DEEP WATER by William Douglas

Short answer questions. 30-40 words:

1. Why did Douglas’ mother recommend he learn to swim at the YMCA pool?
2. How did Douglas develop an aversion to water?
3. What is the ‘misadventure’ Douglas refers to?
4. What happens when Douglas is thrown into the YMCA pool?
5. What strategy did he devise to save himself from drowning?
6. Describe what Douglas went through under water.
7. How did the ‘misadventure’ affect Douglas?
8. Why did Douglas decide to overcome his fear of water?
9. “Piece by piece he built a swimmer” Who does ‘he’ refer to? How did he build a swimmer?
10. How did Douglas remove his residual hydrophobia?
11. “All we have to fear is fear itself”. Describe the relevance of this statement.

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Long answer questions. 120-150 words

1. Douglas had an aversion to water and his misadventure at the YMCA pool further increased it. Explain.
2. Discuss the short term and long term effects the incident at the YMCA pool had on Douglas.
3. How did Douglas get over his fear?

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ANSWER KEY

Short answers

1. Douglas’ mother recommended that he learn swimming at the YMCA swimming pool as the Yakima River was treacherous and there had been many drowning there. YMCA pool was safe as it was 2-3 feet deep at the shallow end. Though the deeper end was 9 feet deep, the drop was gradual making it less dangerous than the Yakima River.
2. When Douglas was just four-years-old, his father took him to the beach In California. The strong waves knocked him down and he was completely covered with water. He was terrified at the overpowering forces of the waves while his father laughed at him. Since that day, he had developed an aversion to water.
3. The ‘misadventure’ William Douglas refers to is the incident when he was thrown into the YMCA pool by an older boy.
4. When Douglas was thrown into the YMCA pool, he landed in sitting position. He felt his hydrophobia again and couldn’t swim to the other end of the pool since he hadn’t learnt how to swim yet.
5. As soon as he landed in the sitting position, Douglas made a strategy to save himself. He thought that when his feet would touch the bottom of the pool, he would apply pressure and jump upwards. Once his nose and mouth was out of the water he would lie flat and paddle to the edge of the pool.
6. When Douglas was tossed into the deep end of the pool, he was frightened but his brain was under his control. After his first attempt to save himself failed, he started feeling dizzy. When he went down the second time, he was terrified, paralysed and frozen with fear. After the failure of his second attempt, when he went down the third time, all his effort ceased and unconsciousness wiped out fear and terror from his mind and he relaxed.
7. Douglas’ misadventure at the YMCA pool affected him drastically. He feared and avoided water whenever he could. He couldn’t enjoy the waters of the cascades or bathing in warm lakes as the terror would seize him and he would be horrified. His fear of water handicapped him so much that he couldn’t enjoy fishing, swimming, boating or canoeing.
8. Douglas desired to get over his fear of water as this fear deprived him of all the amusement associated with water he was terrified to go near any pool or enjoy any kind of water sports.
9. ‘He’ refers to the instructor Douglas had hired in order to overcome his fear of water. The instructor initially used a rope to avoid fear and nervousness then he taught Douglas to put his face under water and after that he trained his legs to work. In this way he built a swimmer piece by piece.
10. Douglas removed his residual doubts about his hydrophobia by swimming alone without help of the instructor. He went to Lake Wentworth and swam across it. When the terror returned to him, he laughed at it. His residual fear was removed after swimming across the length of the warm lake twice.
11. Roosevelt once said, “All we have to fear is fear itself.” The relevance of this statement is that Douglas had experienced the fear of water and the terror of fear. He had made an effort to overcome the terror that had seized him for a long time and hence proved that the things we fear are not scary, only the idea of terror terrifies us.

Long Answers:

1. Douglas had an aversion to water since his childhood. When he was just 4 years old, he had gone to California beach with his father. There, the waves had knocked him down and overpowered him while his father stood by laughing. He tried to overcome his childhood fear by attempting to learn to swim. He chose the YMCA pool as it was safer than the Yakima River. But before he could learn to swim, a misadventure horrified him and increased his phobia of water. When he was tossed into the deep end of the pool, he got frightened. Still, he devised a strategy to save himself. However, all his attempts failed and he was gripped by terror. This terror affected him so much that he couldn’t allow himself to enjoy any kind of recreational activities associated with water bodies. Ultimately, he overcame his fear as he learnt to swim as an adult.
2. When Douglas experienced drowning in the YMCA pool and was taken out, he became conscious only after a while. When he walked home, he felt weak and trembled due to fear. He broke down and couldn’t eat that night. The terror remained in his heart for many days. Slight exertion upset him and made him sick. He feared water so much that he avoided it and never went back to the pool. Even after many years, his fear didn’t go away. He wanted to enjoy the water of the Cascades. However, his terrifying experience at the YMCA pool possessed him completely and he was horrified. The phobia of water handicapped him so much that he couldn’t go fishing and it ruined all his fishing trips. Neither could he enjoy canoeing, boating and swimming. The misadventure affected his mental health in both, the short and long term.
3. Douglas’ misadventure at the YMCA pool horrified him for all his life. The aversion to water that he had developed in his childhood was intensified because of his near death experience at the YMCA pool. Even when he grew up, this phobia deprived him of all the joys one could experience during water sports. He couldn’t go swimming, fishing, canoeing or boating. Whenever he tried to go near water, the terror would seize him. Ultimately he decided to overcome his fear of water. His instructor helped him become a swimmer. Even after spending 7 months under the instructor supporting him, he still had remnants of the fear lodged in deep inside his head. Finally he overcame his fear teaching us the values of perseverance and determination. Roosevelt once said, “All we have to fear is fear itself.” and Douglas showed us the way to overcome any kind of fear.