

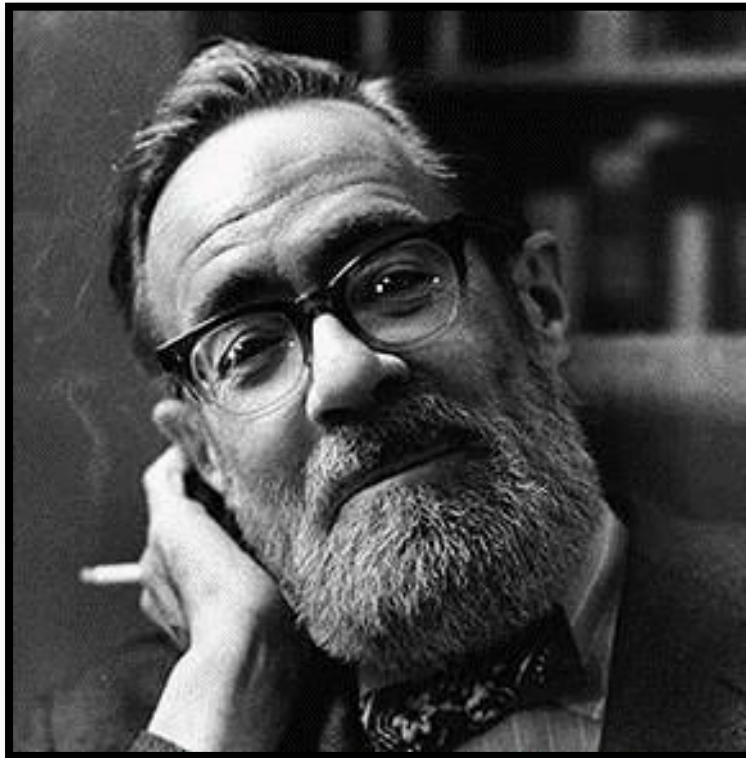
A top-down view of various sports equipment arranged on a green artificial turf field. On the left is a basketball. Next to it is a red ping-pong paddle. In the center is a white badminton racket. To the right are a white volleyball, a yellow tennis ball, a white baseball with red stitching, a red ball, a white ball, and a blue ball. Further right is a black and white soccer ball, a wooden baseball bat, and a brown leather baseball glove. The text 'The Ball Poem' is overlaid in a white box with a blue border in the lower-middle section.

The Ball Poem

About the Poet



John Berryman was an American poet and scholar. He is best known for the Dream Songs (1969) which was a sequence of 385 poems. He won Pulitzer Prize for the dream songs. He also won National book award.



The Ball Poem Introduction



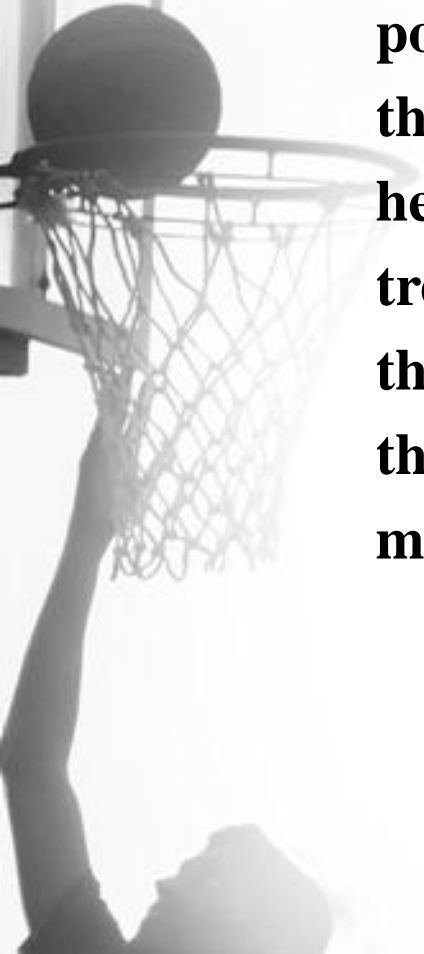
The poet John Berryman through his poem, ‘The ball poem’ has described the reality of life which everyone has to face one day. He has touched the topic of how to stand up against the miseries and sorrows of life.



