

Short-Answer Questions

Q.1. When Douglas realised that he was sinking, how did he plan to save himself?

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

Ans. Douglas did not lose hope. He planned that as soon as he would hit the bottom of the pool, he would push himself up. He sprang up as he planned and came slowly to the surface.

Q.2. What sort of terror seized Douglas as he went down the water with a yellow glow? How could he feel that he was still alive?

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

Ans. Douglas was seized with extreme terror and panic. He tried to shriek under water and felt absolutely paralysed with fear. He felt stiff and rigid and the screams seemed to freeze in his throat. The beating of his heart and the pounding in his head were the only reminders that he was still alive.

Q.3. Why did Douglas go to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire?

[CBSE Delhi 2011]

Ans. Douglas went to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire to get rid of his fear of water. He took training from a coach in a swimming pool. Though his fear for water decreased, it had not completely left him. Then he went to the lake to test his fear to swim all alone. He swam two miles in the lake. Thus he conquered his phobia of water.

Q.4. Which factors led Douglas to decide in favour of Y.M.C.A. pool?

[CBSE (AI) 2011]

Ans. Douglas decided in favour of Y.M.C.A. pool, as it was an ideal place to learn swimming. It was safe as it was only two-three feet deep at the shallow end. Though it was nine feet deep at the other end, the drop was gradual.

Q.5. Why did Douglas go to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire? How did he make his terror flee?

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

Ans. Douglas was not sure whether all the terror had left even after the training from October to April and practice till July. So he went to Lake Wentworth and swam two miles. Terror returned only once when he was in the middle of the lake. He had put himself under water and saw nothing but bottomless water. The old sensation returned, but only at a smaller magnitude. He laughed and rebuked terror.

Q.6. What efforts did Douglas make to get over his fear of water?

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

Ans. Douglas hired an instructor who taught him to face water and exhale. He taught Douglas various techniques to handle water and learn swimming. Eventually to ensure that his fear was completely off his mind, Douglas Swam 2 miles across the lake went worth, and for any residual fear to be cleared he hurried west to the Conrad Meadows and dived into the Warm lake from on top of the Gilbert peak. He had finally conquered his fear of water.

Q.7. How did the instructor turn Douglas into a swimmer?

[CBSE Delhi 2013]

Ans. Douglas wanted to overcome his fear of water. For this, he took the help of an instructor who taught him all the strokes of swimming. He taught him to practice every part of his body separately – his limbs, his hands, how to exhale and inhale when out of water and inside water. After perfecting each part, he integrated the whole and built a complete swimmer out of Douglas.

Q.8. What was the author's early childhood fear of the water? How did it affect him the rest of his life?

Ans. The author and his father once went to the beach of California when the former was three or four. While playing in the surf of the sea, the author was knocked down by the water and was buried under it. He lost his breath and a deep fear developed in his mind.

Q.9. Why did Douglas' mother recommend that he should learn swimming at the YMCA swimming pool?

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

Ans. Douglas' mother recommended that he should learn swimming at the YMCA swimming pool because it was much safer than the river where a lot of drownings had taken place. It was only 2-3 feet deep at the shallow end and 9 feet deep at the other end.

Q.10. Mention any two long term consequences of the drowning incident on Douglas.

[CBSE Sample Paper 2016]

Ans. After the drowning incident, Douglas always felt terrified near water. He was deprived of enjoying water activities like canoeing, boating, swimming, fishing, etc. Fear gripped him and all this spoiled his holidays.

Q.11. What deep meaning did his experience at the YMCA swimming pool have for Douglas?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Ans. After his near death experience at the YMCA pool, Douglas started fearing water. He could not enjoy any water sports or go fishing. He decided to overcome his fear and learnt swimming again. He became confident and understood that 'all that we have to fear is fear itself'.

Q.12. 'All' we have to fear is fear itself'. When did Douglas learn this lesson?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Ans. These words mean that we fear, fear the most. Those who have undergone this experience of fear can only appreciate its worth. Douglas faced it twice in life. He had a terrible fear of water. He could not go for swimming, canoeing, boating, rafting, etc. he realized that it would ruin his life since it was following and haunting him wherever he went. Fear is our hard core enemy.

Long-Answer Questions

Q.1. “...there was terror in my heart at the overpowering force of the waves.” When did Douglas start fearing water? Which experience had further strengthened its hold on his mind and personality?

