

THE BALL

In this poem John Berryman tells us about our reactions at some material loss. A boy loses a ball in the water. He is Very upset at the loss of the ball. A ball does not cost much. It is not even difficult to buy a new ball. But the poet wants the `child to Understand that losing things is a common thing of life.

Central Idea of the Poem

‘The Ball Poem’ looks like a simple story of a young boy losing his ball. The boy is severely upset over the loss. Normally, it may seem like a great overreaction. Children lose things like their toys and balls quite often. Usually, no fuss should be made about such a small thing. But the ball seems to be symbolising the poet’s childhood. The boy becoming an adult loses his childhood. He was clinging onto his childhood for so long. The poet accepts the changes in his life. Although he is still suffering yet he is learning to move on from his fleeting childhood. The true theme of the poem is that we should cherish every moment of life. Life is really very short. The poet realises that it is very difficult to deal with the loss but it must be done. We should move on as there is no use in wasting precious time and life.

Style

The poem uses a good combination of tone, imagery and symbolism. In the beginning, the tone is depressing. It depicts a scene where a young boy has lost his ball when it is bounced into the harbour. The loss of the ball symbolises the loss of innocence and childhood. Like childhood, the lost ball can’t be retrieved. The tone in the end changes giving an encouraging message that life should be lived as it is and we should move on with the changing time. The poem is in the free verse as it suits its tone and content.

DETAILED SUMMARY

A boy loses a ball in the water. He is very upset. Though the ball does not cost too much it gives a big shock to him. He keeps staring at the place where his ball has gone. The poet sees all this but he doesn’t interfere with the boy’s ruminations. The poet thinks that the loss of the

ball will teach the boy a lesson of accepting the loss with tolerance and pleasure. Everyone has to lose something or the other in this world still they are to survive and fulfil their obligations. This loss makes the boy learn that gains and losses are part and parcel of life. One should accept them as a common matter.

Detailed Summary (2)

1. The Boy Loses His Ball: The poem is about a young boy who loses his ball. Usually, losing a ball should not be a big issue. Young boys usually lose their toys and balls quite often. The ball is seen 'merrily' bouncing down the street. And ultimately the ball falls down into the water and lost forever. The boy stood there sadly watching the ball go. But he was helpless. Nor could he do anything to get the ball back. The ball here symbolises the innocent childhood of the boy which has slipped away and he wants it back.

2. Other Balls Too: It is of no use to remind him that it was not a big loss. He can get more balls and continue his game. But for the boy, the loss of the ball is a great loss. There may be other balls and perhaps he can hope to get any one of them. However, the ball that he has lost can't be retrieved. It has fallen into the deep water of the harbour. The boy is inconsolable. He loses hope in himself and becomes depressed and hopeless. He stands still, trembling and looking at the point where his ball has gone down into the harbour. Here, the lost ball stands for the lost childhood and the harbour stands for the vastness of life. It will not serve any purpose to remind him that the ball costs just a dime and is worth nothing.

3. Recovering from the Loss: But there comes a change in his mood and thinking. He realises that in this world the loss is the part of the game. He must take such losses in life in his stride. Achievements will follow losses in life. And a thing that is lost once can't be retrieved or brought back. Money can't buy the lost childhood, the lost dreams and the lost feelings back. Money is external to such losses.

4. Standing Up: The poet gives a message of hope and encouragement. Ultimately, he comes out of his depression and hopelessness. He has to learn how he should stand up to bear the loss. The theme of the poem is that life is precious and should not be wasted. Life has to be lived. And

life can be lived purposefully and fruitfully only when we stand up and come out of depression.

Main Points of the Poem

The young boy lost his ball.

He was playing and saw the ball bouncing down the street.

Then, in the end, the ball fell down into the water and lost forever.

The boy sees everything happening before his eyes but he is helpless.

He only stands there helplessly moaning at the loss of the ball.

The loss of the ball may appear to be an ordinary incident.

It seems that boys lose such balls many times while they are playing.

The boy should not make a fuss over it.

The loss of ball is symbolic. It has a deeper meaning.

The loss of the ball is the loss of childhood and the loss of his dreams.

And if it is lost, it never comes back again.

Similarly, we can't console the child that he can have another ball.

Actually, he is sad that the ball he has lost can't be brought back.

