

DEEP WATER

Introduction

In this story, Douglas talks about his fear of water and how he finally overcomes it with strong will power, courage, hard work and firm determination. Once he took courage, the fear vanished. That shows most of our fears are baseless. Fear creates dangers where there is none. The writer's experiences further confirm the proverbial truth, "Where there is a will, there is a way."

Summary

The story, "Deep Waters" tells us how the writer overcame his fear of water and learned swimming with sheer determination and will power. He had developed a terror of water since childhood. When he was three or four years old, the writer had gone to California with his father. One day on the beach, the waves knocked the child down and swept over him. The child was terrified but the father who knew, there was no harm, laughed. The experience bred a permanent fear of water in the child's sub-conscious mind. Still another incident, more serious, increased his terror. The writer was trying to learn swimming in the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool in Yakima. One day while he was waiting for other boys, a big boy suddenly played a dangerous prank and pushed him into the water. The writer was terribly frightened. He went down nine feet into the water. When he reached the bottom, he jumped upward with all his strength. He

came up but very slowly. He tried to catch hold of something like a rope but grasped only at water.

He tried to shout but no sound came out. He went down again. His lungs ached, head throbbed and he grew dizzy. He felt paralyzed with fear. All his limbs were paralyzed. Only the movement of his heart told him that he was alive. Again he tried to jump up. But this time his limbs would not move at all. He looked for ropes, ladders and water wings but all in vain. Then he went down again, the third time. This time all efforts and fear ceased. He was moving towards peaceful death. The writer was in peace. When he came to consciousness, he found himself lying on the side of the pool with the other boys nearby. The terror that he had experienced in the pool never left him. It haunted him for years and years to come. It spoilt many of his expeditions of canoeing, swimming and fishing. It spoilt his pleasures in Maine Lakes, New Hampshire, Deschutes, Columbia and Bumping Lake etc.

But the writer was determined to conquer his terror. He took help of a swimming instructor to learn swimming. The instructor taught him various actions necessary in swimming part by part. He put his face under water and exhaled and inhaled raising it above water. He practiced it for several weeks. He had to kick with his legs a few weeks on the side of the pool. At last he combined all these actions and made the writer swim. He learned swimming but the terror continued. So deep goes our childhood experiences! So fearful is the fear of fear! Whenever he was in water the terror returned. Hence forward the writer tried to terrorize terror itself. He tried to face the new challenge. When terror came, he confronted it by asking it sarcastically as to what it can really do to him? He plunged into the water as if to defy the fear. Once he took courage the terror vanquished. He faced the challenge deliberately in various places like the Warm Lake. He conquered it at last.

Main points

1. Douglas had a desire to learn swimming since childhood.
2. At the age of three or four, he was knocked down and buried by a wave at a beach in California.
3. He developed a great aversion to water.
4. 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.
5. While sitting alone and waiting for others to come at the Y.M.C.A. pool, a big boy came and threw Douglas into the deep end of the pool.
6. Douglas swallowed water and went straight down to the bottom of the pool.

7. While going down he planned to make a big jump upwards but came up slowly.
8. Stark terror seized him.
9. Tried to shout but could not.
10. As he went down the pool the second time he tried to jump upwards but it was a waste of energy.
11. Terror held him deeper and deeper.
12. During the third trial he sucked in water instead of air. So he ceased all efforts and he became unconscious.
13. When revived he found himself vomiting beside the pool.
14. He was in the grip of fear of water and it deprived him of the joys of canoeing, boating swimming and fishing.
15. He took help of a swimming instructor to learn swimming.
16. The instructor taught him swimming piece by piece.
17. He went to different lakes to swim and found tiny vestiges of fear still gripped him.
18. Swimming up and down the warm lake he finally overcame his fear of water.
19. He realized that in death there is peace and there is terror only in fear of death.
20. Will to live is stronger than fear of death.

Short Answer Type Questions

Q1. What had happened when Douglas was three or four years old?

Ans. When Douglas was three or four years old he was on the California beach with his father. There the sea waves knocked him down and swept over him. He felt breathless buried in the water and was frightened; but his father laughed at him.

Q2. What was the misadventure of Douglas?

Ans. One day, an eighteen year old big bruiser picked him up and tossed him into the nine feet deep end of the swimming 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 but was somehow miraculously saved from the mouth of death.

Q3. What were the series of emotions and fears that Douglas experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?

Ans. The narrator was frightened but was still able to think. He decided that as his feet hit the bottom of the pool, he would make a big jump and come to the surface. However, when he could not manage to come to the surface, he was gripped with panic and this paralyzed his limbs.

Q4. How did Douglas finally overcome his fear of water?

Ans. Douglas overcame his fear of water by challenging the fear itself and going for several round of swimming in the pool; but finally the residual fear he overcame when he went up to Tieton to Conrad meadows and swam across the other shore and back of the warm lake as Doug Corpron used to do.

Q5. What thought of Roosevelt deeply impacted Douglas? How did he apply the thought to his life?

