Ode Goodbye Essay, Research Paper

The Ode Goodbye

The importance of something can’t be simply stated but rather explained to someone in depth. The poem “The Fish” by Elizabeth Bishop tells of a story of something important to her. She tells a trial of her life in this poem. Bishop explains in depth the true value of this experience. As the reader, one becomes more in tune with what the poem is saying, when explained in detail. Elizabeth Bishop’s technique while writing this poem was a brilliant one. While she was merely catching a fish, she found a way in which to make this experience interesting for others to see. In Bishop’s poem “The Fish”, she uses visual imagery to help the reader to understand the true feeling she had towards the fish.

The poem starts by Bishop saying, “I caught a tremendous fish and held him beside the boat,” (lines 1-2) when stating this one must think it’s just another experience or simply a prize at best. It is not until this moment that the fish hung beside her that she realizes the true meaning of this fish. When she says, “He hung a grunting weight, battered, and venerable and homely,” she realized that this beast hanging beside her was in pain. Bishop felt for this fish because he could not break free from her hook.

When reading this poem, she described the fish at first as if it were some kind of painting. She was unaware of this fish representing life. Bishop states, “Here and there his brown skin hung in strips like ancient wallpaper, and it’s pattern of darker brown was like wallpaper: shapes like full-blown roses stained and lost through age,” (lines 9-15) she describes this fish as a piece of work and not a living creature. It’s not until she says, “While his gills were breathing in the terrible oxygen, the frightenting gills,” (lines 22-24) did she really understand that this fish had meaning. Her tone had changed and it now seemed as if the fish denoted a creature to her and the vow of respect.

In the middle of Bishop’s poem, she describes the fish in more and more details. She writes about his external self and describes in depth. She states, “He was speckled with barnacles, fine rosettes of lime, and infested with tiny white sea-lice,” (lines 16-19) makes the fish seem genuine with nature’s elements on it. Although, the sea lice that she sees is in a way gross, it is a part of life and it makes the fish all the more beautiful.