

PROMPT /  
Question

It's a Woman's World  
by Eavan Boland

(p. 1)

(pg)

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION  
SECTION II

Total time--2 hours  
Question 1

(Suggested time--40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following poem was written by a contemporary Irish woman, Eavan Boland. Read the poem carefully and then write an essay in which you analyze how the poem reveals the speaker's complex conception of a 'woman's world.'

	Our way of life has hardly changed since a wheel first whetted a knife.	(30)	So when the king's head gored its basket-- grim harvest-- we were gristing bread
Line (5)	Well, maybe flame burns more greedily and wheels are steadier but we're the same	(35)	or getting the recipe for a good soup to appetize our gossip.
(10)	who milestone our lives with oversights-- living by the lights	(40)	And it's still the same: By night our windows moth our children to the flame
(15)	of the loaf left by the cash register, the washing powder paid for and wrapped, the wash left wet.	(45)	of hearth not history. And still no page scores the low music of our outrage.
(20)	Like most historic peoples we are defined by what we forget, by what we never will be: star-gazers, fire-eaters. It's our alibi	(50)	But appearances still reassure: That woman there, craned to the starry mystery is merely getting a breath of evening air, while this one here-- her mouth
(25)	for all time that as far as history goes we were never on the scene of the crime.	(55)	a burning plume-- she's no fire-eater, just my frosty neighbor coming home.

(1982)

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New! Improved

p.2

Assignment N: AP Exam Practice with Boland

- a. Actively read Eavan Boland's "It's a Woman's World" on page 9 in your poetry packet. (and reverse side of this sheet)  
After reading it at least twice, carefully read the AP test question that was used along with this poem on the 1997 AP English Literature Exam. Try to break the question down in parts.

Jot down in this box what you think this question is asking you to do:

Now, go back to the poem. Look specifically for evidence of **IMAGERY** and **TONE** and what lines inform the reader of Boland's complex conception of a "woman's world."

**NOTE:** BE SURE TO CIRCLE/CITE SOME ACTUAL LINES FROM THE POEM THAT SUPPORT YOUR RESPONSE!

Discuss some of the powerful images in this poem and what their purpose might be in this poem. Look especially for any repetitive imagery.

Comment here whether you think Eavan Boland's poem's tone is positive, negative, or both.

Describe here exactly what you think Eavan Boland's complex conception of a "woman's world" is.

# Scoring Guide for "It's a Woman's World"

1998 AP ENGLISH LITERATURE SCORING GUIDE  
Question #1: Boland's "It's a Woman's World"

This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay *as a whole*. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

- 9-8 These well-conceived and well-ordered essays provide insightful analysis (implicit as well as explicit) of how Boland's poem reveals the speaker's *complex* conception of "a woman's world." Although the writers of these essays may provide a range of interpretations, these papers offer a convincing reading of the poem and maintain consistent control over the elements of effective composition, including the language unique to the criticism of verse. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though not without flaws, they demonstrate the writers' ability to read poetry perceptively and to write with clarity and sophistication.
- 7-6 These essays reflect a sound grasp of Boland's poem; but they are less sensitive to the complexities of that "woman's world" than the best essays, and the interpretations of the poem that they provide may falter in some particulars. Though perhaps not as thorough or precise in their discussion of how the speaker reveals that "woman's world," their dependence on paraphrase, if any, should be in the service of analysis. These essays demonstrate the writers' ability to express ideas clearly, but they do not exhibit the same level of mastery, maturity, and/or control as the very best essays. These essays are likely to be briefer, less incisive, and less well-supported than the 9-8 papers.
- 5 These essays are, at best, superficial. They respond to the assigned task yet probably say little beyond the most easily-grasped observations. Their analysis of how the world of the poem is revealed may be vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported. They may suffer from the cumulative force of many minor misreadings. They tend to rely on paraphrase but nonetheless paraphrase which contains some implicit analysis. Composition skills are at a level sufficient to convey the writer's thoughts, and egregious mechanical errors do not constitute a distraction. These essays are nonetheless not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers.
- 4-3 These lower-half essays reveal an incomplete understanding of the poem and perhaps an insufficient understanding of the prescribed task as well: they may choose to debate the speaker's views rather than explain ways in which they are revealed. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant—or it may rely essentially on paraphrase. Evidence from the text may be meager or misconstrued. The writing demonstrates uncertain control over the elements of composition, often exhibiting recurrent stylistic flaws and/or inadequate development of ideas. Essays scored 3 are marred by significant misreadings and/or particularly inept writing.
- 2-1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the poem. Frequently, they are unacceptable brief. They are poorly written on several counts and may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt may have been made to respond to the question, the writer's assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the text of the poem.
- 0 A response with no more than a reference to the task.
  - A blank paper or completely off-topic response.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

9-8

- Well-conceived
- Well-ordered
- Insightful analysis
- Convincing reading
- Effective control of composition elements
- Includes language unique to poetry critique
- Textual references apt and specific
- Perceptive reading
- Writing is clear and sophisticated
- May have some minor flaws

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

4-3

- Essay reveals an incomplete understanding of poem
- May reveal an incomplete understanding of the prescribed task
- May choose to debate speaker's views (such as complexity) rather than explain ways a woman's world is revealed
- Analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant
- May be too much reliance on paraphrase
- Evidence from poem may be meager or misconstrued
- May have uncertain control over elements of composition; markedly inept writing
- May have recurrent stylistic flaws
- May have inadequate development of ideas
- May have significant misreadings

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

7-6

- Sound grasp of the poem
- May be less sensitive to complexity than a 9-8 essay
- Some support from poem may falter
- Perhaps not as thorough/precise in "HOW" speaker reveals a "woman's world"
- Use of paraphrase does serve analysis
- Writing is clear
- Does not have the same level of mastery, maturity, control as the 9-8 essays
- Perhaps rather brief
- Perhaps less incisive and less well-supported than a 9-8 essay

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

2-1

- Weaknesses in 3-4 scored papers are even more compounded
- May have serious misreadings of poem
- May be unacceptably brief
- May be poorly written
- May contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics
- Writer's assertions may be presented with little clarity
- May be poorly organized
- Writer's assertions may be poorly supported from the text of the poem

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

5

- May be superficial
- May say little beyond the most easily-grasped observations
- Analysis may be vague or formulaic
- Analysis may be inadequately supported
- May have cumulative misreadings
- May have over-reliance on paraphrase which contains implicit analysis
- Egregious mechanical errors do not distract
- Essay is not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as 6, 7, 8, 9 scored papers

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Scoring for "It's a Woman's World"

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- A response is given but with no more than a reference to the task
- A blank paper is turned in
- A completely off-topic response is given

P.4  
"It's a Woman's World" by Eavan Boland  
AP Essay Rubric