The innocent childhood that he has lost can't be replaced or bought back with money.

Wealth can't buy life and time.

Ultimately, a change comes in the grieving boy.

He comes to know that losing is a part of life.

The loss must not break his spirits.

There is no use of grieving over what has been lost.

He must stand up to face such losses with courage and determination.

Life has to be lived and not wasted in grieving and mourning over the losses suffered in the past.

COMPREHENSION OF STANZAS

Read the following stanzas and answer the questions that follow:

STANZA 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!

Questions :

- (a) What becomes peculiar of the boy who has lost his ball?
- (b) What did the poet see?
- (c) Where did the ball land finally?
- (d) What has the boy lost?
- (e) Name the poem and the poet.

Answers :

- (a) The boy is confused as to what he is to do.
- (b) The poet saw the ball bouncing towards the water.
- (c) It landed finally in the water.
- (d) The boy has lost his ball.
- (e) Poem: The Ball Poem.
Poet: John Berryman.

STANZA 2

No use to say. 'O there are other balls' :
Ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down
All his young days into the harbour where
His ball went

Questions :

- (a) How do people generally comfort a boy who has lost his ball?
- (b) What does he stare at?
- (c) What comes to his mind when he looks at the ball?
- (d) Why is the boy so sad?
- (e) Where was the boy staring at?

Answers :

- (a) People generally comfort him by saying, "There are other balls."
- (b) He stares at the ball which has fallen in the water.
- (c) When he looks at the ball, all his young days come to his mind.
- (d) He is grief-stricken at the loss of his ball.
- (e) He was staring down the harbour where his ball had gone.

STANZA 3

I would not intrude on him;
A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now
He senses first responsibility

In a world of possessions.

Questions :

- (a) Who does the word 'he' refer to?
- (b) Why is money or another ball worthless for the boy?
- (c) How does the boy sense responsibility?
- (d) What kind of a world is it?
- (e) Name the poem and the poet.

Answers :

- (a) The word 'he' refers to the boy whose ball has lost.
- (b) Money or another ball is worthless for the boy because he has lost something dear to him. He is suffering from a sense of loss.
- (c) He senses responsibility when his possessed ball is lost.
- (d) It is a materialistic world.
- (e) Poem: The Ball Poem.

Poet: John Berryman.

STANZA 4

People will take

Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.

And no one buys a ball back. Money is external

Questions :

- (a) Why does the poet say 'balls will be lost always'?
- (b) Why does the poet say that no one buys a ball back?
- (c) What does the poet mean by 'Money is external'?
- (d) What is external?
- (e) What is the name of the poem?

Answers :

- (a) The poet wants to say that the loss of dear things is a fact of life.
- (b) The poet says so because no one can buy the ball back because it is lost. He means to say that money cannot compensate for the sense of loss.
- (c) It means that it always meant to be spent.
- (d) Money is external.
- (e) The name of the poem is 'The Ball Poem'.

STANZA 5

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.

Questions :

- (a) How are the boy's eyes?
- (b) Why are the boy's eyes 'desperate'?
- (c) What is the boy learning?
- (d) What is the boy going to know?
- (e) Who is the poet of this poem?

Answers :

- (a) The boy's eyes are desperate.
- (b) The boy's eyes are 'desperate' because he has lost his ball.
- (c) The boy is learning the meaning of loss.
- (d) He is going to know the universal truth that almost all men lose something and they have to compromise with their loss.
- (e) John Berryman is the poet of this poem.

Stanza-6:

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!

Word-Meaning: Bouncing— jumping over, Street— narrow path, Merrily— happily,

Paraphrase

The poet sees a boy playing with a ball. Then, the boy loses his ball. The poet asks what should the boy be feeling now? Does he ask what will the boy do now? He saw the ball bouncing merrily and going down the street. And now, in the same way, it has fallen into the water and lost forever.

Questions:

- (a) What has gone wrong with the boy?
- (b) What did the poet see?
- (c) Where did the ball fall into?
- (d) What is the condition of the boy after losing his ball?

Answers:

(a) The boy has lost his ball.

(b) The poet saw the ball bouncing down the street and finally falling into the water.

(c) The ball fell into the water.

(d) The boy seemed to be upset after losing his ball.

