



THINK AS YOU READ

Q1. What is the “misadventure ” that William Douglas speaks about?

Ans: William O. Douglas had just learnt swimming. One day, an eighteen year old big bruiser picked him up and tossed him into the nine feet deep end of the Y.M.C.A. pool. He hit the water surface in a sitting position. He swallowed water and went at once to the bottom. He nearly died in this misadventure.

Q2. What were the series of emotions and fears that Douglas experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?

Ans: Douglas was frightened when he was thrown into the pool. However, he was not frightened out of his wits. While sinking down he made a plan. He would make a big jump when his feet hit the bottom. He would come to the surface like a cork, lie flat on it, and paddle to the edge of the pool.

Q3. How did this experience affect him?

Ans: This experience revived his aversion to water. He shook and cried when he lay on his bed. He couldn't eat that night. For many days, there was a haunting fear in his heart. The slightest exertion upset him, making him wobbly in the knees and sick to his stomach. He never went back to the pool. He feared water and avoided it whenever he could.

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Q1. Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?

Ans: His fear of water ruined his fishing trips. It deprived him of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming. Douglas used every way he knew to overcome this fear he had developed 'since childhood. Even as an adult, it held him firmly in its grip. He determined to get an instructor and learn swimming to get over this fear of water.

Q2. How did the instructor “build a swimmer” out of Douglas?

Ans: The instructor built a swimmer out of Douglas piece by piece. For three months he held him high on a rope attached to his belt. He went back and forth across the pool. Panic seized the author everytime. The instructor taught Douglas to put his face under water and exhale and to raise his nose and inhale. Then Douglas had to kick with his legs for many weeks till these relaxed. After seven months the instructor told him to swim the length of the pool.

Q3. How did Douglas make sure that he conquered the old terror?

Ans: Douglas still felt terror-stricken when he was alone in the pool. The remnants of the old terror would return, but he would rebuke it and go for another length of the pool. He was still not satisfied. So, he went to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire, dived off a dock at Triggs Island and swam two miles across the lake. He had his residual doubts. So, he went to Meade Glacier, dived into Warm Lake and swam across to the other shore and back. Thus, he made sure that he had conquered the old terror.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q1. How does Douglas make clear to the reader the sense of panic that gripped him as he almost drowned? Describe the details that have made the description vivid.

Ans: Douglas gives a detailed account of his feelings and efforts to save himself from getting drowned. He uses literary devices to make the description graphic and vivid. For example, 'Those nine feet were more like ninety', 'My lungs were ready to burst.' 'I came up slowly, I opened my eyes and saw nothing but water..... I grew panicky1 'I was suffocating. I tried to yell, but no sound came out!' '

Q2. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

Ans: When Douglas grew up, he took the help of an instructor to learn swimming. His training went on from October to April. For three months he was taken across the pool with the help of a rope. As he went under, terror filled him and his legs froze. The instructor taught him to exhale under water and inhale through raised nose. He made him kick his legs to make them relax. Then he asked him to swim. He continued swimming from April to July. Still all terror had not left. He swam two miles across Lake Wentworth and the whole length to the shore and back of Warm Lake. Then he overcame his fear of water.

Q3. Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from this experience?

Ans: The experience of terror was a handicap Douglas suffered from during his childhood. His conquering of it shows his determination, will power and development of his personality. He drew a larger meaning from this experience. "In death there is peace." "There is terror only in the fear of death." He had experienced both the sensation of dying and the terror that fear of it can produce. So, the will to live somehow grew in intensity. He felt released- free to walk the mountain paths, climb the peaks and brush aside fear.

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