

# EDEN ROCK KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

**Context** – *Eden Rock* was written by Charles Causley and published in *A Field of Vision* in 1988.

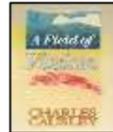
**Charles Causley** – Charles Causley (1917-2003) was a Cornish (a recognised ethnic group from Cornwall – England) poet and schoolmaster. He went to a grammar school, where his interest in poetry was developed from a young age. His father died when he was only 15, and at 16, his mother got him a job in a builder's office, which caused him great despair. His poetry is often simplistic in language, but with deeper meanings hidden beneath the surface.



**Eden** – The use of Eden in the title promotes an image of paradise and sanctuary: 'The Garden of Eden' is the biblical garden of God described in the Book of Genesis. It is the utopia in which the story of Adam and Eve takes place, and has been long-associated with beauty and purity. Causley was a religious man, and so the use of the word Eden in the title is likely to signify the sense of sentimentality and happiness that he feels when considering times with his parents.



**A Field of Vision** – Causley's 1988 collection was one of his most autobiographical, containing a handful of poems that referred to events from his own childhood (*Eden Rock* is one of them). In total, there are 38 poems in the collection, many of which deal with travel, homecoming, reflection and recollection. Other popular poems in the collection include 'Sibard's Well' and 'In Malacca.'



**Religious Symbols – River/Streams** – There is a long tradition of rivers being associated with death and the afterlife in religious texts. In Ancient Greece, the River Styx had to be crossed in order to reach the Underworld. In Christianity (Causley's religion), many Christians view the River Jordan as the barrier to navigate in order to reach eternal paradise. Causley's poem extends this tradition.



## Language/Structural Devices

**Metaphors/ Figurative Language** – A number of metaphors and other figurative language techniques are used in order to develop deeper, symbolic meanings – most of which are religious. For example, the descriptions of the 'three plates' and the 'three suns' in lines 12 and 13 can be seen as metaphors for the Holy Trinity. Likewise, the 'drifted stream' that is brought to the reader's attention in stanza 4 appears to form the frontier between life and death – 'Crossing' appears to represent the journey between life and death, which is deemed 'not as hard as you might think.'

**Specific Vocabulary** – One of Causley's key strengths is the precise (yet accessible) nature of his language choices throughout the poem. Examples of this include the description of his father (in the 'same suit', 'Genuine Irish Tweed', and his 'trembling' Jack Russell) mother (in a 'sprigged dress', 'ribbon in her straw hat', and with hair the 'colour of wheat') and the family traditions (milk poured from a sauce bottle, etc.). This is fitting in that it shows how cherished these details/ memories are to the speaker, but also creates vivid imagery to enhance the poem for the reader.

**Quote:** "The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue. The sky lightens as if lit by three suns"

**Quote:** "Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat, Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass."

**Enjambment/ Caesura** – Enjambment and caesura are used to affect the rhythm and pace of the poem, and to emphasise meanings. For example, caesura and enjambment combine to isolate 'Leisurely' at the end of line 16, highlighting the peace and gracefulness of the speaker's parents' actions in the final two stanzas – making them seem more 'divine.'

**Alliteration** – Alliteration is used sparingly throughout the poem, however it generates a clear effect upon the pace, rhythm and meaning of the poem. For example, the alliteration of the soft 'l' and 's' sounds in line 13 emphasises the difference in the light, and implies that this is a positive change – making the speaker feel somewhat at ease.

**Quote:** "A stone along the water. Leisurely/ They beckon to me from the other bank."

**Quote:** "The sky lightens as if lit by three suns My mother shades her eyes and looks my way"

**Form** – There is debate as to whether the poem is 5 or 6 stanzas long (depending upon whether the final line is considered a separated part of stanza 5 or its own stanza) but in any case, this line is deliberately separated from the other lines in the poem (see line-by-line analysis for effect). There is a clear system of half-rhyme in use, suggesting something is slightly off – perhaps the spiritual influence.

**Narrative Structure** – In the opening two stanzas, the speaker (quite precisely) describes his father and mother, in a somewhat idealised tone. The third stanza reverts towards realism, giving the reader further information about the family's traditions. In stanzas 4 and 5 there is a shift towards the more spiritual, as the light increases and the parents shift across the bank, leaving the speaker to ponder in stanza 6.

