***Chapter 3: THE BALL POEM ----- BY JOHN BERRYMAN***

Q.***1Why does the poet say, “I would not intrude on him”? Why doesn’t he offer him money to buy another ball?***

Ans. The poet says “I will not intrude on him” because he does not want to intervene in the natural process of learning and wants the boy to learn the meaning of loss on his own. He does not offer him money to buy another ball because that would be worthless. The boy was trying to understand his first responsibility as he had lost something, which could not be brought back. He wants the boy to learn the lesson of responsibility and bear the loss.

***Q.2“… staring down/All his young days into the harbor 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?***

Ans. Yes, it seems like the boy has had the ball for a long time. When it bounced into the water, all his memories of the days of childhood flashed in front of him. This led to a realization that those moments would not come back, just like the ball. He can buy new balls and can similarly create new moments, but those that are gone would not return.

***Q.3 what does “in the world of possessions” mean?***

Ans. Here, “in the world of possessions” means that the world is full of materialistic things. It means the world where everything and every action is made to possess something, whether it is the possession of land, property, money, or any other thing. The poet suggests that losing a ball, which is a very small thing, would make the boy understand what it is like to lose something that one possessed. This would make the boy realize that this is a world of possessions and where one can possess more things by buying them, one cannot buy what has been lost.

***Q.4 Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.***

Ans. No, it seems that the boy had not lost anything earlier. The words that suggest so are ‘senses first responsibility in a world of possessions’.

***Q.5 what does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words***.

Ans. The poet says that the boy is learning to cope up with the loss of the ball. He is experiencing pain and sorrow and learning to grow up in the world of possessions. He learns that there are many things in life that are lost and cannot be brought back. He is sensing his first responsibility as he has lost the ball. The boy will learn to stand up and leave the losses behind as he would have understood the true meaning of loss.

***Q.6 what does the poet want to convey through this poem? (CBSE)***

Ans. The poet wants to convey the importance of loss and responsibility in life. We should learn our responsibility and learn to cope up with the loss. The poet also wants to us to learn that things will get lost from time to time and money cannot replace them all.

***Q.7 Money is external. What does the poet mean by this? (CBSE)***

Ans. The poet wants to say that no loss can be replaced by money. Money cannot buy memories, nor can it replace the things that we love, the things that really matter.

***Q.8 Why is it important for everyone to experience loss and stand up after it? (CBSE)***

Ans. It is important for everyone to experience loss and stand up after it in order to get strong and move on in life. Staying strong no matter how much it hurts inside is the only way to survive. One needs to let go and not cling to things that one cannot have. The past which is gone will never come back. One needs to face hardships like loss as one grows up.

The poet teaches us a philosophy of life through the loss of a ball. . The ‘ball’ in the poem signifies something valuable that cannot be bought or replaced. Through the loss of the ball, the boy learns the reality of this world. If he is able to bear the loss, he will be able to face the difficulties of life courageously. The boy must know how to stand up after a loss. Loss is a universal truth in our life. We have to lose something at one point of time. It is very essential for every human being to stand up after falling or being knocked down in life. He must learn to cope up with loss with patience and courage..

***POETIC DEVICES***

1. Repetition- EX. What, what is he to do

Balls, balls will be lost

2. Alliteration – What is the boy now, who has lost?

And no one buys a ball back

***The Ball Poem----- BY John Berryman***

***Summary***

The poet is talking about a little boy who has lost his ball. He was playing with his ball. The ball skipped from his hand and went into the nearby water body. The poet says that this sight of the boy losing his favorite ball made him think about the boy and his reaction to this situation.

He further says that the boy was helplessly looking into the water where his ball had gone. He was sad and was trembling with fear. He got so immersed in his sorrow that he kept standing near the harbor for a very long time and kept on looking for his ball. The poet says that he could console him that he may get new balls or he could also give him some money to buy another ball. But he stops himself from doing so because he thinks that the money may bring a new ball but will not bring the memories and feelings attached to the lost ball.

He further says that the time has come for the boy to learn his responsibilities. Here the poet wants to say that now the boy will learn the toughest lesson of life. The lesson of accepting the harsh realities of life that one day we will lose our loved ones and our loved things.

***The Ball Poem***

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!

**Merrily: cheerful  
Bouncing: jumping up and down**

*The poet is talking about a boy who has lost his ball. He wants to know about him and his reaction because he has lost his ball. Further, he asks to himself that what this boy will do after losing his ball. The poet has seen the ball going away from the boy. He says that the ball was cheerfully jumping up and down in the street. This means that when the ball skipped from boy’s hand it went into the street and later on, it fell into the nearby river.*

***Literary devices:***   
***Anaphora***: use of repeated words in two or more lines (What is the boy… what, what and merrily bouncing… merrily over)  
***Assonance:*** repeated use of vowel ‘o’ (boy, now, who, lost)  
***Imagery***: when poet says merrily bouncing down the street  
***Repetition***: ‘what’ is repeated

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

No use to say ‘O there are other balls’:  
An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy  
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down   
All his young days into the harbor where  
His ball went. I would not intrude on him;   
a dime, another ball, is worthless. Now  
He senses first responsibility

**Grief: sorrow  
Rigid: fixed  
Trembling: shaking  
Harbor: dock, port  
Intrude: invader  
Dime: 10 cents (U.S)   
Worthless: valueless, useless**

*The poet says that there is no benefit of consoling the boy by saying that he will get another ball because he has other balls too. He says so because the boy is feeling very sad. He is completely surrounded by sorrow.  He is sad because all the memories of the childhood days went down the harbor with the ball. Here the poet says that the boy is very sad as the ball which has now gone into the water reminds him of those sweet memories, of the times when he owned it. This loss is unbearable for him and he is grief stricken. The poet says that he can’t even tell the boy to take some money from him in order to buy another ball. He says so because the new ball will not bring the sense of belonging to the boy. Further, the poet says that the time has come for the boy to learn the responsibility of taking care of his things.*

***Literary devices:  
Repetition:*** use of word ‘***ball’***  
***Asyndeton:*** no use of conjunction in a sentence (A dime, another ball, is worthless)

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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



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.  
***Possessions: ownership  
External: Here, things with which feelings are not attached  
Desperate: hopeless  
Epistemology: The Greek word episteme means ‘knowledge’****Here the poet says that the boy has to learn that in this materialistic world, many of his belongings will be lost. He personifies the ball as his belongings, be it the worldly things or the relationships he is in possession of. So, he says that he has to learn to live without them no matter what. He says no one can buy back such things for him. The poet said so because according to him money can’t buy you everything. If it does buy you some materialistic thing, still, it will not be able to buy the sense of belongingness. He says that the boy is learning how to stand up against the sense of lost things. This means that the boy is trying to learn the real truth of life which states that you have to accept the miseries of life and stand up again. This is the truth which everyone has to learn in his or her life. The harsh truth of standing up against the odd miseries of life that everyone has to bear.*

***Literary devices:  
Alliteration:*** use of sound ‘b’ at the start of two consecutive words (buys a ball back)  
**Assonance**: use of vowel sound ‘e’ (He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes)  
***Repetition***: ‘ball’ word is repeated  
Rhyme scheme: There is ***no rhyme scheme*** followed in the poem.