

## Class12 English Chapter: Deep water

**About the author: William O Douglas** was born in Maine. Minnesota. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Economics. He spent two years in teaching high school in Yakima. He then decided to pursue a legal career. He met Franklin D Roosevelt at Yale and became an adviser and friend to the President. The following excerpt is taken from **“Of Men and Mountains’ by William O Douglas**. It reveals how as a young boy William Douglas drowned in a swimming pool. In this essay he talks about his fear of water and thereafter, how he finally overcomes it.

### Answer the following questions:

1. How does Douglas make clear to the reader the sense of panic that gripped him as he almost drowned? Describe the details that have made the description vivid?
  - A. Douglas gives a detailed account of his feelings and efforts to save himself from getting drowned. He uses literary devices to make the description graphic and vivid. For Example ‘those nine feet were more like ninety’. My lungs were ready to burst. I opened my eyes and saw nothing but water...I was suffocating .I tried to yell, but no sound came out’.
2. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?
  - A. When Douglas grew up, he took the help of an instructor to learn swimming. His training went on from October to April. For three months he was taken across the pool with the help of a rope. As he went under, terror filled him and his legs froze. The instructor taught him to exhale under water and inhale through raised nose. He made him kick his legs to make them relax. Then he asked him to swim. He continued swimming from April to July. Still all terror had not left. He swam two miles across Lake Wentworth and the whole length to the shore and back of Warm Lake. Then he overcame his fear.
3. Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from his experience?
  - A. The experience of terror was a handicap Douglas suffered from during his childhood. His conquering of it shows his determination, will power and development of his personality. He drew a larger meaning from this experience. ‘In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death’ .He had experienced both the sensation of dying and the terror threat fear of it can produce. So the will to live somehow grew in intensity. He felt released –free to walk the mountain paths, climb the peaks and brush aside fear.

4. Give an account of the fears and emotions of Douglas as he made efforts to save himself from being drowned in the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool.
  - A. Douglas was frightened as he was going down. His active mind suggested a strategy to save himself from being drowned in water. He knew that water has buoyancy. He must make a big jump as his feet hit the bottom. He hoped to rise upon like a cork to the surface, lie flat in on it and paddle to the edge of the pool. Before he touched the bottom, his lungs were ready to burst. Using all his strength, he made a jump. He rose up very slowly. He saw nothing but yellow colored dirty water..He grew panicky and he was suffocated. He swallowed more water as he tried to shout. He choked and went down again. His stiff leg refused to obey him. He had lost all his breath. His lungs ached and head throbbed. he was feeling dizzy. . He went down through dark water again. An absolute terror seized Douglas. He was paralyzed under water .His reasoning power told him to jump again. He did so. But his arms and legs wouldn't move. His eyes and nose came out of water. But not his mouth. He swallowed more water and went down again third time. Now blackness swept over his brain. He had experienced the terror of death can produce as well as sensation of dying.
5. Comment on the appropriateness of the title "Deep water" or Do you think the title 'Deep water 'is apt? Give reasons in support of your answer.
  - A. The title' Deep water 'is quite appropriate to this extract from 'Of Men and Mountains'. By William O Douglas. The title is highly suggestive and at once focuses our attention on the main theme-experiencing fear of death under water and the efforts of the author to overcome it.

All the details in the essay are based on his personal experience and analysis of fear. The psychological analysis of fear is presented from a child's point of view and centers around. Deep water and drowning. The overcoming force of the waves at the California beach stirs aversion of water in Douglas. His mother warns him against swimming in the deep water of the treacherous Yakima River. The nine feet deep water of the swimming pool appears more than ninety feet to Douglas. However, when he conquers fear he can dive and swim in the deep water of Lake Went worth and Warm Lake. Thus the title is apt and suggestive.

6. What impression do you form of William O Douglas on the basis of reading 'Deep water'
  - A. William Douglas leaves a very favorable impression on us. He appears quite truthful and courageous. He gives a detailed account of his fears. And emotions as he struggles

against the deep water to save himself from being drowned.. Confessing one's own fault and shortcomings is not easy. It needs courage. Honesty and will power. Douglas has all these qualities.

His efforts to overpower the fear of water show his firm determination resolution and strong will power.. In his heroic struggle against fear. Terror, and panic, he rises to heroic stature. He becomes an idol. A living image of bravery and persistent effort. He typifies the will not to surrender or yield. His indefatigable zeal is a source of inspiration for all and especially for the youth. In short William Douglas impresses us as a frank, truthful, honest, and determined person.

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