

Class-12

Sub.-English

Chap- Deep Water

Write and learn the following questions:

Q1 :

What is the "misadventure" that William Douglas speaks about?

Answer :

Douglas refers to the incident at the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool where he almost drowned as a "misadventure." The author was about ten or eleven years old at the time and had barely begun to learn swimming, primarily by aping others. As he was thrown suddenly into the water by someone and he couldn't swim, he started drowning. The struggle to come to surface and to avoid getting drowned left him with a deep fear of water which deprived him from enjoying water-related activities for many years.

Q2 :

What were the series of emotions and fears that Douglas experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?

Answer :

The sudden realization of being thrown into the pool did not make him lose his wits immediately. Although frightened, he thought of a trick to come up to the surface but couldn't execute it successfully. He panicked and felt suffocated by the water. His sense-perceptions gave way, his heart pounded loudly, his limbs became paralyzed with fear, his mind became dizzy and his lungs ached as he gulped water while making desperate attempts to come out of the water. Finally, he lost all his strength and willingness to keep struggling and blacked out.

Douglas planned to allow himself to go down till his feet hit the bottom so that could make a big jump to come back to the surface like a cork. Then, he would lie flat on the surface of water and paddle to the edge of the pool.

Q3 :

How did this experience affect him?

Answer :

The near death experience of drowning had a very strong impact on his psychology. He was deeply perturbed and shaken by the whole experience. A haunting fear of water took control of his physical strength and emotional balance for many years. As he couldn't bear being surrounded by water, he was deprived of enjoying any water-related activity.

Q1 :

How does Douglas make clear to the reader the sense of panic that gripped him as he almost drowned? Describe the details that have made the description vivid.

Answer :

Douglas takes us through his near death experience at the Y.M.C.A. pool by detailing every little aspect associated to it. He details minutes of his emotional, mental and

physical struggle with the paralyzing fear of being drowned in the water. The first person narration of the incident also helps us to associate with his experience more deeply.

Though he did not lose his wits initially, he panicked when his strategy didn't work. His feeling of suffocation, fear and losing hold on sense perceptions make the readers experience what he does. His eyes couldn't see beyond the dirty yellow water. His voice did not assist him. His nose and mouth could only manage to take water to the lungs. His limbs became paralyzed with fear and his mind dizzy. His desperation to save himself kept him struggling until he went down the third time and blacked out. All these details make the description vivid.

Q2 :

Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?

Answer :

Douglas regretted being deprived of enjoying water activities like canoeing, boating, swimming, fishing, etc. The wish to enjoy them and the craving to regain his lost confidence, while being in water, made him try every possible way to get rid of his fear. He was finally able to overcome this mental handicap by getting himself a swimming instructor and further ensuring that no residual fear was left.

Q3 :

How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

Answer :

At first, he tried to overcome his fear of water on his own. But when this failed, he got an instructor for himself who worked on Douglas' fear very methodically. With his help, Douglas began by learning to be at ease in water. After this, he practiced exhaling-inhaling in water to eliminate the fear of putting his head inside the water. Then, he moved on to master individual steps of swimming which were, finally, integrated into a complete experience of swimming, by his instructor. After about six months, Douglas could not only swim well but was, also, free of his fear to a great extent.

At this stage, Douglas' journey of truly overcoming his fear to its tiniest vestiges began. He swam alone in the pool. He went to Lake Wentworth to dive. He tried every possible stroke he learnt. Finally, in his diving expedition, in the Warm Lake, he conquered his fear completely.



Q4 :

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How did the instructor "build a swimmer" out of Douglas?

Answer :

The instructor worked gradually on Douglas' psychology, moved on to his physical movements and then integrated each part to build a swimmer out of him.

Initially, he made Douglas swim back and forth across the swimming pool so that he could get used to it. He used an elaborate mechanism with a rope, belt, pulley and an overhead cable to help them stay connected while Douglas was in the pool. Then, one-by-one, he made Douglas master the individual techniques of swimming, like putting his head in the water, exhaling and inhaling while in water, movements of his hands, body, legs, etc. Finally, he integrated these perfected steps into a whole experience of swimming for Douglas.

Q5 :

Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from his experience?

Answer :

Douglas recounts his childhood experience at the Y.M.C.A. pool to enable the readers to understand the exact nature and intensity of the terror. The fear of being surrounded by the water, the fear of putting his head in the water, the fear of choking and the fear of his limbs going numb couldn't have been explained to a reader unacquainted with Douglas' childhood experience. In that case, the elaborate strategy adopted by the author (and his instructor) and the time-taken by him to learn or master even simple things, though put in the perspective of his fear of water, couldn't have been understood properly.

By quoting Roosevelt, "All we have to fear is fear itself," Douglas indicates the larger meaning that he draws from his experience. For him, the importance of life became evident when he encountered death or rather its proximity threatening his life.

Q6 :

How did Douglas make sure that he conquered the old terror?

Answer :

Even after the swimming training was over, Douglas wasn't confident about his swimming or that he had overcome the fear. He was determined to completely get rid of it forever. He swam alone in the pool. He went to Lake Wentworth to dive. There, he tried every possible stroke he had learnt. He fought back the tiny vestiges of terror that

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gripped him in middle of the lake. Finally, in his diving expedition in the Warm Lake, he realised that he had truly conquered his old terror.

