



Poetry - Bishop

English Past Exam Questions

Ordinary Level

Paper 2 – Section 3 – Question C

C Lines 1– 33 *from* THE FISH

I caught a tremendous fish
 and held him beside the boat
 half out of water, with my hook
 fast in a corner of his mouth.
 He didn't fight.
 He hadn't fought at all.
 He hung a grunting weight,
 battered and venerable
 and homely. Here and there
 his brown skin hung in strips
 like ancient wallpaper,
 and its pattern of darker brown
 was like wallpaper:
 shapes like full-blown roses
 stained and lost through age.
 He was speckled with barnacles,
 fine rosettes of lime,
 and infested
 with tiny white sea-lice,
 and underneath two or three
 rags of green weed hung down.
 While his gills were breathing in
 the terrible oxygen
 – the frightening gills,
 fresh and crisp with blood,
 that can cut so badly –
 I thought of the coarse white flesh
 packed in like feathers,
 the big bones and the little bones,
 the dramatic reds and blacks
 of his shiny entrails,
 and the pink swim-bladder
 like a big peony.

Elizabeth Bishop

1. (a) Based on your reading of this extract, which of the following statements do you think best describes the poet's response to the fish?

- The poet admires the fish.
- The poet is disgusted by the fish.
- The poet is fascinated by the fish.

Support your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

- (b) Based on what you have read in the above extract, what is your own response to the fish? Explain your answer with reference to the poem. (10)

- (c) Identify one comparison in the poem that you found to be unusual or surprising and explain why you found it to be so. (10)

2. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 20 marks]

- (i) Do you admire Elizabeth Bishop's use of language in this poem? Explain your answer with reference to the poem, "The Fish". In your answer you may choose to refer to the extract provided or to the poem as a whole.

OR

- (ii) At the end of this poem, Bishop releases the fish, *And I let the fish go*. Based on your knowledge of the poem, explain why you think she did this. Support your answer with reference to the poem. In your answer you may choose to refer to the extract provided or to the poem as a whole.

OR

- (iii) You have been asked to make a short video to accompany a reading of this poem on YouTube. Describe the images, colours, music, sound effects, etc. that you would use as a background to the reading and explain your choices based on your knowledge of the poem. In your answer you may choose to refer to the extract provided or to the poem as a whole.

Paper 2 – Section 3 – Question C

C FILLING STATION

Oh, but it is dirty!
 – this little filling station,
 oil soaked, oil-permeated
 to a disturbing, over-all
 black translucency.
 Be careful with that match!

Father wears a dirty,
 oil-soaked monkey suit
 that cuts him under the arms,
 and several quick and saucy
 and greasy sons assist him
 (it's a family filling station),
 all quite thoroughly dirty.

Do they live in the station?
 It has a cement porch
 behind the pumps, and on it
 a set of crushed and grease-
 impregnated wickerwork;
 on the wicker sofa
 a dirty dog, quite comfy.

Some comic books provide
 the only note of color –
 of certain color. They lie
 upon a big dim doily
 draping a taboret
 (part of the set), beside
 a big hirsute begonia.

Why the extraneous plant?
 Why the taboret?
 Why, oh why, the doily?
 (Embroidered in daisy stitch
 with marguerites, I think,
 and heavy with gray crochet.)

Somebody embroidered the doily.
 Somebody waters the plant,
 or oils it, maybe. Somebody
 arranges the rows of cans
 so that they softly say:
 ESSO—SO—SO—SO
 to high-strung automobiles.
 Somebody loves us all.

Elizabeth Bishop

1. (a) What impression of the filling station and its inhabitants do you get from reading the first two stanzas of the poem? Refer to the text in support of your answer. (10)
- (b) “*Somebody loves us all.*” In your opinion, does this line provide a good ending to the poem? Explain your answer. (10)
- (c) What impression of the poet, Elizabeth Bishop, do you get from reading this poem? (10)

2. Answer **ONE** of the following: [Each part carries 20 marks]

- (i) “Good poetry creates vivid pictures in our minds.” In your opinion, is this true of *Filling Station*? Support your view by reference to the text of the poem.

OR

- (ii) Imagine you are Elizabeth Bishop. Write a diary entry, based on your reading of the poem, in which you describe your experience of stopping at this filling station.

OR

- (iii) Which of the following statements is closest to your own view of the poem:
- *Life is full of surprises*
 - *Everyone needs love*
 - *We shouldn't judge by appearances*

Explain your choice, supporting your answer by reference to the text.