

Dialectic Graphic Organizer

“The Fish” by Elizabeth Bishop

Quote	Line	Thoughts
“Tremendous fish”	1	The President’s favorite word! But aside from that, “tremendous” implies greatness. Why?
“He didn’t fight / He hadn’t fought at all”	5-6	Anyone who’s fished would know the fish fight. This makes the fish in question unique.
“Battered and venerable / and homely.”	8-9	Interesting combination of words. Battered doesn’t usually go with “venerable.” (oxymoronic)
“Shapes like full-blown roses / stained and lost through age.”	14-15	Roses convey beauty, so their withering further emphasizes old age.
“Infested / with tiny white sea-lice,”	18-19	Why is the speaker painting the fish in such an unflattering way?
“The terrible oxygen”	23	Oxymoronic; to us, oxygen is crucial. Emphasizes the literal “fish out of the water” feeling.
“And the pink swim-bladder / like a big peony.”	32-33	After all the negative physical descriptions, a flower seems like an odd choice and a shift
“The irises backed and packed / with tarnished tinfoil”	37-38	Tarnished tinfoil is great alliteration. The image of it also emphasizes the age of the fish.
“Old scratched isinglass”	40	Isinglass is an interesting word. It’s literally a part of the fish. No more imagery here?
“They shifted a little, but not / to return my stare.”	41-42	The fish seems almost human, like it disapproves of being caught in this manner.
“...hung five old pieces of fish-line,”	51	This detail shows fish has been through a <i>lot</i> . It makes the listener feel bad for it.
“With all their five big hooks / grown firmly in his mouth.”	54-55	Vivid imagery stirs up sympathy for the fish: it must hurt.
“A fine black thread / still crimped from the strain and snap / when it broke and he got away.”	58-60	Previous fishermen were unsuccessful in catching this fish, so it’s more special that the speaker caught it. Shows that the fish is a fighter and hard to obtain.
“Like medals with their ribbons....”	61	Describes the hooks and pain like sources of honor and glory. Elevates the fish to a higher

		level.
“A five-haired beard of wisdom...”	63	“Wisdom” is an interesting choice to capture the fish’s experiences. What kind of wisdom?
“And victory filled up / the little rented boat,”	66-67	The victory of catching a fish other people had failed at.
“And I let the fish go.”	76	What a satisfying conclusion. Speaker understood the experiences of the fish and decided to let it go. Why?