

MHDAon

Recipe by Janice Mirikitani –

An Excerpt from “Border Crossings” – A Brief Introduction (*The Bedford Introduction to Literature* 8<sup>th</sup> Edition)

Borders referred to in poems such as “Recipe” by Janice Mirikitani are not only those that mark geographic or political divisions but also the uncertain and indeterminate borders associated with culture, class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Even if we have never left our home state or country, we have all moved back and forth across such defining lines as we negotiate the margins and edges of our personal identities within the particular worlds we inhabit. Any first-year college student, for example, knows that college life and demanding course work represent a significant border crossing: increased academic challenges, responsibility, and autonomy likely reflect an entirely new culture for the student. By Thanksgiving vacation, students know (as do their parents and friends) that they’ve crossed an invisible border that causes a slight shift in their identity because they’ve done some growing and maturing.

Beauty and Borders, Janice Mirikitani, a third-generation Japanese American, reflects upon dominant cultural standards of beauty in “Recipe.” Women who do not meet such standards – especially women of color – can be faced with complicated decisions about how they want to appear, decisions that go far more than skin deep.

JANICE MIRIKITANI (b. 1942)

**Recipe**

**1987**

Round Eyes

Ingredients: scissors, Scotch magic transparent tape,

Eyeliner –water based, black.

Optional: false eyelashes.

Cleanse face thoroughly.

For best results, powder entire face, including eyelids.

(lighter shades suited to total effect desired)

With scissors, cut magic tape 1/16" wide, 3/4" – 1/2" long–

Depending on length of eyelid.

Stick firmly onto mid-upper eyelid area

(looking down into handmirror facilitates finding adequate surface)

If using false eyelashes, affix first on lid, folding any excess lid over the base of eyelash with glue.

Paint black eyeliner on tape and entire lid

Do not cry.

1. Who is speaking? Speculate on the age and gender of the speaker.
2. What is the situation?
3. Why is the speaker interested in creating round eyes?
4. To whom are the instructions given? Is the speaker instructing herself? Is the speaker reading instructions? Or is the speaker instructing another person? Explain.
5. Will the subject reach her goal by following these instructions? Why?
6. What is the significance of the title of the poem? How does it contribute to the tone?
7. How does the layout complement the meaning of the poem?
8. Pay attention to the instructions of the recipe. Which of the five senses is most affected by the process? And what is the result?
9. a. What is the tone of the poem? Provide details and diction that contribute to the tone.  
  
b. How does imagery contribute to the tone?
10. What is the purpose /message of the poem, “Recipe”?
11. Which phrase in the poem most strongly suggests indifference to discomfort?
12. Give an example of irony in the poem.
13. Which line in the poem carries an ambiguity that most complements the meaning of the poem?
14. What does the title of the poem imply?