



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (2022-23)

QUESTION BANK – THE BALL POEM- by John Berryman

Class: X

Sub: ENGLISH

I.SUMMARY

The poet is talking about a little boy who has lost his ball. He was playing with his ball. The ball skipped from his hand and went into the nearby water body. The poet says that the sight of the boy losing his favourite ball made him think about the boy and his reaction to this situation. He further says that the boy was helplessly looking into the water where his ball had gone. He was sad and trembling with fear. He got so immersed in his sorrow that he kept standing near the harbour for a very long time and kept on looking for his ball. The poet says that he could console him that he may get new balls or he could also give him some money to buy another ball. But he stops himself from doing so because he thinks that the money may bring a new ball but will not bring the memories and feelings attached to the lost ball. He further says that the time has come for the boy to learn his responsibilities. Here the poet wants to say that now the boy will learn the toughest lesson of life. The lesson of accepting the harsh realities of life is that one day we will lose our loved ones and our loved things.

MCQ QUESTIONS:

Question 1.

Who is the poet of the poem 'The Ball Poem'?

- (a) Sylvia Plath
- (b) W.B Yeats
- (c) Robert Frost
- (d) John Berryman.

Ans: John Berryman

Question 2.

Why are the boy's eyes desperate?

- (a) Because he has lost his ball.
- (b) Because he has lost his money.
- (c) Because he has lost his gloves
- (d) None of the Above

Ans: Because he has lost his ball

Question 3.

What does 'in the world of possessions' means?

- (a) Love
- (b) Lust
- (c) Materialistic things
- (d) None of the Above

Ans: Materialistic things

Question 4.

Where was the boy staring down?

- (a) the sea
- (b) the ocean
- (c) the harbour
- (d) the lake

Ans: The Harbour

Question 5.

Name the literary device used in "And no one buys a ball back."

- (a) Metaphor
- (b) Simile
- (c) Alliteration
- (d) Anaphora

Ans: Alliteration

Question 6.

Why does the poet decide not to condole the boy?

- (a) He is busy
- (b) He is indifferent
- (c) It will be of no use
- (d) He is happy

Ans: It will be of no use

Question 7.

According to the poet, what is the child learning?

- (a) to bear loss
- (b) to take care of things
- (c) to be responsible
- (d) to be careful

Ans: To bear loss

Question 8.

What does a ball cost?

- (a) 5 dimes
- (b) 10 dimes
- (c) 1 dime
- (d) 4 dimes

Ans: 1 dime

EXTRACT-BASED QUESTIONS:

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?

Ans:

- (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.

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?

Ans:

- (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.

3. I would not intrude on him;

A dime, another ball, is worthless.
Now He senses the 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?

Ans:

- (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.

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) Which poetic device is used in the second line of the poem?

Ans:

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) Alliteration

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:

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 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 5.

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 6.

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 7.

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 8.

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 9.

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 10.

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.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Should the boy be allowed to grieve for his ball? If his loss is irreparable or irretrievable then how should one handle it? What lessons can be learnt?

Answer:

Yes, the boy should be allowed to grieve for his ball, as he had that ball for a long time. He had many old memories associated with it since his childhood. Moreover, when a person is trying to overcome his grief on his own, then one should not intrude or disturb him as it may break his chain of thoughts and may irritate him.

One should have self-consolation, and self-understanding in order to bear the loss. Self-realization and understanding are more effective and lasting than when it is done by an external agency or a person.

2. How did the boy really react to the loss of the ball or was he fearful of something or

someone? Can our attention be directed toward his family and other people? Are there any lessons to be learnt?

Answer:

The boy was not fearful of anyone, in fact, he was really upset about the loss of the ball. The ball was valuable for him. He was shocked, remained fixed, trembled with grief staring at the place where the ball had fallen. His family must not have been affected by the loss as a ball is an easily available and inexpensive item.

The loss of the ball teaches a lesson to us. Money is external in the sense that it can give you only outer happiness or pleasure not inner. Money cannot buy the emotions and heavenly virtues. It cannot be linked with old memories. Moreover, self-consolation, realization or understanding is more effective and lasting than done by an external agency or a person.

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

Answer:

When a person is trying to come over his grief on his own, he is busy making himself understand certain things if then, someone intrudes or disturbs, and his chain of thoughts is broken. It makes him irritated. Moreover, self-consolation, realization or understanding is more effective and lasting than when it is done by an external agency or a person. The poet knows it. So he does not intrude on him.

His offer of money to buy another ball is useless for the boy wants the same ball he is attached to and has been playing for a long time. No other ball will be able to take its place.

4. How is the lost ball, the metaphor of the lost childhood of the boy? Why doesn't the poet want to 'intrude on' the boy by offering him money to buy another ball?

Answer:

The boy has a ball. Perhaps he has been keeping it for a long time. He must have developed a lot of attachment and love with the ball. Suddenly while he is playing, the ball bounces down the street. And after a few bounces, it falls down into the harbour. It is lost forever. The boy stands there shocked and fixed to the ground. He constantly goes on staring at the spot where his ball fell down into the water. Outwardly, the loss seems to be quite small. The boy seems to be making a fuss over the loss. Many boys have lost such balls and will lose so in future. A new ball can be easily bought in a dime.

The metaphor of the lost ball is beautifully linked to the loss of a sweet childhood. No amount of money can buy the ball back that has been lost forever. Similarly, no worldly wealth can buy back the lost childhood. The poet doesn't want to sermonise on this issue. The boy himself has to learn epistemology or the nature of the loss. He has to move ahead in life forgetting all the losses he has suffered in the past.

5. What is the epistemology of loss in this world of possessions? How has the child learned to stand up in life?

Answer:

Gain and loss are the two sides of the same coin. Getting, spending and losing things form a natural cycle of life. The boy is inconsolable at the loss of his ball. Actually, it is not the ordinary ball but his long association and attachment with it that makes the loss so unbearable. It is like the good sweet days of childhood that the boy cherishes so much but are lost and gone forever. They will never come back again.

So, what is the remedy? He can bear this loss by understanding the epistemology or nature of the loss. In this world of material wealth and possessions, it seems that money can buy anything. However, it is a false conception. Money has its own limitations. Its nature is external. It cannot compensate for the losses that a person suffers emotionally or internally. No wealth can buy back the ball that has been lost forever. Similarly, no wealth can buy back the lost childhood. The child will have to move ahead and stand up in life. He has to stop weeping over his past losses and start living life as it should be lived.