Stanza-7:

No use to say 'O there are other balls';

An *ultimate shaking grieffixes* the boy'

As he stands *rigid, trembling, staring* down

All his *young days* into the *harbour* where

His ball went.

Word-Meaning:

Ultimate— final, Shaking— trembling, Grief— sorrow, Fixes— overpowers, Rigid— (*here*)

unmoved, Trembling— shivering, Staring— looking keenly, Young days— childhood days, Harbour— a place where ships load and unload goods,

Paraphrase

There is no use of consoling the boy. He can't be consoled if he is offered other balls in place of the lost ball. Finally, deep grief overpowers the boy. He stands shaking there without leaving the place. Standing there, he stares down the place where the ball has disappeared in the water of the harbour. The loss of the ball in the harbour reminds him of his childhood and childhood days which have been lost in the harbour of life.

Questions:

(a) What is the significance of the lost ball for the boy?

(b) What is the condition of the boy?

(c) Where is he staring down?

(d) What does he think of his young days?

Answers:

(a) There will be of no use of consoling the boy that he can have other balls in place of the lost one.

(b) The boy is overpowered with grief and stands like a statue staring down the harbour where the ball was lost.

(c) He is staring down the harbour where his ball disappeared into the water.

(d) The boy feels that as the ball has been lost into the harbour.

Similarly, his childhood has been lost in the harbour of life.

Stanza-8:

I would not *intrude* on him;

A *dime*, another ball, is *worthless*. Now

He *senses* first *responsibility*

In a *world of possessions*.

Word-Meaning: Intrude— encroach, A dime— (*here*) very cheap, Worthless— useless, Senses- considers, Responsibility— a sense of duty, World of possessions— a world where people are busy in possessing things,

Paraphrase

The poet doesn't want to intervene or console the boy. He will not tell the boy that the ball he has lost costs almost nothing. He will not console him by saying that he can buy another ball quite easily. Now good sense prevails over the boy. He knows that in this world people are always running after acquiring and owning things. He realises what is his first responsibility in such a world.

Questions:

(a) Does the poet want to intrude in the matter?

(b) What is the cost of the ball?

(c) How does the boy prepare himself?

(d) What kind of the world is it?

Answers:

(a) No, the poet doesn't want to intrude in the matter.

(b) The cost of the ball is just a dime, it is very cheap.

(c) The boy senses his responsibility and composes himself calmly.

(d) This is the world where people run after possessing and grabbing material things.

Stanza-9:

People will take

Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.

And no one buys a ball back. Money is *external*.

Word meaning: External—outwardly, not internal,

Paraphrase

Buying and losing continues throughout our life. People will always buy such balls and the balls they buy will continue to be lost. Once a ball has been lost, it is lost a ball again. Money is totally external to our inner feelings. Money can't compensate for our emotional losses. Similarly, the childhood that we have lost forever, can't be bought back with money.

Questions:

- (a) What will people take?
- (b) What will be the fate of the balls?
- (c) Can money buy a lost ball?
- (d) Why is money external?

Answers:

- (a) People will go on buying new balls.
- (b) The balls will always be bought and lost forever.
- (c) No, money can't buy back a lost ball.
- (d) Money can't compensate internal or emotional losses suffered by us.

Stanza-10:

He is learning, well *behind* his *desperate* eyes,

This *epistemology of loss*, how to stand up

Knowing what every man must one day know

And most know many days, how to stand up.

Word-Meaning:

Behind— backward, Desperate— hopeless, Epistemology

— knowledge, Epistemology of loss —understanding the nature of loss,

Paraphrase

The boy with his hopeless eyes is beginning to learn the nature of the loss. He is learning what it means to lose something. He has to learn how to come over the loss and stand up again in life. He has to learn this basic principle of life which every man of the world has to learn. He

must learn how to bear the pangs of the loss of his childhood. He has to move ahead in life forgetting the loss of his childhood.

Questions:

- (a) Are his eyes shining with hope?
- (b) What is the epistemology of loss?
- (c) What should every man learn?
- (d) What lesson is the boy taught here?

Answers:

- (a) No, there is no hope in his 'desperate' eyes.
- (b) It means the nature of loss and means what it means to lose something.
- (c) Every man has to learn that gains and losses are to be accepted with a balanced mind.
- (d) The boy should learn how to stand up again and move ahead in life forgetting his loss of childhood.

