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Understanding The Text:

1. How does Douglas make clear to the reader the sense of panic that gripped him as he almost drowned? Describe the details that have made the description vivid.

Answer:

Douglas conveys to the reader the panic that gripped him as he nearly drowned. When he was learning to swim at the Y.M.C.A. pool, he had a “misadventure.” A well-built boy threw him into the pool. Despite his fear, Douglas was confident that he would emerge from the pool. He intended to make a big jump as soon as his feet touched the bottom of the pool, rise to the surface, and paddle to the pool’s edge. The pool was only 9 feet deep, but Douglas believed it to be 90 feet deep. When his feet hit bottom, he tried jumping with all his might, but the effort was in vain. He began searching for rope, a ladder, and water wings. All he could see was yellowish water all around him. He was dying of suffocation. He tried to yell, but nothing came out of his mouth. His eyes and nose emerged from the water, but his mouth did not. Douglas flailed at the water’s surface. His legs stiffened, and became paralyzed. He had begun his long journey back to the pool’s bottom. His lungs and legs were both throbbing with pain. He began to feel dizzy. He couldn’t move his legs or arms. He shook with fear. He wished he could call for assistance, but he was unable to do so.

2. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

Answer:

Douglas was determined to overcome his fear of water because it was preventing him from enjoying the pleasures of boating, fishing, and canoeing. For months, he attended swimming lessons. The instructor required him to put in a lot of practice time. He learned a variety of swimming techniques. Every day, he practised for hours. After taking those swimming lessons, he felt a little less afraid. Douglas hadn’t finished his swimming lessons yet. He went to various lakes to practise his swimming skills. He swam from one shore to the other without assistance.

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 this experience?

Answer:

Douglas, as an adult, recounts a terrifying childhood experience and his triumph over it because the experience had a deep meaning for him. He had been through a terrifying ordeal and emerged victoriously. The larger meaning he derived from his experience is that terror exists only in the fear of death; as Roosevelt once stated, “all we have to fear is the fear itself.” Douglas had felt both the sensation of death and the terror that it could elicit; his desire to live had grown stronger.

Thinking About The Text:

1. “All we have to fear is fear itself”. Have you ever had a fear that you have now overcome? Share your experience with your partner.

Answer:

Write your own answer.

2. Find and narrate other stories about conquest of fear and what people have said about courage. For example, you can recall Nelson Mandela’s struggle for freedom, his perseverance to achieve his mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor as depicted in his autobiography. The story We’re Not Afraid To Die, which you have read in Class XI, is an apt example of how courage and optimism helped a family survive under the direst stress

Answer:

Do it Yourself.

