

The Ball Poem

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 wants the boy to learn from the experience of loss. This will teach the boy that loss is also an important part of life, hence the poet does not intervene in the boy’s natural process of learning. He also doesn’t offer the boy money to buy another ball because the lesson of loss learnt from this experience would become worthless and wouldn’t teach the little one to learn the lesson of responsibility from this situation.

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, it appears that the boy has had the ball for a long time. When it bounced and fell into the water, all his childhood memories of wonderful days flashed in front of his eyes. He realised that those moments would never come back, just as the ball. He felt that he can buy new balls and those would create new memories or moments for him, but those that are gone with the ball into the water would never ever return.

Question 3:

What does “in the world of possessions” mean?

Answer:

“In the world of possessions” refers to the world consisting of materialistic things. Different people possess different things such as land, property, money, or any other valuable thing. In the poem, the poet indicates that losing of the ball by the boy may be a very small thing, but this would give him a realization of loss and the experience of losing memories associated with it.

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 did not lose anything earlier. It is evident from the words ‘He senses first

responsibility in a world of possessions'. This line suggests that the sense of loss gave him an experience of understanding how several precious moments are lost with the loss of a particular object.

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 tries to convey through his poem that the boy has learnt an important lesson to cope up with the loss of his ball. He is experiencing grief and sadness while he grows up in this world full of possessions. He learns that there are several important things in life that are lost and cannot be brought back. He also senses his first sense of responsibility as he loses the ball. The boy learns to stand up and leave the loss behind as he moves ahead in his life and understands the true meaning and nature of loss.

Question 6:

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:

Yes, I had lost my pet dog in a road accident when he was just five years old. One day I was playing with my puppy with a ball in my garden. I threw the ball in the air while playing with him, my dog jumped to catch the ball but it bounced back and rolled to the street nearby. As my dog went to fetch the ball, a speeding car ran over my puppy and I could hear it crying in pain. I rushed to the spot and found my pup covered in blood. I rushed him to the hospital immediately but it was too late and he was bleeding profusely and succumbed to injuries. I was very upset and grief-stricken by this incident. With due course of time, I recovered with my loss, but that incident is fresh in my memories and I still love my dog and miss him dearly.

(Note: Students can write this answer as per their personal experiences.)