Ans. The thought of Roosevelt that there is terror in the fear of death, had deep impact on Douglas. He had experienced both the sensation of dying and the terror of the fear of death. But later he brushed aside his fear by challenging it by the strong will power and firm determination. He applied it and finally succeeded to overcome the fear.

Q6. How did this experience affect him?

Ans. This experience left him fearful of water for a long time. He did not want to go near the pool. He could not enjoy any water-related sport and it robbed him of the joy of canoeing, boating and swimming.

Q7. Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?

Ans. Douglas was determined to get rid of this fear as he could not enjoy any of the sports that he had enjoyed earlier. His fear of water not only kept him away from the pool, but also from activities like canoeing, boating and fishing.

Q8. How was the instructor successful in making Douglas a perfect swimmer?

Ans. The instructor made Douglas a perfect swimmer by removing his fear of being drowned and teaching him swimming piece by piece in a period of three months. During the training he let Douglas swim back and forth of the pool tying him with a pulley. He taught him to put his face under the water to exhale and raise above it to inhale.

Q9. How did Douglas make sure that he conquered the old terror?

Ans. Douglas swam extensively in all the lakes that he knew, making a concerted effort to rid himself of his fear of water. He would swim long lengths, put his head under water, till all the residual fear was gone. It was at Warm Lake that he was at last able to get rid of the fear of water that had haunted him for so long.

Long Answer Type Questions

Q1. Give an account of the fears and emotions of Douglas as he made efforts to save himself from being drowned in the YMCA swimming pool.

Ans. When the author was flung into the deep end of the pool, he was overcome with fear. He was able to think rationally and planned that he would jump up as soon as he hit the bottom of the pool. He hoped that in this way he would be able to rise to the surface of the water. When this action did not produce the desired result, he tried it again but in vain. Panic seized him when he realized that he was engulfed in water that was suffocating him and abject fear immobilized him making his limbs unresponsive and heavy. His flailing arms failed to find anything to hold on to and he found himself being pulled down to the bottom. His lungs ached and his silent screams went unheard. The mass of yellow water that held him captive in its grip produced stark terror over which he had no control. When three attempts to rise to the surface failed, he fainted. He had experienced the terror that fear of death can produce.

Q2. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

Ans. The fear of water haunted Douglas for many years till he decided to hire the services of an instructor and started practising five days a week. The instructor devised a method by which Douglas could learn swimming without fear. Douglas was to wear a belt around his waist and attached to this was a rope that went through a pulley that ran on an overhead cable. After three months, he had begun to relax. The instructor also put him through the exercise of moving his legs in water by the side of the pool and though at first Douglas felt paralyzed and quite unable to move, with sustained effort, he soon overcame it. The instructor then felt that his job was done and that he had made a swimmer out of Douglas. He swam in different lakes and rivers and it was after he had swum in Warm Lake that he knew that he had at last conquered the fear of water.

Q3. 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?

Ans. Douglas, as an adult, recounts this experience as to him it was larger than just overcoming fear of water. The childhood experience of almost drowning in the pool had been a brush with death and this had produced in him a greater desire to live. The terror that he had experienced was so real to him that only he could understand the full implication of it. It had aroused in him the passion to destroy the fear that had the ability to incapacitate him to the extent that it numbed his senses and paralyzed his limbs. This fear continued to haunt him for years and strengthened his resolve to destroy it for he knew that the only way he could ever live with himself was when he had attained freedom from it. It was a personal battle that he had to win. The rigorous routine that he put himself through to overcome his fear bears testimony to his willpower, courage and determination.

Q4. People say that failures are the stepping stones. They are the best teachers. Discuss in about 125 words.

Ans. It is rightly said that failure plays an important role in a man's life. Failure in one field becomes the cause of exploring success in other fields. Failures make us familiar with our weaknesses and flaws. They become the stepping stones and inspire us to fight against odd circumstances. Man should learn from his mistakes and strive hard to reach at his destination. Most of the successful peoples failed at any step but could get their target because failures guided them and encouraged them to try harder. One should never give up one's target. It is certain that failure inspires us to work with more strength and vigour. One should never get depressed and dejected. All leaders, fighters, businessmen, bureaucrats firmly say that failures are the pillars to success.

Q5. Strong will power and firm determination ensure success in your life. Douglas wanted to learn swimming but he was afraid of water. He did not give up and finally mastered swimming. He proved that where there is a will, there is a way. Write your views in about 125 words.

Ans. Strong will power plays a vital role in our life. Firm determination and consistent hard work are the hallmarks of success. A person who has passionate desire to do something achieves his goals within the stipulated time. Will power of a human being gives him strength, energy, vigour and enthusiasm. It determines the fate of a human being. Absolute determination has the ability to face and overcome obstacles. No hindrance can defeat the will power. It is invincible and insurmountable. There is no problem in this world which has no solution. It has been proved by great personalities that all obstacles can be overcome by sheer determination. Man has the knack to achieve anything. Nothing is impossible in this world. He must not be fatalist. He should not

believe in destiny, but on *karma*. Man can accomplish every assignment if he desires. Strong desire is the prerequisite to success. There is no scope for disappointment in the life of a person who has iron will and dogged determination.