

The Ball Poem

Summary of the Poem The Tiger

The Tiger by Carolyn Wells

*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':
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. 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.
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.*

The poem is about losing something that you love, and learning to grow up without it. It is about a little boy who for the first time in his young life, is learning what it is like to experience grief at the loss of a much beloved possession-his ball. To us, the loss of a ball is of minor consequence, and our reaction to it is to say 'O there are other balls'. But to a little boy, this is not so. A dime, another ball, is worthless. Money is external; it cannot buy back our love, nor replace the things that we love: the things that really matter.

In this poem, the boy's ball personifies his young days and happy innocence. In this world, people will take balls just as they will take away our innocence and force us to grow up. And once we lose this innocence, we can never get it back. Balls will be lost always, little boy, and no one buys a ball back. This poem goes

to show how, all throughout your life, you will be forced to do things that you don't want to do; and you will lose or have to give up the things that you love. But, despite this, you have to learn to stand up - to be strong and get on with your life - no matter how much it hurts inside. Because that is the only way you will survive; you have to learn to accept and let go - and not cling onto something that you can never have.

The poet uses imagery when describing how the ball personifies the spirit of the boy's childish innocence. In the last five lines, we visualize how the spirit of this little boy, like the ball, is sinking into the dark waters of the harbour. As it drifts further away, the boy learns to grow up, and that part of him that is linked to that ball grows up as well, until it is no longer a little boy.

Quick Revision Notes

- The little boy has lost his ball.
- He can buy many new balls but he has a very deep emotional attachment and memories associated with that ball.
- So, he regrets over the loss of the ball.
- The poet is indirectly trying to tell us that we should learn how to cope up with the loss.
- Money is external which means that we can't buy memories with money.
- We all should learn our responsibility and learn to cope up with the loss.