



THE VILLAGE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
"We Nurture Dreams"

Grade 10
The Ball Poem

Very Short Answer Questions

1. What has the boy lost in the water?
2. Where did the ball land finally?
3. What was the reaction of the boy at the loss of his ball?
4. Where was the boy staring down?

5. What does 'in the world of possessions' means?
6. Do you think the boy has lost something earlier?
7. What lesson does the boy learn?
8. Why is money called external?

9. Why are the boy's eyes desperate?
10. Who is the poet of the poem 'The Ball Poem'?
11. What is the boy learning from the loss of the ball?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.
2. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.
3. What is the theme of the poem –'The Ball Poem'?
4. A ball is an easily available, inexpensive thing. Then, why is the boy so sad to lose it?
5. What shows that the ball was valuable for the boy?
6. 'He senses first responsibility'—what responsibility is referred to here?
7. Why did the poet not console the boy?

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?

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

10. What does the poet notice at the beginning of the poem?

11. What was the effect of the loss of ball on the boy?

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

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

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

15. What is the main idea of the poem?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23. How can the boy stand up again? What every man must know one day?

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

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

Long Answer Type Questions

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?

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?

3. Why does the poet say, 'I would not intrude on him?' Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?

4. 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?

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

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

**Question 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!**

- 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?**

Question 2: 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.**

- 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?**

Question 3: I would not intrude on him;

**A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now
He senses first responsibility
In a world of possessions.**

- 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?**

Question 4: People will take

**Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.**

- 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?**

Question 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.**

- 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?**

Self- Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

- 1. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.**
- 2. How is the boy affected with the loss of the ball?**
- 3. Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Why/Why not?**
- 4. Why didn't the poet console the boy?**
- 5. What does the boy learn after losing the ball?**

Long Answer Questions

- 1. The poet teaches a philosophy of life in the poem, 'The Ball Poem'. Give your views on it and explain in detail.**
- 2. What is the central idea of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'? How does the poet explain his ideas?**



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Answer key

Very Short Answer Questions

1. What has the boy lost in the water?

Answer: He has lost his ball in the water of the sea.

2. Where did the ball land finally?

Answer: The ball landed finally in the water.

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

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

4. Where was the boy staring down?

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

5. What does 'in the world of possessions' means?

Answer: It means the world of materialistic things.

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

Answer: Yes, he has lost something earlier.

7. What lesson does the boy learn?

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

8. Why is money called external?

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

9. Why are the boy's eyes desperate?

Answer: His eyes are desperate because he has lost his ball.

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

Answer: John Berryman.

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

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

Short Answer Type Questions

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

Answer: 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'.

Answer: 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'?

Answer: 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?

Answer: 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 younger days are associated with it because he had been playing with it for a long time. It was not an ordinary but a special 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?

Answer: 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?

Answer: 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?

Answer: 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?

Answer: 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

Answer: 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.

10. What does the poet notice at the beginning of the poem?

Answer: 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.

11. What was the effect of the loss of ball on the boy?

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: Hem 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".

15. What is the main idea of the poem?

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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 limitations. Wealth can't compensate such emotional losses such as the loss of one's childhood days.

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

Answer: 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.

23. How can the boy stand up again? What every man must know one day?

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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'.

[Long Answer Type Questions](#)

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?

Answer: 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 overcome 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?

Answer: (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?

Answer: 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.

4. 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?

Answer: 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.

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

Answer: 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.

[Extract Based Questions](#)

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Question 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!**

- 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?**

Answer:

- a. The boy is confused as to what he is to do.**
- b. The poet saw the ball bouncing towards the water.**
- c. The ball finally landed in the water.**
- d. The boy has lost his ball.**

**Question 2: 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.**

- 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?**

Answer:

- a. People generally comfort a boy 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.**

**Question 3: I would not intrude on him;
A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now
He senses first responsibility
In a world of possessions.**

- 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?**

Answer:

- 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.**

**Question 4: People will take
Balls, balls will be lost always, little boy.
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.**

- 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?**

Answer:

- a. The poet wants to say that the loss of dear things is a fact of life.**
- b. The poet says so because the ball is lost and money cannot compensate for the sense of loss.**
- c. It means that money is always meant to be spent.**
- d. Money is external.**

**Question 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.**

- 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?**

Answer:

- 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. The boy is going to know the universal truth that almost all men lose something and they have to compromise with their loss.**

Self- Assessment Test

- 1. Express your views on the title of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'.**
- 2. How is the boy affected with the loss of the ball?**
- 3. Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Why/Why not?**
- 4. Why didn't the poet console the boy?**
- 5. What does the boy learn after losing the ball?**

Long Answer Questions

- 1. The poet teaches a philosophy of life in the poem, 'The Ball Poem'. Give your views on it and explain in detail.**
- 2. What is the central idea of the poem, 'The Ball Poem'? How does the poet explain his ideas?**