**Sample Paragraph – Filling Station**

The poet's powers of observation and description, as well as her remarkable ability to achieve insight through reflecting on ordinary, everyday experiences are again evident in 'Filling Station'. The conversational tone draws us into the poem: *'Oh, but it is dirty!'* The image of an *'overall black translucency*' perfectly conveys the sense of overwhelming filth. The poet **closely observes** every aspect of the *'oil-soaked'* station, even **noticing** how the father's monkey suit '*cuts him under the arms'*. Her **close observation** of the unlikely domestic world that she encounters here sets her thinking, *'Why the extraneous plant? / Why the taboret? / Why, oh why, the doily?*' (her eye for **detail** is such that she even **notices** that the doily is 'embroidered in daisy stitch'). These questions reflect the poet's admirable curiosity to understand the reality that lies behind external appearances. Again we see how reflection leads to insight. The poet realises that some unseen person (probably a woman) has done her best to create some semblance of domestic order in a world of grime: *'Somebody waters the plant / or oils it, maybe'* (one of several lovely touches of humour in the poem). Even the oil cans are neatly arranged so as to soothe the fraught nerves of stressed drivers. I enjoyed the poet's clever use of personification as well as the repetition of the soothing 'so' sound: *'they softly say: / ESSO-SO-SO-SO / to highstrung automobiles'*. The poet concludes that there is always someone doing their best to quietly improve the quality of our lives. *'Somebody loves us all'*. As in 'The Fish', poet and reader are uplifted by a very positive, reassuring insight into human life. The human ability to rise above ugliness of life means that beauty and love are to be found in the most unlikely places. I like the way Bishop reflects on a personal experience to discover an uplifting universal truth.