Questions and Answers

Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow.

1."In a world of possessions. People will take
Balls, balls will be lost always the little boy
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external."

- (a) The poet speaks of the ball as a symbol of _____ _.
- (b) Who has lost the ball and when?
- (c) What has the boy learnt from the loss?
- (d) What does the poet want him to learn?

Ans. (a) the world of wealth and property.

(b) A boy has lost the ball while playing.

(c) The boy has learnt a sense of loss. He has his childhood memories associated with the ball.

(d) The poet wants him to learn that losses and gains are part of life.

2. 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 would not intrude on him;
A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now
He senses first responsibility
In a world of possessions.

- (a) Who is 'I'?
- (b) The boy has learnt to be _____.
- (c) Why does the boy feel 'ultimate shaking grief when he loses his ball'?
- (d) Why is the ball precious to the child?

Or

- (a) What is the mood of the boy?
- (b) Why was he in this mood?
- (c) Why does the boy think that another ball would be worthless?
- (d) What lesson does the boy learn after he loses his ball?

Ans. (a) The Poet.

(b) a sense of loss

(c) This is because he has lost his ball.

(d) This is because; he was very attached to the ball and hence, was very upset about losing it.

Or

(a) The boy is quite upset.

(b) He was upset because he had lost his ball.

(c) Another ball would not be able to replace the ball that he had lost.

(d) The boy learns that loss is inevitable and that one must learn to live with it.

3. 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!

No use to say 'O there are other balls';

(a) The boy who has lost ball is in the state of _____ .

(b) The ball went into the water _____ .

(c) The ball got lost _____ .

(d) 'I' in the above lines refers to _____ .

Ans. (a) shock and grief

(b) happily bouncing

(c) in the water

(d) the poet

4. No use to say 'O there are other balls':

Ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy

As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down

All his young days into the harbour where

His ball went.

(a) Who composed the above lines?

(b) The poet thinks it improper to say to the boy 'O there are other balls' because of ____ _.

(c) The boy's reaction to the loss of his ball shows that ____ _.

(d) To the poet, the loss is not important enough ____ _.

Ans. (a) John Berryman

(b) he wants the boy to learn to have a sense of loss

(c) he was very attached to the lost ball and was very upset about losing it

(d) to worry about

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who loses his ball?

(A) the poet

(B) the boy

(C) both (A) and (B)

(D) none of the above

Ans. (B) the boy

2. Where has the boy lost his ball?

(A) in the water

(B) in the school

(C) in the fire

(D) at home

Ans. (A) in the water

3. How does the boy feel when he loses his ball?

(A) confused

(B) shaken

(C) trembling

(D) all of the above

Ans. (D) all of the above

4. What does the poet say about money?

(A) internal

(B) external

(C) useless

(D) all of the above

Ans. (B) external

5. What does the poet say about this world is made of?

- (A) possessions
- (B) happiness
- (C) joys
- (D) troubles

Ans. (A) possessions

6. The boy remembers his days.

- (A) infancy
- (B) young
- (C) old
- (D) all of the above

Ans. (B) young

7. What could the poet buy for the boy?

- (A) book
- (B) bag
- (C) ball
- (D) toys

Ans. (C) ball

8. How are the boy's eyes?

- (A) brilliant
- (B) dull
- (C) desperate
- (D) all of the above

Ans. (C) desperate

9. What meaning is the boy learning?

- (A) meaning of loss
- (B) meaning of life
- (C) meaning of playing
- (D) the meaning of happiness

Ans. (A) meaning of loss

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

- (A) Carolyn Wells
- (B) John Berryman
- (C) Leslie Norris
- (D) Robin Klein

Ans. (B) John Berryman

VERY SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q.1. What has the boy lost in the water?

Ans. He has lost his ball in the water of the sea.

Q.2. Where did the ball land finally?

Ans. The ball landed finally in the water.

Q3. What was the reaction of the boy at the loss of his ball?

Ans. The boy was sad and troubled at the loss of his ball.

Q.4. Where was the boy staring down?

Ans. The boy was staring down the harbour where his ball had gone.

Q.5. What does 'in the world of possessions' mean?

Ans. It means the world of materialistic things.

Q.6. Do you think the boy has lost something earlier?