**Quote:** "I had not thought it would be like this."

**Quote:** "They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:/ My father, twenty-five, in the same suit"

**Themes** – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Family Love** – The poem deals with the subject of a strong family love that outlasts separation. Even long after events, the speaker is able to remember precise, minute details about childhood memories, showing how deeply their time together was cherished. The title (*Eden*) suggests that this was the speaker's paradise – his perfect time.



**Religion** – Religious ideas span the entire length of the poem. The title, for example, makes reference to the 'Garden of Eden.' There are also references to the holy trinity, and to the idea of heaven/ an afterlife. Furthermore, the use of the symbolic stream as a boundary to the afterlife is in keeping with religious traditions.



## Line-by-Line Analysis

STANZA	LINE	POEM	ANALYSIS
1	1	They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:	The opening stanza slowly builds up an image of the setting and the speaker's parents. 'Somewhere beyond' subtly hints to the idea of an afterlife. The idea of the 'same suit' tells two things: 1.) the family was not economically well-off and 2.) the suit is etched in the speaker's mind. The use of the word 'still' adds to the idea of being frozen in time. The inclusion of specific details shows the importance to the speaker.
	2	My father, twenty-five, in the same suit	
	3	Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack	
	4	Still two years old and trembling at his feet	
2	5	My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress	Causley presents an idealised image of his mother – as a woman who was widowed from an early age, when there was little support for women in this position, the reality was probably far different. The clothes described were fashionable at the time. Her clothes are described in a high-level of detail, once more showing the importance of these memories to the speaker. The analogy of wheat associates her as being natural, organic, and pure.
	6	Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,	
	7	Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.	
	8	Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.	
3	9	She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight	Having hinted at fantasy in his rose-tinted descriptions in the opening two stanzas, Causley returns to reality in this description of down-to-earth family traditions – milk served from an old sauce bottle and paper for a cork. There are three of everything, perhaps a religious reference to the trinity (father, son, holy spirit). The use of the word 'same' again gives the impression that the speaker is determined for everything to be the same as he remembers – the memories are cherished.
	10	From an old H.P. sauce-bottle, a screw	
	11	Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out	
	12	The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.	
4	13	The sky lightens as if lit by three suns	The 3 suns may symbolically represent the 3 members of the family. The alliteration of the 'l' sound emphasises the light – it is likely that this signals the happiness/ clarity of the moment. Also gives an impression of heaven. The mother shading her eyes may be to mask her face from her son – she is a fantasy/angel in this vision and thus may be too divine to be gazed upon directly. The enjambment (over lines 14/15) and subsequent caesura emphasises that they are now over the stream from the speaker – miraculous/ more distant from the speaker.
	14	My mother shades her eyes and looks my way	
	15	Over the drifted stream. My father spins	
	16	A stone along the water. Leisurely	
5	17	They beckon to me from the other bank.	The caesura sets aside 'leisurely', which highlights the idea that all of the parents' actions from this point onward seem graceful and divine. 'Beckon' is another word with religious connotations (as in Jesus 'beckoning' to his followers, etc.) Their message has a deeper, symbolic meaning (that dying is not so terrible).
	18	I hear them call, 'See where the stream path is!'	
	19	Crossing is not as hard as you might think.	
6	20	I had not thought it would be like this.	The inclusion of the stream to symbolise some sort of boundary to the afterlife is in line with a long tradition of streams/ rivers being associated with death. The final line, set apart, may show the separation between them, between life and death, or even between what it was like compared to what he thought it would be.

## Poems for Comparison

Poems for Comparison	Influences on the Poet
<b>Walking Away</b>	<i>Eden Rock</i> can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <b>Family Love</b>
<b>Before You Were Mine</b>	<i>Eden Rock</i> can be contrasted with this poem in relation to the theme of <b>Time</b>

"Given the oral roots of some of his favourite forms, it's immensely valuable to be able to listen to Causley's own interpretation. His Cornish burr imparts a story-teller's magic to the ballads, and an intimacy to more personal poems such as the moving elegy to his parents, 'Eden Rock'. As he says in the last line of this poem "I had not thought that it would be like this", a fitting epitaph for a poet who continued to be surprised by the world throughout his long life..." [www.poetryarchive.org.uk](http://www.poetryarchive.org.uk)

