:** Both poems express admiration for the parent, but this admiration is tempered by melancholy. In "Follower," the son's admiration for his father's skill is shadowed by his own feelings of inadequacy and the realization that his father is no longer the strong figure he once was. The son's inability to match his father's strength creates a sense of unfulfilled desire.

In "Before You Were Mine," the daughter's admiration for her mother's youthful independence is also tinged with melancholy, as she realizes that her mother's carefree days were lost to the responsibilities of motherhood. The speaker's imagination of her mother's pre-motherhood life is bittersweet, filled with a sense of loss for what could have been.

## Imagery and Symbolism

1. **Earthy vs. Glamorous Imagery:** In **“Follower,”** Heaney uses imagery that is grounded in the physical, agricultural world. The father is depicted as a powerful figure working the land, with imagery of ploughing, furrows, and the farm. The poem is filled with earthy, tactile imagery that reflects the father’s connection to the land and the son’s attempt to follow in his footsteps.

In **“Before You Were Mine,”** Duffy’s imagery is more urban and glamorous. The speaker imagines her mother dancing on the pavement, with high heels and polka-dot skirts, evoking a sense of vibrancy and freedom. The imagery of Hollywood stars like Marilyn Monroe adds to the sense of glamour and the idealized version of the mother’s youthful past. This contrasts with the more grounded, physical imagery in **“Follower.”**

2. **Symbols of Lost Freedom:** In **“Before You Were Mine,”** the mother’s youthful independence is symbolized by her glamorous attire and carefree actions, like dancing and laughing with friends. These symbols represent the life she had before becoming a mother, a life that the daughter feels she has disrupted. The high heels and dancing on the pavement symbolize freedom and youth, which have been sacrificed for motherhood.

In **“Follower,”** the father’s ploughing is symbolic of his strength, skill, and authority. The son’s stumbling and falling behind symbolize his struggle to live up to his father’s expectations. The farm and the work of ploughing represent the father’s role as a leader and provider, a role that the son aspires to but cannot fully achieve.

## Structure and Form

1. **Regular vs. Conversational Structure:** **“Follower”** is written in a formal structure with six quatrains and a regular rhyme scheme (ABAB), which reflects the order and discipline of the father’s work on the farm. The regular structure also mirrors the father’s mastery of the land and the son’s attempts to emulate his father’s steady, rhythmic ploughing.

In contrast, **“Before You Were Mine”** is written in free verse, with a more conversational and fluid structure. This form reflects the personal and intimate nature of the speaker’s reflection on her mother’s life. The lack of a strict rhyme scheme allows the poem to flow more naturally, mirroring the spontaneity of the mother’s youthful past that the daughter imagines.

## Conclusion:

In comparing **“Follower”** and **“Before You Were Mine,”** both poems explore the complexities of parent-child relationships, but they do so from different angles. **“Follower”** focuses on a son’s admiration for his father and the inevitable role reversal that comes with aging, while **“Before You Were Mine”** examines a daughter’s reflection on her mother’s lost youth and the changes that motherhood brought. Both poems express admiration, but they are also marked by a sense of loss—whether it is the loss of a parent’s strength in **“Follower,”** or the loss of a parent’s independence in **“Before You Were Mine.”** The contrasting tones of nostalgia and regret highlight the different emotional landscapes of the

poems, with **“Follower”** focusing on physical labour and aging, and **“Before You Were Mine”** centring on identity and sacrifice.

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