

Grade X
Poem 5. The Ball poem

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 boy 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 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 chance 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.

I. Extract Based questions

I. Read the following extract and answer the questions/ complete the sentences that follow :

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!

1. The extract suggests that the poet is:

- a. An onlooker observing
- b. A parent recounting the incident
- c. The boy talking about himself
- d. Imagining the incident

2. The poet seems to have indicated the merry bouncing of the ball to

- a. create a sense of rhythm in these lines.
- b. support the happiness of the experience of playing.
- c. contrast with the dejected feeling of the boy.
- d. indicate the cheerful mood of the boy.

3. Choose the situation that corresponds to the emotion behind the exclamation mark in the poem.

1)	Hey ! Hey! That's no way to dispose of the garbage. Have you no community sense? Please but it in the bin.
(2)	I knew it! I knew he'll fare well in his auditions for 'Young Chef. Now, we prepare for the semi-finals.
(3)	I don't know where I've placed my ID-card. Let me check the bag once more. Ah, finally!
(4)	I've been trying to call mom for the past 20 minutes and can't get through. I don't know how...Aarrgh! Agai

- a. Option 1 b. Option 2 c. Option 3 d. Option 4

4. The poem begins with a question. Based on your reading of the poem, the speaker:

- a. wants the boy to answer the question.
- b. expects the passers-by to respond.
- c. is looking for answers in a self-help book.
- d. is thinking to himself.

5. Alliteration is a literary device that occurs with the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.

Pick the option that showcases an example of alliteration from the extract.

- a. What is the boy now
- b. who has lost his ball
- c. I saw it go
- d. and then/ Merrily over

II. Extract based questions

II. Read the following extract and answer the questions/ complete the sentences that follow

An 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;

1. The poet uses the word 'ultimate' to describe the boy's reaction.

Pick the meaning that DOES NOT display what, 'ultimate' means in the context given.

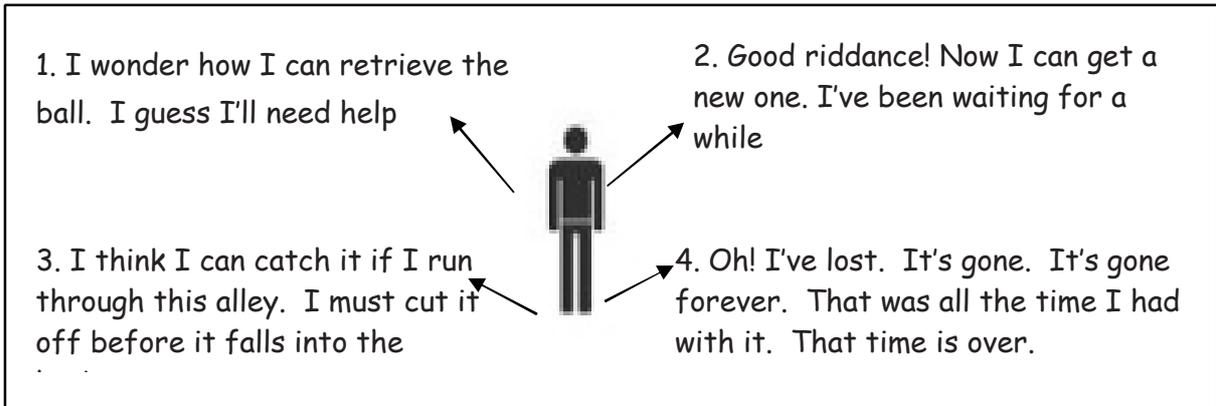
- a. Consequent
- b. Final
- c. Conclusive
- d. Fateful

2. The boy is very young in this poem. As a mature, balanced grown-up, he might look back and think that his reaction of 'ultimate shaking grief' was:

- (1) disproportionate to the loss.
- (2) pretension to procure a new toy.
- (3) according to his exposure and experience then.
- (4) a reaction to the failure of retrieving the toy.
- (5) justified and similar to what it would be currently.

- a. 5 & 2
- b. 1 & 3
- c. 2 & 4
- d. 3 & 5

3. Pick the option that lists the boy's thoughts, matching with the line- *As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down* .



1. I wonder how I can retrieve the ball. I guess I'll need help

2. Good riddance! Now I can get a new one. I've been waiting for a while

3. I think I can catch it if I run through this alley. I must cut it off before it falls into the

4. Oh! I've lost. It's gone. It's gone forever. That was all the time I had with it. That time is over.

- a. Option 1 b. Option 2 c. Option 3 d. Option 4

4. Why does the speaker choose not to intrude? This is so because the poet:

- a. knows that it would embarrass the boy in his moment of grief.
- b. feels that it's important that the boy learn an important life lesson, undisturbed.
- c. Realises that he doesn't have sufficient funds to purchase a new ball for the boy.
- d. experiences a sense of distress himself, by looking at the boy's condition.

