

## SAMPLE A

In Robert Bridge's "EPΩΣ" and Anne Stevenson's "Eros", there is a sense of confusion and curiosity towards Eros; however, the two poems differ as to why they both are confused and puzzled. In "EPΩΣ", the speaker does not understand why Eros and the concept of love are regarded with such awe and beauty, whereas in "Eros", the speaker does not understand why Eros is portrayed as this mortal, ugly "brute" who has been badly bruised. In the two poems, both speakers use different techniques to show their contrasting descriptions of Eros, the Greek god of love.

"EPΩΣ" begins by stating the rhetorical question "Why hast thou nothing in thy face?", which sets a confused and curious tone. The speaker then instantly employs vivid imagery in order to give descriptions of Eros, saying that he is "idol of the human race", "flower of lovely youth", with "exuberant flesh" and "proud dress". This description gives an unreal, godlike ambience to Eros, describing his powerful and beautiful appearance. Also, the speaker of "EPΩΣ" shows his reverence for the god's power by saying Eros has "power immense" and that he is "An image of eternal Truth". Also, the speaker of "EPΩΣ" uses sophisticated word choice in order to convey his feelings of respect towards Eros, describing him as having an "unchristen'd smile" suggesting the purity of Eros. The speaker also says "That only Pheidias might compare / Ere from his chaste marmoreal form.", which alludes to the Greek sculptor, Pheidias, of the fifth century B.C. Pheidias, as the poem suggests, creates statues out of marble, which can be associated with qualities of admiration. While illustrating Eros as this being of greatness, the speaker of "EPΩΣ" also uses paradox when discussing Eros, saying that he is the "tyrant of the human heart". The "human heart" can be associated with positive, jovial feelings, whereas a "tyrant" has an oppressive and power-lusting connotation. This shows that the speaker is still confused by Eros and is not completely sure of the awe that he has for Eros. Also, the speaker of "EPΩΣ" discusses the "shadows neither love nor guile" and the "shameless will/ In secret sensuous innocence" of Eros, hinting at the deceitful nature of Eros. The combination of the higher-being and deceitful nature of Eros show that the speaker of "EPΩΣ", does not know what to think of Eros and the speaker shows this confusion at the beginning of the final stanza when asks a second rhetorical question, "What is thy thought?" The speaker

shows that he does not know if he should be amazed by Eros or fearful of him, suggesting the duplicitous nature of Eros.

In Anne Stevenson's "Eros", the speaker starts out with the rhetorical question, "I call for love / But help me, who arrives?", just like "EPΩΣ" starts out with a rhetorical question. In "Eros", the speaker's rhetorical question expresses a sense of shock as to who appears when she makes her apostrophe for "love". The speaker of "Eros" then uses pronounced imagery to describe Eros saying that he is "thug with broken nose / And squinty eyes" with "boxer lips" and "patchy wings". These images portray Eros as this broken man, who has been beaten up, which contrasts with the speaker of "EPΩΣ"'s description which describes Eros as this lovely, but questionable god. Also, the speaker of "Eros" uses irony when describing the Greek god of love, as the speaker is "calls for love", but only this "bully boy" arrives, referring to Eros in a cynical and mocking manor. This also implies that Eros does not think humans are capable of love, but only lust. In addition, the dialogue used by the speaker of "Eros" and Eros, give a colloquial tone and mood to the poem, which contributes to the idea that Eros is actually quite mortal. In "Eros", Eros, himself, says that he has been beaten and "long overuse" and has taken "blows [the speaker's] lust delivered", suggesting that Eros is more humanized and less immortalized, which is what the speaker of "EPΩΣ" suggests. This also implies that Eros does not think humans are capable of love, but only "lust". The end of the "Eros" poem says "Better my battered visage, / Bruised but hot, / Than love dissolved in loss / Or left to rot." This is suggesting that a beaten and overused idea of love is better than no love at all. This idea of a broken concept of love, that has been abused by humanity's "lust" is held by both the Greek god of love and the speaker of "Eros".

The two poems and their speakers both suggest that they question love, and they question if there is an idealized form of love, however the two poems differ in how they describe the concept of Eros and love. In Bridges' poem, the speaker describes Eros as an immortalized god, but the speaker really questions if this view is valid, while in Stevenson's poem, the speaker questions Eros by presenting him in a cynical fashion by exposing the weaknesses of this "thug". The two poems suggest that there is not one common concept of love that is not questioned by people.

## **SAMPLE B**

It is often said that man made God in man's own form. From the development of religion and gods in Mesopotamia to the Greek fascination with the ideal proportions to portray their gods as embodiments of Classical beauty to contemporary outgrowths of Christianity, the fact remains that throughout history, humankind has turned to its gods for inspiration and reassurance. Robert Bridges's Eros poem and Anne Stevenson's "Eros" call upon the same subject—the god of love, yet their concepts of Eros could not be more dissimilar while Bridges portrays Eros as a cryptic statue that has no way of communicating with the human world, Stevenson portrays an ironically crippled version of the Classical ideal, and has a dialogue with Eros himself.

Bridges sees Eros as a cold, marble statue that affects so many people's emotions yet seems either unbothered by it or blithely unaware. He starts both the first and third stanzas with rhetorical questions. The whole poem is an address to Eros, who cannot answer. Bridges calls Eros a "tyrant of the human heart," implying that love is a powerful force that drives humans to incredible actions. The metaphor "flower of lovely youth" is a somewhat cliché metaphor comparing Eros to a flower, symbolic of youth and passion. "Flower" also connotes that emotions like love are fleeting and ephemeral. The allusion to the sculptor Pheidias embodies the attitude of the god towards humankind. The concept behind Pheidias's style was that gods were aloof from and unaware that their actions affected mortals. Thus Bridges portrays a detached relationship between man and god as they face each other. However, by no means does Bridges suggest that humans are as unfascinated with the gods as the gods are with humans. Alliteration and consonance in "starry sheen" and "secret sensuous innocence" implies man's admiration for Eros and all he stands for. Love is a compelling force that mystifies, Bridges suggests. Furthermore, the first and last word of Bridges's poem is "face." Repetition of this word reflects his preoccupation with the soul and inner workings of the God's mind. The poet mentions the "soft unchristen'd smile," an outgrowth of the Archaic smile that was meant to convince sculpture viewers that the sculpture was alive. The smile is also mysterious, and, like many, Bridges wonders what Eros's face is attempting to tell us.

The face of Eros says it all, in Anne Stevenson's poem. The simple diction of the poem belies its complex idea of the psychological manifesting itself physically. In her poem, the speaker has a direct dialogue with Eros, who ironically, far from the classical ideal of beauty, manifests himself as an injured man with "boxer lips and patchy cringes askew." The colloquial language signals a change in time to a more contemporary view of love and Eros. Alliteration in "bully boy" and repetition of the B sound in "better my battered/image/Bruised but hot" conveys how battered Eros is and suggests a force buffeting him. Juxtaposition in "long overuse" makes the concept of love seem even more outdated and cliché. Furthermore juxtaposition of "slaves" and "immortal" in the same line suggests an ironic reversal of values because gods, usually thought of as immortal rulers, are being abused by mortals, who exploit gods in archetypes that man creates.

While Bridges idolizes the ideal of beauty and love and wonders what Eros's secret is, Stevenson argues that there is no secret, because humankind created and perpetuated the ideal and so-called "mystery" itself. The answer is clearly written in Eros's face.