Ans. Yes, he has lost something earlier.

Q.7. What lesson does the boy learn?

Ans. He learns the lesson that gains and losses are the part and parcel of life.

Q.8. Why is money called external?

Ans. Money is called external because we can replace the lost things with its help.

Q.9. Why are the boy's eyes desperate?

Ans. His eyes are desperate because he has lost his ball.

Q.10. Who is the poet of the poem 'The Ball Poem'?

Ans. John Berryman.

Short Answer Type Important Questions

1. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.

Ans. When one reads the title 'The Ball Poem', one assumes that the poem may be a light-hearted one but perhaps about the joys of childhood. We must not feel disheartened, dejected and desperate but try to stand up and bear the loss through self-understanding.

2. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.

Ans. When one reads the title 'The Ball Poem', one assumes that the poem may be a light-hearted one, perhaps about the joys of childhood. However, as the reader reads the poem, the seriousness of the topic comes forth, as does the title's appropriateness.

3. What is the theme of the poem — 'The Ball Poem'?

Ans. In this world sometimes we lose things which we love and are attached to. We must not feel disheartened, dejected and desperate but try to stand up and bear the loss through self-understanding as the boy who lost the ball he loved was trying to learn.

4. A ball is an easily available, inexpensive thing. Then, why is the boy so sad to lose it?

Ans. No doubt the ball is an easily available and inexpensive item but the ball, the boy has lost is valuable for him. His memories of young days are associated with it for he had been playing with it for a long time. It was not an ordinary but special a ball for him. No other ball could take its place. So, he is sad to lose it.

5. What shows that the ball was valuable for the boy?

Ans. The ball was valuable for the boy is obvious (clear) from the way he reacts after losing it He was shocked, remained fixed, trembled with grief staring at the place where the ball had fallen. All this shows that he loved the ball and it was valuable for him.

6. 'He senses first responsibility'—what responsibility is referred to here?

Ans. The responsibility referred to here is how to stand up or bear the loss through self-understanding and trying to console oneself on his own as the boy who lost his ball was trying to do.

7. Why did the poet not console the boy?

Ans. The poet did not console the boy for two reasons—One, the boy was too shocked and grief-stricken to listen to any sense. Second, the poet also observed that the boy was trying to stand up or bear the loss on his own through self-understanding which is much more reflective and lasting. The poet's or anybody else's consoling would not be that effective.

8. '.....starting, 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 memories of days when he played with it?

Ans. Yes, I think the boy had that ball for a long time. The expression—'all his young days into the harbour' suggests this. It is linked with old memories when he used to play with it, that is why he is so upset about losing it.

9. Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.

Ans. I don't think the boy has lost anything earlier. The first loss is shocking and full of grief—the line—An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy' reflects it. Also in the 'senses first responsibility'—the word first shows that it was his first loss.

Q.11. What does the poet notice at the beginning of the poem?

Ans. The poet sees a boy playing near a harbour with a ball. The poet saw his ball bouncing. It bounced and fell into the water of the harbour. The boy lost his ball. He became very sad.

Q.12. What was the effect of the loss of ball on the boy?

Ans. The poet sees the boy whose ball has fallen into the harbour. He describes the effect of the loss on the boy. The boy is shaken with grief. He trembles and stares down the harbour. His past days come alive in his mind.

Q.13. Why does the poet decide not to give money to the boy or he buy another ball for him?

Ans. The poet says that he will not intrude upon the boy because he must learn to tolerate loss. The poet emphasises this loss. He thinks that money cannot compensate for the sense of loss. So he doesn't give the boy money or buy another ball for him.

Q.14. Explain the line, "And no one buys a ball back. Money is external".

Ans. This line means that no one can buy something that is lost forever. No one can buy the boy that very ball which he has lost. Money is an external thing. It is a medium of possessing things. But even money cannot compensate for the sense of loss suffered by a person.

Q.15. Why does the poet say, "Balls will be lost always"?

Ans. Balls are the symbol of man's possessions. We love our things. Some things are dearer to us than the others. But nothing is permanent in life. We may lose our dear things. Then we suffer from a sense of loss. This is experienced by everyone in life. That is why, the poet says, "Balls will be lost always".

