

The Ball Poem BY **Poet** John Berryman

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

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! No use to say – ‘O there are other balls’

- (a) What has happened to the boy?
- (b) Why does the poet say ‘No use to say – ‘O there are other balls’?
- (c) Which word means ‘happily’?
- (d) Where did the ball go?

Answer:

- (a) The boy was very sad as he had lost his ball.
- (b) The poet says so as the loss of the ball is of a major consequence to the boy.
- (c) Merrily means happily.
- (d) The ball went to the water.

2. 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 would not intrude on him, A dime, another ball, is worthless.

- (a) Where had the boy’s ball gone?
- (b) How has the loss affected the boy?
- (c) Why was ‘he’ trembling, staring down?
- (d) What does the poet mean by ‘first responsibility’?

Answer:

- (a) The boy’s ball went into the dark waters of the harbour.
- (b) The boy is very much troubled at the loss of his ball. He stands still, trembling and staring at his ball.
- (c) He was trembling, staring down as he had lost his ball.
- (d) By ‘First responsibility’, he, means to look after his things properly.

3.....Now

He senses first responsibility

In a world of possessions. People will take

Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.

And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.

- (a) What does the boy understand?
- (b) What does the word ‘balls’ signify?
- (c) What is meant by the word ‘possessions’?
- (d) What does “In a world of possessions mean?”

(b) **Answer:**

- (a) The boy learns to grow up and understands his first responsibility.
- (b) 'Balls' signify the boys' innocence and happy young days.
- (c) 'Possessions' means something that is owned or possessed.
- (d) It means that everybody loves to possess things or materials in their names.

4. 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.

- (a) What is the boy learning?
- (b) Why are boy's eyes desperate?
- (c) What do you mean by 'epistemology of loss'?
- (d) What every man needs to know one day?

Answer:

- (a) The boy is learning to cope up with the loss.
- (b) Boy's eyes looks desperate as he is sad to see his ball gone forever.
- (c) 'Epistemology of loss' means to understand the nature of loss.
- (d) Every man needs to know one day that loss may occur to him and he would have to bear it up.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:-

1. What does John Berryman want to convey through this poem?

Answer:

Poet, John Berryman wants to convey the importance of loss and responsibility in life. We all should learn our responsibility and how to cope up with the loss.

2. How does the boy feel at the loss of his ball?

Answer:

The boy is very much troubled at the loss of his ball. He experiences grief at the loss of his much loved possession. Like a statue, he keeps staring at the ball with his desperate eyes.

3. Write the sum and substance of the poem "The Ball Poem".

Answer:

In "The Ball Poem", Berryman tells us about how our childhood can quickly fly by, as quickly as a ball is lost and how we sometimes unsuspectingly must grow up and face hardships, like loss.

4. "Money is external". What does the poet mean by this expression?

Answer:

The poet makes the boy understand about his responsibility as the loss is immaterial. Money

is external as it cannot buy memories, nor can it replace the things that we love, the things that really matter.

5. Why does the poet think that it is useless to give the following suggestion to the boy?

'No use to say- 'O there are other balls':

Answer:

According to the poet, it is useless to console the boy by saying that he can get another ball in place of the lost one. The boy had a long association with the ball. It was, thus, useless to give him such a suggestion because he wanted to get back the ball that he had lost.

6. Why did the poet not offer the boy money to buy another ball?

Answer:

The poet watched the boy who had plunged in grief at the loss of his ball. He did not offer the boy money to buy another ball. He felt that another ball could not console the boy. It seemed that the boy had the ball for a long time. The poet also wanted the boy to realise the epistemology of loss.

7. Why did the boy feel so sad at the loss of his ball?

Answer:

When the boy lost the ball, he plunged in grief. He stood staring down the harbour where his ball was lost. The boy was affected profoundly by the loss of his ball because it had been with him for a long time. It was linked to the memories of the days when he played with it.

8. 'He senses first responsibility'—What responsibility is referred to here?

Answer:

The 'responsibility' referred to here is related to learning what it is like to experience grief at the loss of a much loved possession.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.