[CBSE (AI) 2010]

Ans. Once Douglas was thrown into the swimming pool by a boy. He did not know swimming by that time. He could not come out of it by himself and was nearly drowned. Therefore, he became very much afraid of water. He dropped the idea of swimming and developed a fear of water. He made many efforts but water in vain. He could not control his feeling of terror. The writer had near death experience in the pool. The writer made one more effort to come out but that also failed. He could not forget his first experience of drowning when he was swept away by a sea wave. At that time, he was with his father but he was afraid.

Now the writer was so afraid of water that he could not even wade into it. He could not bathe in the river and could not enjoy any water sports.

Q.2. How did the misadventure in YMCA swimming pool affect Douglas? What efforts did he make to conquer his old terror?

[CBSE (F) 2013]

Ans. The misadventure at the YMCA swimming pool affected Douglas for life. He was eleven at the time. When he was a learner and sat alone on the edge of the YMCA pool, a young man just for fun, threw him into the deep end of the pool.

He almost drowned. This experience left a deep scar on his mind. For days, the panic and fear kept haunting him. He began to fear water. He was possessed by it completely. It deprived him of the joy of canoeing, boating, fishing, bathing and swimming—all water sports. So he decided to conquer it.

He got the services of an instructor, who trained him. First every part of his body and then bit by bit, he built a swimmer out of Douglas. A rope was attached to the belt around the waist of Douglas and the rope went through a pulley, the other end was held by the instructor. First, the fear came back every time the instructor let go the rope. Gradually, the fear became less. Later the instructor was no more needed. He tried to swim alone to test himself. So he went to Lake Wentworth and dived off. He swam using all the strokes that he had learnt. The traces of fear that frightened him were brushed aside. He could now laugh it all away. The fear was gone. He could swim fearlessly.

Q.3. How did the instructor make Douglas a good swimmer?

[CBSE (AI) 2012, 2013]

Ans. The haunting fear of the water followed Douglas in his fishing trips, swimming, boating and canoeing. He used every way he knew to get rid of this fear but it held him firmly in its grip. So, he finally engaged an instructor to learn swimming.

The instructor made him practise five days a week, an hour each day. He held one end of the rope in his hands and the other end through a pulley overhead of Douglas, was tied to the belt. Thus the instructor relaxing his hold on the rope made Douglas swim back and forth in the pool.

After three months of this much training, the instructor taught Douglas to put his face under water and breathe out and to raise his nose and breathe in. He repeated this breathing out and breathing in exercise hundreds of times. Bit by bit, he got rid of part of the terror which had gripped him. Next, the instructor held Douglas at the side of the pool and made him kick the water with his legs. After weeks of practice, he could command his own legs for swimming in water.

Thus piece by piece, the instructor built a swimmer. When he had perfected each piece, he put them into an integrated whole in the seventh month of the training.

Q.4. How did Douglas try to save himself from drowning in the YMCA pool?

[CBSE Delhi 2012]

Ans. Douglas was tossed into the YMCA pool by an older boy. He was frightened out of his wits, but on his way down he planned how to rescue himself. He decided that when his feet would hit the bottom, he would jump upwards and be able to come to the surface, lie flat and paddle to the edge of the pool. He tried to do so several times.

However, it seemed difficult because his lungs seemed to burst, he was not able to push himself upwards with force. He tried to reach a rope which also he failed to do. He tried to call out for help, but his voice failed him. His legs failed to paddle, he was surrounded by water and he drifted into a state of unconsciousness.

Though all his efforts to save himself failed, he was rescued by the folks at YMCA. But the incident aggravated his fear for water.

Q.5. How did Douglas develop an aversion to water?

[CBSE Delhi 2012]

Ans. Douglas developed an aversion to water first as a child when he went to the beach in California with his father. It so happened that when he was three or four years old, he went to the beach with his father. The waves knocked him down and swept over him. He was buried in water and his breath was gone. He was frightened and there was terror in his heart at the overpowering force of the waves.

At the YMCA pool, a strong boy threw him in the deep end of the pool. Douglas hit the water in a sitting position and slowly went to the bottom and fainted. Although he was saved later, the terror stayed with him. As a result, he could not sleep or eat for days and did not go near the water for years. He developed a strong aversion for water bodies.

Q.6. 'Practice makes a man perfect'.

Douglas tried hard to reach to the level of perfection by perseverance. Comment.

Ans. Practice means constant use of one's intellectual and aesthetic powers. Perfect means 'ideal, complete and excellent'. Proper planning and practice promote perfect performance. Practice depends on training and it means repeating an activity. Constant practice also sharpens talent.