5. Choose the option that lists the meaning of 'harbour' as used in the extract.

Noun:

- 1. a place on the coast where ships may moor in shelter.
- 2. a place of refuge.

Verb:

- 3. keep (a thought or feeling, typically a negative one) in one's mind, especially secretly.
- 4. shelter or hide (a criminal or wanted person).

- a. Option 1 b. Option 2 c. Option 3 d. Option 4

III. Multiple choice questions

III. Read the following extract and answer the questions/ complete the sentences that follow.

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':

An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down
All his young days into the harbour where
His ball went

1. The poet uses the ball as a symbol of the boy's:
 - a. sense of adventure.
 - b. carefree childhood days.
 - c. ability to bounce back.
 - d. extended family.
2. The poet feels that there is no point consoling the boy as:
 - a. it would give him false hope.
 - b. he might demand for a new ball.
 - c. it might distress him further.
 - d. whatever he has lost, is irretrievable.
3. The word 'harbour' DOES NOT have a meaning similar to:
 - a. port.
 - b. pier.
 - c. dock.
 - d. cargo
4. 'Merrily over — there it is in the water!' The dash here is meant to convey:
 - a. some familiar experience.
 - b. a feeling of excitement.
 - c. a sense of unexpected interruption.
 - d. some thoughtful moments
5. The word that DOES NOT indicate a physical manifestation of sorrow in the boy, is:
 - a. worthless.
 - b. shaking.
 - c. trembling
 - d. rigid

Very Short Answer Type Questions

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

What does the poet imply by this expression?

Ans. Through this expression the poet implies that a lost ball cannot be bought back even with money. Money can only be used to buy valuable things but not to restore or compensate for a thing that is lost.

2. *'He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes'.*

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

Ans. The boy is learning the epistemology of loss from the loss of the ball. He is understanding what means to lose something he greatly admires.

3. **Why does the poet say that he will not offer the boy money to buy another ball?**

Or

Why 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 that he will not offer the boy money to buy another ball because balls are anyway worthless and also because he wants the boy to understand what it means and how it feels to lose something.

4. "Money is external". What does the poet mean by this expression taken from 'The Ball Poem'?

Ans. By this expression the poet intends to make us realize the mere material value of money which in no way helps us to understand the essential worth of a commodity. In this world of possessions, the value of money is only to buy things and this does not make us understand the true value of things.

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

Ans. The above line 'in' the world of possessions means a world of material things. Things of value are owned and priced because of their worth.

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

Ans. No, the boy has not lost anything earlier. The line, he senses his first responsibility, suggests so.

7. 'He senses first responsibility' - What responsibility is referred to here?

Ans. The responsibility referred to here is of losing a ball by a little boy and how he learns to grow up. The ball is a much loved happy innocent days. The closing of the ball losing his innocence and he is forced to grow up, and become responsible.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 its own limitation. Wealth can't compensate such emotional losses such as the loss of one's childhood days.

5. 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 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.

6. 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 loss. This is not the problem of the boy alone. Everyone has to know 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.

7. 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 great attachment for the lost ball. No other ball can console him.

8. 'He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes'

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. No doubt, the lost ball can't be retrieved. He will have to learn to take this loss in his stride.

9. 'He senses first responsibility' - What responsibility is referred to here?

Ans. The 'responsibility' referred to here relates to learning what it is like to experience grief at the loss of a much loved possession.

10. 'An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy.' Who is the boy? What is his state of mind?

Why is he in such a state of mind?

Ans. The boy in the poem is a symbol to represent the poet's ideas of loss. The boy is very unhappy at the loss of the ball. His loss cannot be compensated by any one. First, happiness at having a nice ball, then unhappiness due to loss of the ball - so this truth makes the boy sad under the circumstances. This is why he immersed himself in such a sad state of mind.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. 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 boy 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 the 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 the epistemology or the nature of loss. He has to move ahead in life forgetting all the losses he has suffered in the past.

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

Ans. Gain and loss are the two sides of the same coin. Getting spending and losing things from 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 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 limitation. Its nature is external. It cannot compensate the losses that a person suffers emotionally or internally. No wealth can buy back the ball that has been lost forever. Similarly, on wealth can buy 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.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Short Answer Type Questions

1. How does the boy lose the ball?
2. Why is the boy making such a fuss over the loss of the ball?
3. How does the face of the boy look and how does he behave after losing the ball?
4. What does he think about his young day?
5. Why doesn't the poet want to intrude? Is he right in this regard?
6. When will and how the child senses his first responsibility?
7. How is money 'external'?
8. What is the epistemology of the loss?
9. How will the boy stand up to face this world?

Long Answer Type Questions

1. The loss of ball is a metaphor of the boy's lost childhood. Justify this statement.
2. How will the child learn to stand up in this 'world of possessions'?



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