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**DEEP WATER
ACADEMIC ENGLISH
XII**

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FACULTY OF ENGLISH

1. Why was Douglas' mother particular that he should not go to the Yakima river? How did she manage to keep the son away? (Click on the questions to see the answers | Do you find this inconvenient?)

The Yakima River was treacherous. Drowning was common in it. By reminding him of each drowning incident, Douglas' mother kept him away from the Yakima River.

2. What made the YMCA pool a safe place to learn swimming?

The YMCA pool at Yakima was not so deep. At the shallow area it was only three feet deep and at the deepest end it was nine. Moreover, the bottom of the pool was tiled, its slope was gradual and the water was clear.

3. What was the author's early childhood fear of the water? How did it affect him in the rest of his life?

The author and his father once went the beach of California when the former was three or four. While playing in the surf of the sea, the author was knocked down by the water and was buried under it. His breath was gone and a deep fear developed in his mind.

4. What was the misadventure that happened while William Douglas was making his attempt to learn swimming in the YMCA pool?

Douglas was attempting to learn swimming in the YMCA pool. He was sitting on the side of the pool waiting for other boys to come. Unexpectedly a fat boy arrived there, and, seeing Douglas sitting timidly, grabbed him and threw him onto the deepest part of the pool and left him to drown.

'5. I was frightened, but not yet frightened out of my wits.' What does this mean?

It was quite unexpected that Douglas was thrown into the deepest part of the YMCA Pool. The fact that he didn't know swimming increased the risk and danger. But Douglas was not ready to be overtaken by the sheer fear of sinking. On the contrary he strengthened his mind and got ready to apply his wit to overcome the situation.

6. What were Douglas' plans when he went down the water the first time?

Douglas was frightened at being hauled into the deep water but was strategic even at such a crucial stage. While sinking, he planned to make a leap once his feet touched the tiled bottom of the water and consequently reach the surface and swim to the side and escape.

7. Douglas presents before us the true experience of dying which is not frightening but peaceful. Explain.

Douglas' experience of dying in the YMCA pool taught him an untold mystery about death. He says it is a peaceful experience to die. People generally think of death as a frightening experience. When all efforts to escape from death, one is left with no other choice than dying, a sort of peace wraps him. It wipes out fear, it wipes out terror. There was no more panic. It is quiet and peaceful. Nothing to be afraid of. One feels it nice, to be drowsy, to go to sleep, no need to jump, too tired to jump. It is a feeling of being carried gently, to float along in space, tender arms around us, tender arms like Mother's.

8. Love for water could never die in Douglas. How did this statement come true to Douglas in the years that followed?

Water was very cruel with Douglas since his childhood. Even though he had been frightened twice, Douglas' love for water was everlasting. After having undergone a fatal experience at the YMCA pool Douglas didn't give up his desire to learn swimming. He waited for his time and overcame the fear of water and made himself a good swimmer.

9. This handicap stayed with me as the years rolled by. Which handicap does the author refer to?

The fear of water that possessed him first on the California Beach and later at the YMCA Pool crippled Douglas. This was an additional handicap for him other than his polio.

10. How did Douglas decide to overcome his fear of water?

After the misadventure at the YMCA Pool, Douglas found his fears for water assuming an alarming height. He decided to overcome this fear by getting effective training from a professional trainer.

11. But I was not finished. What was unfinished for Douglas?

At the end of his rigorous training to swim, Douglas' trainer informed him that his job was completed. Yet Douglas was not entirely satisfied. He had his own fears and anxieties regarding his swimming skills. He wanted to overcome the last bit of fear from his mind.

12. What did Roosevelt mean when he said, 'All we have to fear is fear itself?' How did Douglas realize this in his own life?

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President Roosevelt believed that it is fear all we have to fear. People are afraid of fear. Even when the mind wills to do certain acts, fear stops us from doing that. In the case of Douglas, too, he never feared water. On the contrary he had great attachment to water. What he feared was the fear for water.

13. Only once did the terror return.

When William Douglas was just three or four years, his father took him to a beach in California. While playing in the surf/waves, Douglas was knocked down by a huge wave. Though his father laughed at it, little Douglas caught a fear of water. When he was a teenager, he tried to learn swimming in the YMCA Pool at Yakima but got drowned in the pool, instead. He was but not ready to accept his defeat. With the help of an instructor he learnt swimming and finally kept his fears aside.

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