16. What is the main idea of the poem?

Ans. The main idea of the poem is 'the sense of loss in life'. The loss is a fact of life. The sooner man learns to tolerate it the better it is. When we lose something for the first time, we feel very sad. But later we learn to live with our loss. In this poem, the boy loses his ball. He is very sad. The poet can buy him another ball. But he does not want to do so. He wants the boy must learn the bitter truth of life that everyone can suffer the loss of something dear.

Q17. How did the poet witness the whole scene of the boy losing his ball?

Ans. The poet saw the boy playing with his ball. While he was playing with it, the ball bounced down the street 'merrily'. And then the most unexpected thing happened. Rolling down the street and after taking a few bounces, finally, the ball fell down in the water of the harbour below.

Q18. How did the boy react after his ball fell into the water of the harbour?

Ans. The falling of the ball in the water was quite sudden. Actually, it was an unexpected loss. The boy was completely shaken but couldn't even move a step. He stood there fixed to the ground like a statue. He constantly continued staring at the point where his ball fell into the harbour. It seemed as if he was thinking of his childhood days which had disappeared forever like the lost ball.

Q19. Does the lost ball stand for the metaphor of the boy's lost childhood? How?

Ans. The boy has lost his ball. It has fallen down into the harbour. It will not be found back again. However, through the metaphor of the lost ball, the poet wants to highlight a bigger loss. It is the loss of his childhood. Like the lost ball, the childhood days which he cherishes still now, have been lost forever. This makes the loss inconsolable.

Q20. Why does the poet say: 'No use to say 'O there are other balls'?

Ans. The loss of the ball looks like an ordinary incident. It seems that the boy should not make such a fuss over it. Boys usually lose such balls and again buy new ones as they are not very costly. But the boy seems to be inconsolable over the loss. No money can buy the same ball that he has lost forever. Similarly, no wealth can buy back the childhood that he has lost forever.

Q21. Why doesn't the poet want to intrude on 'him'? What does he consider the safest course?

Ans. The poet doesn't want to intrude on the inconsolable boy. There is no gain in telling him that the ball he has lost costs almost nothing. He can buy a new ball easily in a dime. Instead of sermonising, the poet

leaves it on the boy to develop a new sense of responsibility. It will help him in bearing the loss.

Q22. What is the general rule of this 'world of possessions'? Why is money 'external'?

Ans. Getting and losing is a natural cycle. Many more boys before him bought and lost their balls. This process will go on forever. However, no amount of money can buy back the same ball that has been lost forever. Money is external and has its own limitation. Wealth can't compensate such emotional losses such as the loss of one's childhood days.

Q23. How is the boy learning the 'epistemology of loss' from the loss of his ball? What he has to learn?

Ans. The boy has to understand the nature of the loss. He has to understand what it means to lose something. Gain and loss are the two sides of the same coin. The boy has to learn how to move forward forgetting everything about the losses he has suffered in the past.

Q24. How can the boy stand up again? What everyman must know one day?

Ans. The boy has to understand the epistemology of loss — the knowledge and nature of the loss. This is not the problem of the boy alone. Everyone has to know it sooner or later that it is useless to weep over the loss of our dearest childhood days. One should move ahead forgetting all such losses. Life has to be lived only by moving ahead in it.

Q25. What is the message that John Berryman gives to the readers in 'The Ball poem'?

Ans. In 'The Ball Poem' John Berryman gives a very positive message. Gain and loss, getting and losing are the essentials in the cycle of life. One should learn epistemology or the knowledge and nature of the loss. Our childhood with all its attachments and sweet memories has gone forever never to come back again. We should not weep over the losses that we have suffered. Let us learn to live and moving ahead in life forgetting all inconsolable losses.

Q26. Why does the poet not offer to buy the boy another ball?

Ans. The poet does not offer to buy the boy another ball because the new ball would not console him. The reason is that he had a great attachment to the lost ball. 'He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes'

Q27. What is the boy learning from the loss of the ball?

Ans. The boy is learning the nature of loss in this materialistic world. He has learnt that loss is part and parcel of human life.

Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:

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?

Ans. 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 come over 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?

Ans. (i) 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. (ii) 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?

Ans. 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.

Q4. 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?

Ans. 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 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.

Q5. What is the epistemology of loss in this world of possessions? How has the child learned to stand up in life?

Ans. 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.