

The Ball Poem

Once a boy was playing with his ball. It was bouncing in the street up and down. The boy was happily enjoying the game. While bouncing, suddenly it fell in the water and was lost.

Without the ball the boy became full of grief. The poet said and that there were other balls. He could purchase another since it was not a great loss. There was no need to worry. Since, the boy had that ball for a long time so he was deeply grieved due to his attachment with it. It was linked to his memories. The poet thinks that it is of no use to purchase another ball. He must feel his responsibility of the loss.

NCERT Solutions

Thinking About the Poem (Page 47)

In pairs, attempt the following questions

Question 1.

Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?

Answer:

The poet says, "I would not intrude on him" because he does not want to intervene in the natural process of learning. He wants the boy to learn the meaning of loss on his own. He also doesn't offer him money to buy another ball because that would be worthless. He wants the boy to learn the lesson of responsibility.

Question 2.

".... staring down All his young days into the harbour where His ball went...." Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Is it linked to the memories of days when he played with it?

Answer:

Yes, the boy has had the ball for a long time. When it bounced into the water, all his memories of the days of childhood flashed in front of him. This led to a realisation that those moments would not come back, just like the ball. He can buy new balls and can similarly create new moments, but those that are gone would not return.

Question 3.

What does "in the world of possessions" mean?

Answer:

"In the world of possessions" means that the world is full of materialistic things. Here everything and every action is made to possess something, whether it is the possession of land, property, money, or any other thing. The poet suggests that losing a ball, which is a very small thing, would make the boy understand what it is like to lose something that one possessed

Question 4.

Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the Words that suggest the answer.

Answer:

No, it seems that the boy had not lost anything earlier. The words that suggest so are 'He senses first responsibility in a world of possessions'.

Question 5.

What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.

Answer:

The poet says that the boy is learning to cope up with the loss of the ball. He is experiencing grief and learning to grow up in this world of possessions. He learns that there are so many things in life that are lost and cannot be brought back. He is sensing his first responsibility as he has lost the ball. The boy will learn how to stand up and leave the losses behind as he would have understood the true meaning and nature of loss.

Extra Questions

Short Answer Type

Question 1.

How was the boy's ball lost?

Answer:

The boy was playing with his ball. The ball bounced and it went down the street. From the street the ball fell into the water. This is how the boy lost this ball.

Question 2.

How did the boy react after losing the ball?

Answer:

The boy was very much upset after losing the ball. He was filled with sadness, which affected him greatly. Stuningly he stood in a stiff manner, overpowered with grief, trembling and staring down where his ball was lost.

Question 3.

How does the boy 'Sense first responsibility'?

Answer:

The boy loses his ball and gets upset. This was his first lesson in sensing first responsibility. He has the experience of losing something and learning how to cope up with the loss. He understands the nature of loss or what it means to lose something. He now will be more responsible and vigilant to avoid losing something in future.

Question 4.

What do you think the poet means by the following lines?

People will take Balls,
balls will be lost always, little boy.
And no one buys a ball back.

Answer:

We think the poet, in these lines, conveys a great message. Losing ball here symbolises miseries arising out of the losses one suffers in life. In this materialistic world, there is cut throat competition.

So losses are bound to happen some day or the other. You have to make up for your own losses. No body else will, do it.

Question 5.

What does the poet mean by “epistemology of loss”?

OR

How important is the learning to “epistemology of loss” for the boy?

Answer:

According to the poet, the epistemology of loss is the greatest lesson, the boy is learning. It teaches him to value and preserve his cherished things. It also teaches him to recover from the loss and move on with his life. When we try to understand what it means to lose something, we are more vigilant to check for further losses. Thus it helps us to be self-reliant and stand up on our own feet.

Question 6.

Why is it important for everyone to experience loss to stand up after it?

Answer:

The poet believes that nothing is eternal. Everyone must experience the loss to help him bear it. It also teaches him how to recover from it and stand up. It will remind him to protect and preserve his possessions.

Question 7.

Why does the poet say that ‘Money is external’?

Answer:

The poet believes that money cannot buy each and everything. It can bring just external happiness by buying us possessions but it cannot make a boy recover from his unhappiness due to loss of a loved one or valued thing.

Question 8.

What does the poet say about “A world of possessions”?

OR

Why does the poet call the world ‘A world of possessions’?

Answer:

The poet calls the world ‘A world of possessions’ because man values and is valued on the basis of his worldly possessions. All his feelings and his whole life are dominated by his possessions.

Question 9.

Why is it important for everyone to experience loss and to stand up after it?

OR

There’s always loss and there’s always disappointment. When someone is learning from loss, he is moving towards achievement. Elaborate.

OR

It’s often been said that you learn more from losing than you do from winning. You learn a lot from a loss. It really gets your attention and it really motivates. Describe.

OR

Loss is an essential and significant experience of one’s life. Explain.

Answer:

Everyone experiences a loss at some point in one’s life. It might be the loss of a beloved, or a parent or a close relative or even a pet. Humans have a tendency of getting attached to things and the loss

of things or people close to heart causes grievance. But one must not let that pull us down. Loss is an essential and significant experience of one's life. And one must learn to deal with it and move on.

