



## 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.

## THINK AS YOU READ

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 panicky<sup>1</sup> '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.

## TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q1. "All ice have to fear is fear itself" Have you ever had a fear that you have now overcome? Share your experience with your partner.

Ans. I must have been about eight or nine years old. It was the night of Diwali. All the houses were shining bright with the rows of candles, oil lamps and electric bulbs. Children were bursting crackers. Suddenly, a cracker went up and hit the thatched roof of a poor gardener. Soon the hut was in flames. His only son, a tiny infant had severe burns before he could be rescued. I began to tremble with fear as the police



questioned the boys exploding crackers. From then on I had a fear of crackers, fire and police. My parents and I had to work very hard to remove this blemish. It was adversely affecting my personality. By learning the safeguards against fire and safe handling of crackers, I gradually overcame my fear. However, I still get panicked at the sight of a policeman in uniform. The fear of police remained now; My uncle came to my rescue. He got me dressed as a police inspector in one of his plays, I commanded many policemen and scolded them for misbehaving with the common people. I learnt that policemen were also, humans and not demons. Police protect and help us to maintain law and order. Thank God, I have overcome all my fears now.

Q2. Find and narrate other stories about

conquest of fear and what people have said about courage. For example, you can recall Nelson Mandela's struggle for freedom, his perseverance to achieve his mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor as depicted in his autobiography. The story 'We're Not Afraid To Die,' which you have read in Class XI, is an apt example of how courage and optimism helped a family survive under the direst stress.

Ans. In his autobiography 'Long Walk to Freedom', Nelson Mandela tells the extraordinary story of his life. He brings vividly to life the escalating political warfare in the fifties between the African National Congress and the government, culminating in his dramatic escapades as an underground leader and the notorious Rivonia Trial of [1964](#), at which he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He recounts the

surprisingly eventful twenty-seven years in prison and the complex, delicate negotiations that led both to his freedom and to the beginning of the end of apartheid. Mandela also struggled against the exploitation of labour and on the segregation of the universities. He persevered to achieve his mission and to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor. In 1990, he was freed from prison. The apartheid laws were relaxed. Mandela became the champion for human rights and racial equality. He also became the first non-white president of the Republic of South Africa.

## THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

If someone else had narrated Douglas's

experience, how would it have differed from this account? Write out a sample paragraph or paragraphs from this text from the point of view of a third person or observer, to find out which style of narration would you consider to be more effective? Why?

Ans. The third person account or one from the point of view of an observer is detached and objective. Real-life personal account is subjective and focuses more on the person's thoughts, feelings and emotional response. I would consider the first per