

Task for *Inside My Mother*

'Eyes'

Like many of Eckermann's poems, the title of this one is short and sharp, capturing both the main content and the mood/metaphor.

Students may consider:

1. What do we understand by 'eyes'?
 - a. organs of our visual system
 - b. give us vision, allowing us to receive and process visual details
 - c. enable us to see, understand and interpret our surroundings and environment
 - d. associated with visual acuity and perception
 - e. sometimes regarded as 'windows to the soul'
 - f. can be protective ('keep an eye on you')
2. What emotions and moods can you convey through your eyes?

This four-stanza poem tells the story of a girl and the different moods and expressions revealed by her eyes. We are not given much information about the people in this poem; the pronouns 'her' and 'she' are the only identifying clues:

her eyes stare to challenge her
from a plate on the kitchen table

The verb 'stare' amplifies the mood in the phrase 'to challenge her'. Is the 'challenge' one of defiance, provocation, rebellion or simple assessment of the situation?

The 'kitchen table' suggests a domestic scene; the plate is the shape of an eye but also an everyday object, showing that the girl feels insignificant and accused from all sources. The final line of this stanza, in the form of a question, implies that the girl is accustomed to having to be circumspect.

By the second stanza the girl has listed three different types of 'eyes' she has had to adopt into her persona:

- eyes of terror
 - eyes of submission
 - eyes of shame
3. How do the various verbs in this stanza link to the eyes she is adopting: 'thrown away', 'blinded' and 'avoids'?

The narrative continues in the third stanza as the focus returns to the kitchen table and the plate. There are now different eyes: 'wonder', 'contempt' and 'compassion'.

4. How do these eyes differ from those in the second stanza?

By the final stanza, there is a sense that the persona can take charge; she can choose her eyes and either 'soothe or sting her tears'. But the choice has been made: 'she picks the eyes filled with rage'.

5. In what ways does this final line contribute to the poem's meaning?

[\(ACELR038\)](#) [\(ACELR042\)](#) [\(ACELR044\)](#) [\(ACELR045\)](#) [\(ACELR052\)](#)