Prompt:

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.”

Thesis (not to do!):
Boland’s poem reveals the speaker’s complex conception of a woman throughout history.

Introduction:
In the poem, “It’s a Woman’s World” by the Irish woman Eavan Boland, the simplicity of its language gives rise to a complicated feel for a woman’s place in time and history. The speaker’s complex conception of a woman’s world underscores her importance in life-changing events yet her behind-the-scenes position throughout most of life. To reveal the speaker’s impression of a “woman’s world” as being both unchanged and yet forever evolving. Boland employs use of paradoxical language and startling imagery, giving the reader a clear impression of these views.

Body 1:
The paradoxes found within “It’s a Woman’s World” allow the subtleties of change to be expressed in the guise of simplicity, and contribute to the overall assertion that a woman’s role is “still the same.” Boland creates differing phrases like “has hardly changes,” and “well, maybe . . . more,” to reveal the complexity of her conceptions. Because the speaker seems very sure of what the woman’s world in the first stanza is, her contradiction in the second displays her conflicting view. The speaker also says, paradoxically, that women are “defined . . . by what we will never be: star-gazers, fire-eaters,” yet later admits to seeing “that woman there, craned to the starry mystery>’ and “this one here – her mouth a burning plume.” This contradictory image that the speaker sees as what woman will forever be remembered as not being, simply shows the complex ideas that a woman’s world changes at every instance, even within the poem, yet it also will always stay wholly the same. The point that the woman’s world will continue on the same appears when the speaker rejects the notion that these last two women were either “fire-eater(s)” or “star-gazer(s).” When the speaker denies this, yet also admits to it, the complex conceptions of a woman’s world being immovable and at the same instance forever changing, struggle to take root in the mind and impression of the reader through
Eavan Boland, in her poem, evokes images of everyday, universal tasks and duties shared by women to concretely ground her impression of a woman’s world as being both mundane and unchanging, yet also shifting in time. First, the poet continually uses the motif of fire to reveal the mysterious and drawing aspect of a woman from her everyday life. This flame “burns more greedily” since time has passed and defines the woman because she’s “no fire-eater.” Fire imagery conveys the supernatural and the goal every woman wishes to achieve, especially in the line “our windows moth our children to the flame.” The fire imagery displays a moving and changing, growing and feeding quality to a woman’s world through the effects of time. The more stable images like “wash let wet,” and “getting the recipe for a good soup,” convey the more mundane and unchanging side to the woman’s world. The speaker exempts the woman from having any part in history: “we were never at the scene of the crime.” The downplay of a woman’s role in society and throughout time, mixed with the fire imagery of things longed to be attained, allows the reader a definite impression of the speaker’s complex conception of a woman’s world.

Through the use of paradoxical language and differing imagery, the poet aptly conveys the speaker’s turbulent and conflicting concept of a “woman’s world” in the poem by Eavan Boland. This changing role plays homage to the movers-and-shakers and the mothers who both desire a clearly defined role in society. Boland’s poem “It’s a Woman’s World” conveys the startling contrasts of a woman’s place in society through rich poetic language.