

FIRST FLIGHT

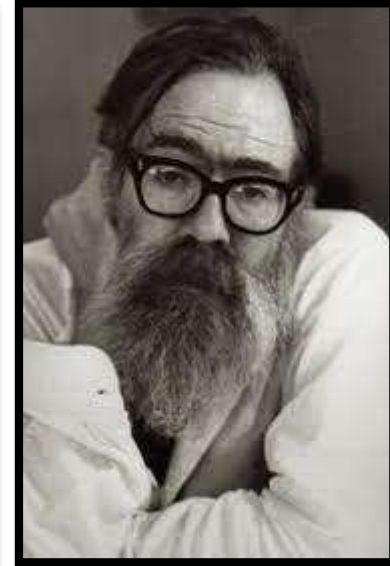
STD-X

SUBJECT : ENGLISH
CHAPTER NUMBER: 3
CHAPTER NAME : THE BALL POEM
BY JOHN BERRYMAN

CHANGING YOUR TOMORROW

INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

Born	John Allyn Smith, Jr. October 25, 1914 McAlester, Oklahoma
Died	January 7, 1972 (aged 57) Minneapolis, Minnesota
Occupation	Poet
Alma mater	Columbia University
Period	1942–1972
Literary movement	Confessional poetry
Notable works	<i>The Dream Songs</i>
Notable awards	National Book Award, Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, Bollingen Prize
Spouse	Eileen Simpson (1942–1956); divorced Ann Levine (1956–1959); divorced Kate Donahue (1961–1972)



John Berryman (born **John Allyn Smith, Jr.**; October 25, 1914 – January 7, 1972) was an American poet and scholar.

RECAPITULATION

- 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 i.e. we can't buy memories with money.
- We all should learn our responsibility and learn to cope up with the loss.



EXPLANATION (LINES 5-10)

- According to the poet, there is **no use to say “O there are other balls’** i.e. it is useless to make the boy happy by saying there are balls in the market because the boy is standing **rigid** (motionless).
- He is **trembling** (with fear or sorrow) while **staring down** (watching and thinking of) **all his young days** (i.e. the memory of the balls which he used to play with) **into the harbour** (the bank of the river) in which **his ball went**.



EXPLANATION (LINES 10-14)

- The poet says to the **little boy** (in an imaginary conversation) that, **in the world of possessions**(i.e. the world in which we own things), **people will take balls**. The **balls** here means 'things'. So, the lines mean that in this world, every human gets things that they love a lot and get attached to them.
- However, these **balls** i.e. things which they own, **will be lost** like the ball of the little boy. So, the boy **senses first responsibility** i.e. he learns the first lesson of his life i.e. we own things and we lose them. It will remain the same throughout our lives.



EXPLANATION (LINES 15-18)

- According to the poet, the boy *is learning the epistemology of loss* though *his eyes* are *desperate* i.e. he is hopeless and sad. He is learning *how to stand up* after falling down (because of the loss).
- He is learning that *every man must know* (i.e. accept the loss) and *stand up* (i.e. move on). Most people learn that sooner or later. Hence when *a whistle blows, the light returns to the street* i.e. the boy becomes a little bit hopeful. He returns back and forgets about the ball because it *is out of sight* now.



VOCABULARY

Rigid: stiff

Iron pipes are usually **rigid** in nature. They cannot be twisted easily.

Harbour: an area of water near the coast where ships are kept and are safe from the sea

This is a **harbour** where ships rest.

A dime: ten cents (U.S.)

The newspaper costs 10 **dimes**.

Desperate: hopeless

This man looks **desperate** because of his personal worries.

Epistemology of loss: understanding the nature of loss

It seems the lady understands the **epistemology of loss**. She looks grieved.

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