



QUESTION BANK – THE BALL POEM

Class: X

Sub: ENGLISH

**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!  
No use to say – ‘O there are other balls’:

- (a) What has happened to the boy?
- (b) Why does the poet say ‘No use to say – ‘O there are other balls’?
- (c) Which word means ‘happily’?
- (d) Where did the ball go?

**Answer:**

- (a) The boy was very sad as he had lost his ball.
- (b) The poet says so as the loss of the ball is of a major consequence to the boy.
- (c) Merrily means happily.
- (d) The ball went to the water.

**Question 2.**

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,  
A dime, another ball, is worthless.

- (a) Where had the boy’s ball gone?
- (b) How has the loss affected the boy?
- (c) Why was ‘he’ trembling, staring down?
- (d) What does the poet mean by ‘first responsibility’?

**Answer:**

- (a) The boy’s ball went into the dark waters of the harbour.
- (b) The boy is very much troubled at the loss of his ball. He stands still, trembling and staring at his ball.
- (c) He was trembling, staring down as he had lost his ball.
- (d) By ‘First responsibility’, he, means to look after his things properly.

**Question 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.

- (a) What does the boy understand?
- (b) What does the word 'balls' signify?
- (c) What is meant by the word 'possessions'?
- (d) What does "In a world of possessions mean?"

**Answer:**

- (a) The boy learns to grow up and understands his first responsibility.
- (b) 'Balls' signify the boys' innocence and happy young days.
- (c) 'Possessions' means something that is owned or possessed.
- (d) It means that everybody loves to possess things or materials in their names.

#### **Question 4.**

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) What is the boy learning?
- (b) Why are boy's eyes desperate?
- (c) What do you mean by 'epistemology of loss'?
- (d) What every man needs to know one day?

**Answer:**

- (a) The boy is learning to cope up with the loss.
- (b) Boy's eyes looked desperate as he was sad to see his ball gone forever.
- (c) 'Epistemology of loss' means to understand the nature of loss.
- (d) Every man needs to know one day that loss may occur to him and he would have to bear it up.

#### **LONG ANSWER QUESTION**

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

**Ans.** 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.

**2. 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 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 sermonize 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.

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

**Ans.** 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.

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

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

**Ans.** 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.

**2. What is the theme of the poem — 'The Ball Poem'?**

**Ans.** 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.

**3. A ball is an easily available, inexpensive thing. Then, why is the boy so sad to lose it?**

**Ans.** 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 young days are associated with it for 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.

**4. What shows that the ball was valuable for the boy?**

**Ans.** 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.

**5. ‘He senses first responsibility’—what responsibility is referred to here?**

**Ans.** 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. In other words the responsibility of taking care of his things in this world of possessions and cope up with the loss.

**6. Why did the poet not console the boy?**

**Ans.** The poet did not console the boy for two reasons—first, 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.

**7. 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 has its own limitation. Wealth can’t compensate such emotional losses such as the loss of one’s childhood days.

**8. 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.

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

**Ans.** 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.

**10. Why doesn’t the poet want to intrude on ‘him’? What does he consider the safest course?**

**Ans.** 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

sermonizing, the poet leaves it on the boy to develop a new sense of responsibility. It will help him in bearing the loss.

**11. What is the message that John Berryman gives to the readers in ‘The Ball poem’?**

**Ans.** 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.