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.
Charles Causley
Charles Causley (1917-2003) was a quiet and modest man. He was born and brought up in Cornwall, where he lived for most of his life, and which he wrote about in many of his poems. His poetry is known for its simplicity and directness, often in the form of ballads—traditional narrative poems in short rhyming verses. Some of his poems were written for children.

‘Eden Rock’ (1988) is one of several poignant poems that Causley wrote about his parents. His father, a groom and gardener, died in 1924, when Charles was scarcely seven, from wounds sustained in the First World War.

He never married, and his private life remained private. He refused to write an autobiography, since he said the truth about his life was available in his poems.

Eden Rock is a fictional place.
What is the poem about?

The narrator imagines that his parents are both young again—his mother is 23 and his father is 25. They’re both on the bank of a stream and his mother is preparing a picnic— it’s an idyllic scene.

The narrator is on the opposite bank to his parents, and they encourage him to cross the river to join them.

The setting may be based on a real memory, or it may be an imagined scene of the time before the narrator was born or when he’s near death—his parents could be beckoning him to join them in life, or in the afterlife.
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.

The use of the present tense makes the scene he’s describing feel more vivid.

Vague description hints that this is an imagined scene.

Biblical reference to the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden was a perfect place, which suggests that, for the narrator, this place with his parents is perfect and peaceful.

The introductions to the two parents mirror each other—this reflects the closeness of their relationship.

The narrator seems to take comfort in remembering specific things about his parents.
The introductions to the two parents mirror each other—this reflects the closeness of their relationship.

These beautiful details show how precious this memory of his mother is to the narrator.

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.

The light in his mother’s hair is an angelic image.
The detailed descriptions of these specific, ordinary things show their importance to the narrator and the affection he has for the way his parents did things.

The actions of the mother and father are tranquil and peaceful.

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.
This hints at something otherworldly, in contrast with the ordinary descriptions of the first three stanzas – it is likely a heavenly light. The three suns could also symbolise that their family of three has been reunited.

Caesura slow the pace of the poem, which emphasises the feeling of peace.

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,**

Even the stream is peaceful. This suggests he’ll have no trouble crossing it to get to his parents.

(They) Enjambment creates a pause, which may imitate the leisurely way the narrator’s parents beckon to him.
‘Eden Rock’

Possibly a metaphor for crossing into death.

**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.

Monosyllabic language creates a tone of child-like simplicity. The meaning of this last line is ambiguous- we don’t know what “it” actually is. He may be referring to his preparing to be born or to die, or he may be talking about the afterlife itself.

The narrator’s parents comfort and encourage him — a typical role of parents.
Eden - the perfect garden in the Bible where Adam and Eve were said to have lived
Tweed - a woollen fabric, often with a checked pattern
Sprigged - patterned with small bunches of flowers
Thermos - a brand of flask
Feelings and Attitudes

1. Deep lasting bond- The parents have been waiting for their son. If the narrator is talking about death, he isn’t scared—he’ll be reunited with his parents, so it’s just like going back to childhood.

2. As the poet’s father died when he was 7, the narrator’s affection for the time when he and his parents were together as a family could reflect the poet’s own desire to see his parents again.

3. Peacefulness- There is a feeling of peace throughout the poem. This could reflect the narrator’s emotions—he feels at peace when he thinks about his parents and imagines being reunited with them.
Have a go at answering these questions to help you come up with your own ideas about the poem:

1. Why do you think the poet chose to call the place in the poem Eden Rock?
2. How would you describe the mood of the narrator?
3. Why do you think the last line is separate from the rest of the stanza?

**Key Themes:**
‘Follower’ also explores the close, lasting bonds of parent/child relationships. You could discuss the vivid childhood memories in ‘Before You Were Mine’ or how distance is overcome in ‘Letters From Yorkshire.’