The Ball Poem Summary



The poet is talking about a little boy who has lost his ball. He was playing with his ball. The ball skipped from his hand and went into the nearby water body. The poet says that this sight of the boy losing his favorite ball made him think about the boy and his reaction to this situation. He further says that the boy was helplessly looking into the water where his ball had gone. He was sad and was trembling with fear. He got so immersed in his sorrow that he kept standing near the harbour for a very long time and kept on looking for his ball. The poet says that he could console him that he may get new balls or he could also give him some money to buy another ball.



The Ball Poem Summary



But he stops himself from doing so because he thinks that the money may bring a new ball but will not bring the memories and feelings attached to the lost ball. He further says that the time has come for the boy to learn his responsibilities. Here the poet wants to say that now the boy will learn the toughest lesson of life. The lesson of accepting the harsh realities of life that one day we will lose our loved ones and our loved things.



The Ball Poem and explanation



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!



The Ball Poem Summary



Merrily: cheerful

Bouncing: jumping up and down

The poet is talking about a boy who has lost his ball. He wants to know about him and his reaction because he has lost his ball. Further, he asks to himself that what this boy will do after losing his ball. The poet has seen the ball going away from the boy. He says that the ball was cheerfully jumping up and down in the street. This means that when the ball skipped from boy's hand it went into the street and later on, it fell into the nearby river.



The Ball Poem Summary



Literary devices:

Anaphora: use of repeated words in two or more lines (What is the boy... what, what and merrily bouncing... merrily over)

Assonance: repeated use of vowel 'o' (boy, now, who, lost)

Imagery: when poet says merrily bouncing down the street

repetition: 'what' is repeated



The Ball Poem Summary



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



The Ball Poem Summary



Grief: sorrow

Rigid: fixed

Trembling: shaking

Harbour: dock, port

Intrude: invader

Dime: 10 cents (U.S)

Worthless: valueless, useless



The Ball Poem Summary



The poet says that there is no benefit of consoling the boy by saying that he will get another ball because he has other balls too. He says so because the boy is feeling very sad. He is completely surrounded by sorrow. He is sad because all the memories of the childhood days went down the harbour with the ball. Here the poet says that the boy is very sad as the ball which has now gone into the water reminds him of those sweet memories, of the times when he owned it. This loss is unbearable for him and he is grief stricken. The poet says that he can't even tell the boy to take some money from him in order to buy another ball. He says so because the new ball will not bring the sense of belonging to the boy. Further, the poet says that the time has come for the boy to learn the responsibility of taking care of his things.



The Ball Poem Summary



Literary devices:

Repetition: use of word 'ball'

Asyndeton: no use of conjunction in a sentence (A dime, another ball, is worthless)



The Ball Poem Summary



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 Ball Poem Summary



Possessions: ownership

External: Here, things with which feelings are not attached

Desperate: hopeless

Epistemology: The Greek word episteme means 'knowledge'



The Ball Poem Summary



Here the poet says that the boy has to learn that in this materialistic world, many of his belongings will be lost. He personifies the ball as his belongings, be it the worldly things or the relationships he is in possession of. So, he says that he has to learn to live without them no matter what. He says no one can buy back such things for him. The poet said so because according to him money can't buy you everything. If it does buy you some materialistic thing, still, it will not be able to buy the sense of belongingness. He says that the boy is learning how to stand up against the sense of lost things. This means that the boy is trying to learn the real truth of life which states that you have to accept the miseries of life and stand up again. This is the truth which everyone has to learn in his or her life. The harsh truth of standing up against the odd miseries of life that everyone has to bear.



The Ball Poem Summary



Literary devices:

Alliteration: use of sound 'b' at the start of two consecutive words (buys a ball back)

Assonance: use of vowel sound 'e' (He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes)

Repetition: 'ball' word is repeated

Rhyme scheme: There is no rhyme scheme followed in the poem.





THANK YOU