



THE BALL POEM

Explanation of the Poem:

Stanza 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!
No use to say 'O there are other balls':

Explanation: The poem starts with the poet looking at the boy who has lost his ball. The poet wants to know about him and his reaction after losing his ball. The poet himself saw the ball bouncing happily down the street and then falling into the water. The poet says that there is no use to tell the boy that there are other balls. Because, he would get many other balls, but he would never be able to get the lost ball and the memories associated with it.

Stanza 2

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.

Explanation: The poet talks about a boy who lost his ball. The boy is sad and just stands there, staring at where the ball went. The poet doesn't want to disturb the boy's thoughts because losing the ball will teach him about sadness and loss. The poet knows that a new ball can be bought for a small amount, but he doesn't mention it because the boy was really attached to his old ball from childhood.

Stanza 3

..... Now
He senses first responsibility
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

Explanation: The poet says the boy is learning about responsibility in a world of possessions. People may lose things and buy new ones, but money can't bring back the memories connected to the lost items.

Stanza 4

He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,
This epistemology of loss, how to stand up
Knowing what every man must one day know
And most know many days, how to stand up.

Explanation: The poet suggests that the boy is learning about loss through losing his ball. The boy is also learning how to stand up and move on from losses, understanding the true nature of loss.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Repetition: Repetition of words/phrases in the same line

What, what
Balls, balls

Alliteration Repetition of initial consonant sounds in the some line

What, What
Balls, balls
buys a ball back

Metaphor Comparison between two different objects without the use of comparison words The lost ball represents the boy's childhood With the loss of the ball, the boy also experiences the loss of his childhood memories.

Extract Based Questions:

What is the boy now, who has lost his ball,, what is he to do? 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.

1. What has happened to the boy?

Answer: The boy was very sad as he had lost his ball.

2. Why does the poet say No use to say – O there are other balls?

Answer: The poet says so as the loss of the ball is of a major consequence to the boy.

3. Which word means happily'?

Answer: Merrily means happily.

Top 10 PYQs:

Short Answer Questions (40-50 words each)

1. If you were the poet, which toy would you use, instead of a ball. Give a reason for your response.

Answer: Toys have a very special place in the lives of children. If I were a poet, I would use a doll instead of a ball. The reason for using a doll would be that a child keeps the doll with extreme care and love as a baby. A doll appears soft and harmless and Children connect by befriending their dolls. The loss of ball would express the pain and difficulty in accepting the bitter truth more efficiently

2. Do you think the 'I' in the poem is the poet or an observer? Give a reason for your choice of response.

Answer: The 'I' in the poem, is the poet as in a few lines the poet says that he doesn't want to intrude on the inconsolable boy. Instead, he wants to leave the boy alone to develop a new sense of responsibility.

3. Suggest a suitable by-line for 'The Ball Poem' with a reason for your choice. [CBSE OD, 2020]

Answer: The by-line can be 'Loss growing up and Transformation, This is something of a coming of age that is seen through the lens of loss and suffering. The child comes to understand the world better when he understands that he is never going to get his lost ball back. It is gone for good and there is nothing anyone can do about it. The child undergoes a transformation.

4. Recount your reaction to the loss of a favourite object as a very young child. Would you have behaved the same way now? Explain with reason.

Answer: In my early childhood, there was a poignant incident when I lost my cherished piggy bank, a delightful giraffe-shaped treasure from my father's overseas travels. The emotional toll was immense, and I spent hours in tears. Reflecting on that moment today, I recognize that my reaction was a genuine response to my first encounter with the pain of losing something beloved. Now, as I've matured, my perspective has evolved. I wouldn't respond with the same intensity to a similar loss. Growing up has brought an understanding that experiencing loss is an inherent and inevitable aspect of life. It's a realization that has tempered my reactions and allowed me to navigate the ebb and flow of life with a more composed outlook.

5. What feelings do you think, might be experienced, at the loss of a mobile phone, for a youngster today? Explain how these would be different from those felt by the boy in the poem.

[CBSE OD, 2020]

Answer: The feelings of a youngster on the loss of his mobile phone today would be very different from those felt by the boy in the poem. The boy in the poem was a little kid. It was his first experience of losing a thing beloved to him. However, a youngster today might not react in such a sad way as kids today are not so attached with their possessions. They have become more materialistic with time.

6. 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: As the boy's beloved ball bounces away and slips into the harbor, the seemingly trivial event unfolds into a poignant metaphor for the loss of sweet childhood innocence. The boy's deep emotional connection with the ball reflects the irreplaceable nature of moments that slip away. The symbolism is clear — just as a new ball cannot bring back the lost one, no amount of worldly wealth can reclaim the purity of a lost childhood. The poet, avoiding moralizing, invites the boy to introspect and internalize the profound nature of his loss, encouraging him to move forward in life, acknowledging and embracing the inevitable changes.

7. Imagine you are the boy's elder sibling. He tells you about the loss of the ball on reaching home. How would you assure him? You may begin your reply like this:

I don't think you should take this to heart. You see...

Answer: I don't think you should take this to heart. You see there will be several moments when a person will have to suffer the bitter loss of their beloved possessions. That's a part and parcel of life. Losses are inevitable. People do lose materials and even relations. But that doesn't bring life to standstill, right? People move on. I want you to be brave enough to accept the reality and get over it

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

Answer: The ball took a quick dip in the water, catching the boy off guard and leaving him feeling unexpectedly upset. He stood there, not able to move, and stared at the spot where the ball disappeared. It seemed as if he was lost in thoughts about his childhood, a time that had slipped away forever, much like his lost ball. The waves gently brushing the shore served as a backdrop to the moment, emphasizing the sense of irreversibility in both the lost ball and the fleeting days of youth.

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

Answer: At first glance, losing the ball might appear commonplace, something not worth getting worked up about. After all, boys often misplace such items, and they can easily be replaced since they're not too expensive. However, the boy's reaction suggests a deeper emotional impact. It's not just about the cost of the ball; it's about the irreplaceable sentimental value attached to it. Likewise, the boy's inconsolability hints at the profound loss of something priceless - his childhood. Money can't bring back the specific ball he cherished, and wealth can't restore the innocence and joy of his lost childhood.

10. 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 move ahead in life forgetting all inconsolable losses.