If we keep thinking about it or grieve over that loss, we can never come out of it. It will only affect us psychologically and can have severe consequences. Brooding over a loss will never help in bringing things back to normal. Loss is inevitable sometimes. Once a loss occurs, one must grieve, but only for a short while. Thereafter one must get over it and move on in life.

Question 10.

Write the central idea of the poem "The Ball Poem".

Answer:

The poet John Berryman "The Ball poem" describes the grief of a boy over the loss of his ball. This loss makes him realise his first responsibility. The poet wants us to understand that in this materialistic world nothing is forever. We will be forced to give up things which we love and even in time of problems, we have to learn to stand up. We have to learn to accept fate of our life.

Question 11.

Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?

Answer:

The poet wants the boy to experience the loss. He should learn that it is the part of life. That is why the poet does not want to interfere and wants the boy to be strong and handle the situation himself and does not want to offer him money to buy another ball.

Question 12.

staring down/ All his young days into the harbour where/His ball went..." Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Is it linked to the memories of days when he played with it?

Answer:

Yes, it seems like the boy has had the ball for a long time. When it bounced into the water, all his memories of the days of childhood flashed in front of him. This led to a realization that those moments would not come back, just like the ball. He can buy new balls and can create new similar moments, but those that are gone, and would not ever return.

Question 13.

What does "in the world of possessions" mean?

Answer:

"In the world of possessions" means people like to possess all sorts of things in the world. Money is an external thing because it can buy only material objects. It cannot buy everything that one loses or cannot bring back your long lost memories.

Question 14.

Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.

Answer:

No, it seems that the boy has not lost anything earlier. The words that suggest so are, "senses first responsibility in a world of possessions".

Question 15.

What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.

Answer:

The boy has lost his ball while playing. The poet says that from this loss, the boy will learn in his years, what it means to lose something. Thus he will understand the nature of loss or how to face and cope up with losses one suffers in life. This experience of losing something will enable him to learn to be self-reliant and to stand up on his feet in the life where losses do occur, though they might not be important enough to worry about.

Question 16.

Have you ever lost something you liked very much? Write a paragraph describing how you felt then and saying whether—and how—you got over your loss.

Answer:

Last year, our beautiful dog Tommy was lost. All the family loved the dog very much, but I was very deeply attached to Tommy. I used to take full care of him and Tommy would accompany me wherever I allowed him to do so. I felt desperate and upset when Tommy was not traced at all the possible places, where we could find him. I did not feel like eating or going for morning walk. Tommy always used to accompany me when I went for my morning walk, Gradually I reconciled with the situation and consoled myself.

I totally engrossed myself in my studies though I did not feel like playing. I never stopped missing Tommy. Then, one day, when I went to another colony to meet a friend, I found Tommy tied in somebody else's home. When I approached them, they said that the beautiful dog seemed to have lost his way and so they had been giving care to him. I thanked them and returned home happily with Tommy.

Reference to Context

Read the following Stanza and answer the questions that follow:

Question 1.

*What is the boy now, who has lost his ball,
What, what is he to do? I saw it go
Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then
Merrily over—there it is in the water!*

- (i) Name the poem and poet.
- (ii) What has the boy lost?
- (iii) What did he see?
- (iv) Where did the ball go?

Answer:

- (i) This stanza has been taken from the poem 'The Ball Poem' composed by John Berryman.
- (ii) The boy has lost his ball while playing.
- (iii) He saw the ball going down the street.
- (iv) The ball went into the water.

Question 2.

*No use to say 'O there are other balls':
An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down
All his young days into the harbour where His ball went.*

- (i) What does 'O there are other balls' imply?
- (ii) Why is the child upset?
- (iii) What is he looking at?
- (iv) Name the poem and poet.

Answer:

- (i) It implies that the loss of his ball cannot console the boy even if he gets another ball.
- (ii) The child/boy is upset because he has lost his ball.
- (iii) He is looking at the place where his ball went.
- (iv) The poem "The Ball Poem" composed by John Berryman.

Question 3.

*I would not intrude on him;
A dime, another ball, is worthless.
Now He senses first responsibility
In a world of possessions.*

- (i) What did the poet decide?
- (ii) What does the boy understand?
- (iii) What does the "World of Possessions" refer to?
- (iv) Name the poem and poet.

Answer:

- (i) The poet decided not to interfere and suggest anything to the boy.
- (ii) The boy senses his first responsibility.
- (iii) It refers to the world where a man is known by his possessions and is continually led by his decision to possess.
- (iv) The poem "The Ball Poem" written by John Berryman.

Question 4.

*People will take
Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.
He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,
The epistemology of loss, how to stand up
Knowing what every man must one day know
And most know many days, how to stand up.*

- (i) What does the boy learn?
- (ii) What does he think about money?
- (iii) Why was the boy upset?
- (iv) Name the poem and poet.

Answer:

- (i) The boy is learning the epistemology of loss. He learns how to cope up with the loss.

- (ii) Money is external.
- (iii) The boy was upset because he had lost his ball.
- (iv) The poem "The Ball Poem" composed by John Berryman.