One has to follow certain qualities to be perfect. These are hard work, strong will power, faith, tolerance, positive approach, self-confidence and dedication. The quality that prepares one for all other qualities is practice. One should not stop practicing and be satisfied until one achieves perfection.

Practice is the best way by which one can achieve perfection. Practice makes one feel and understand the same idea or thing again and again. The more one practices, the more errorless one becomes. One doesn't repeat the errors that were done previously. Practice begins in the cradle and ends in the grave. Right from childhood, man practices various activities like talking, reading, writing, eating, cooking, etc. For learning an art or any activity, one needs constant practice. A child practices speaking first by learning the alphabet, then the words, sentences and finally the speech. A child through repeated practice reaches perfection in speaking. One can't ride a bicycle or a motor bike or drive a car at the very first instance. One needs to practise till one achieves perfection in the same. The same method applies to other areas too. Be it fine arts, cooking or writing. Determined to overcome his phobia of water, Douglas got trained under an instructor. He conquered this terror with an adamant determination, patience, undeterred single mindedness and relentless efforts. He became fearless and courageous.

Practice enables a person to reach the heights of success in all walks of life. Practice develops outstanding qualities in one's character. Practice not only brings perfection but also helps in building character. Thus, it is practice that makes a man perfect and helps a human being who faces every challenge in life.

Q.7. Fear is mankind's greatest handicap. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your views.

Ans. People often hesitate from trying something new because of fear. Fear of failing; fear of not being able to complete something; fear of poor outcome; fear of change; fear of making mistakes—this fear of taking risks in life impedes the progress of a lot of people, especially those who have tasted success in the past. Successful people like to win and achieve high standards, so they become deeply interested in only achieving continuous success. They don't care to put their reputation as a 'winner' at stake—so they stay in their comfortable cocoon, missing all kinds of opportunities for an even brighter future.

Yet again, childhood fears and phobias, also act as deterrents in our way of progress. Fear of darkness, may prevent a person from enjoying the beauty of the night sky. Fear of heights, the view of the world below, and fear of water like Douglas, will deprive one of enjoying various

pleasures that is provided by water sports. Fear of failure prevents us from trying to move towards, success. In short fear of every nature is a handicap.

Change needs resilience, and resilience is born of confidence. One's confidence is highest when things are going well. You'll cope with any setbacks far better when you're doing so from a position of strength.

If you wait until life has dealt you some bad blows, those necessary changes will need to be made under time, pressure and stress. That's a bad time to make decisions. The more stressed and frantic you are, the more likely you are to make mistakes— and the less you'll be able to recover from them.

Corporations often make the same error. They get complacent when the product line is selling well and profits are high, only thinking about new ways to please their customers when those customers are already going elsewhere.

Achievement is a powerful value for many successful people. Each fresh achievement adds to the drive to achieve in their lives. Failure becomes the supreme nightmare: a lurking horror that they must avoid at any cost. And the simplest way is never to take a risk.

It is important to understand that failure is in fact the pillar to success. Be it J.K. Rowling, Steve Jobs, Thomas Alva Edison, Albert Einstein, King Bruce or William Douglas from the chapter 'Deep Water', all of them had failed multiple times to achieve success in life. In fact constant failure was what pushed them towards success. A little failure is essential to preserve everyone's perspective on reality.

Fear is the greatest destroyer of human life and happiness. If you're successful, but constantly afraid of failing, all your success hasn't bought you what matters the most— peace of mind in the face of life's constant unpredictability.

Q.8. A big boy pushed Douglas into the deep end of the swimming pool which could have led to his death. Concerns regarding bullying and ragging persists in many teenage groups. Quoting examples from the text, discuss the problem of bullying and its effects on the victims. Also suggest ways to deal with this problem.

[CBSE Sample Paper 2015]

Ans. Bullying or ragging creates many physiological problems for victims. It may or may not lead to physical harm but psychologically it harms the victim. Douglas was also a victim of a similar incident. At the YMCA pool, a bully threw him in the deeper end of the pool. Although he was saved, the terror stayed with him. As a result, he could not sleep or eat for days and did not go near the water for years. He also started avoiding water for a long time. Simple activities like fishing and boating, which he wanted to enjoy, couldn't be done.

To deal with this problem, especially in schools and colleges, committees for monitoring teenagers should be set up. Once the prospective bullies know that they are being watched, they would not dare to do such actions. Equally important is the support of parents and community. Children need to be aware to understand what bullying is and report any incidents of bullying.

Bullies should be severely punished and not just left with a warning. Unless some stringent measures are taken, the problem of bullying and ragging cannot be resolved.