

2. DEEP WATER BY WILLIAM DOUGLAS

Theme:

In this essay William O. Douglas talks about his fear of water and how he finally overcomes it by his courage, determination, handwork, strong will power, perseverance and the desire to learn. If these are practiced we can definitely achieve success in all our endeavors.

Gist of the lesson:

- ✓ William O. Douglas had a desire to learn swimming since childhood.
- ✓ At the age of three or four, he was knocked down and buried by a wave at a beach in California.
- ✓ He developed a great aversion to water.
- ✓ At the age of ten or eleven he decided to learn to swim with water wings at the Y.M.C.A pool since it was safe at the shallow end.
- ✓ A misadventure:- while sitting alone and waiting for others to come at the Y.M.C.A pool, a big boy came and threw Douglas into deep end of the pool.
- ✓ Douglas swallowed water and went straight down to the bottom of the pool.
- ✓ While going down he planned to make a big jump upwards but came up slowly.
- ✓ Stark terror seized him.
- ✓ Tried to shout but could not.....
- ✓ As he went down the pool second time, he tried to jump upwards but it was a waste of energy.
- ✓ Terror held him deeper and deeper.
- ✓ During the third trial he sucked water instead of air.
- ✓ Light was going out and there was no more panic.
- ✓ So he ceased all efforts and he became unconscious.
- ✓ He crossed to oblivion.
- ✓ When revived he found himself vomiting beside the pool.
- ✓ He was in grip of fear of water and it deprived him of the joys of canoeing, boating swimming and fishing.
- ✓ Hired an instructor to learn swimming.
- ✓ The instructor taught him swimming piece by piece.
- ✓ He went to different lakes to swim and found tiny vestiges of fear still gripped him.
- ✓ He challenged the fear and swam.
- ✓ Swimming up and down the Warm Lake he finally overcame his fear of water.
- ✓ He realized that in death there is peace and there is terror only in fear of death.
- ✓ Will to live is stronger than fear of death.

SOLVED QUESTIONS:

Short Answer Questions:

1. Why was the YMCA pool considered safer when compared to the Yakima River?
Yakima River was very deep, treacherous and there were many cases of drowning but the YMCA pool only two or three feet deep at the shallow end: and while it was nine

feet at the deep end. So YMCA pool was considered safer when compared to the Yakima River.

3. When did his aversion to water begin?

His aversion to water began when he was 3 -4 years old when his father took him to California beach. There the waves knocked him down swept over him.

4. What was the misadventure that happened one day?

William 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 YMCA 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.

5. What strategy did he remember as he went down the water?

To hit the bottom and spring/jump upwards, bob to the surface –like a cork and come out.

6. What effect did the drowning in the YMCA pool have on the Douglas?

-weak and trembling - haunting fear - deprived of the joy of canoeing, boating and swimming.

7. What method did he adopt to overcome terror?

- Rigorous training (breathing moving of legs ,etc)
- went to lake Wentworth and swam for two miles.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. How did the misadventure in YMCA pool affect Douglas? How did he overcome it?

-was ten or eleven decided-learn-swim -an older boy pushed –almost drowned
-haunting fear gripped him -could not enjoy any water sports -finally decided to hire an instructor -seven months –instructor –made a swimmer -released the instructor - vestiges remained -swam in Lake Wentworth -challenged the terror -swam across Warm lake
-shouted with joy-conquered the fear of water -there is terror only in the fear of death and peace in death. - the will to live became stronger.

QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

Short Answer Questions:

1. Why did mother warn Douglas against River Yakima?
2. What impact did the incident at California beach have on him?
3. What made him decide that the instructor's role in teaching him swimming was over?
4. Why did Douglas go to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire? How did he make his terror flee?
5. What larger meaning did the experience have on him?
6. How did he interpret Roosevelt's saying?

Long Answer Questions

1. What is the 'misadventure' that William Douglas speaks about? What were the series of emotions fears experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?
2. How did the instructor build a swimmer out of Douglas?
3. Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from his experience?
4. Do you think the title Deep Water is appropriate to the story? Why/why not?

5. Value Based Question: Answer the following in about 100 words. 5

William Douglas writes about his frightening experience in the YMCA pool:... With that he picked me up and tossed me into the deep end, I landed in a sitting position, swallowed water..... I was frightened."

Do you appreciate the behavior of the big, bully boy? Don't you think that bullying and ragging of students by students(as is seen in news several times) are barbarianism and have great damaging effect on the victim as well as to the society? Write down your thoughts about this in the form of a speech to be delivered in a meeting of the senior students of your school.