

# DEEP WATER

## Reading Materials

About the author

### William Douglas

William Douglas (1898 – 1980) was born in Maine, Minnesota. After graduating with a Bachelors of Arts in English and Economics, he spent two years teaching high school in Yakima. However, he got tired of this and decided to pursue a legal career. He met Franklin D. Roosevelt at Yale and became an advisor and friend to the President. He retired in 1975 with a term lasting thirty-six years and remains the longest – serving justice in the history of the court. The lesson is taken from *Of Men And Mountains* by William O. Douglas. It reveals how as a young boy William Douglas nearly drowned in a swimming pool.

### An Overview

Deep water: A saga of perseverance and courage

The autobiographical account of William Douglas reveals how as a young boy he was nearly drowned in a swimming pool. He talks about his fear of water and how finally he overcomes that fear. His one great handicap was his fear of water. He did not know how to swim. He speaks about his Misadventure at the YMCA pool

### INTRODUCTION

Swimming is only one of the numerous hobbies like canoeing, rafting, rock climbing, etc. But it is a tedious exercise. Its popularity can be judged from the fact that it has been included in the Olympics. But water which is the elixir of life is also very dangerous. We all know about the fury of the floods, Tsunamis. When a boat capsizes, only the skilled swimmers survive. This lesson by Douglas is autobiographical. It gives us a peek into the feelings of a drowning person. He tells us about his harrowing experience when as a young boy, he was tossed into a swimming pool.

### Story Content

Douglas as a boy of eleven decided to learn swimming. Even as a small child of four he developed an aversion to water as he had an experience of drowning in the sea while holidaying with his father in a beach in California. He wanted to get rid of his aversion and learn swimming

### THE MISADVENTURE AT THE YMCA POOL

While he was waiting at the pool a stout boy of about eighteen years came there and unexpectedly tossed him to the deep end of the pool

### Douglas" Plans While Drowning

While going deep into the pool Douglas planned to leap up and spring to the surface of the water like a cork. But he could not do that. He was suffocating . His limbs got paralysed and rigid. He screamed, but the sound was frozen at his throat; he was getting dizzy

### Terror seizing Douglas

Douglas opened his eyes, he could see water, water and nothing else. And then sheer , stark terror seized him. His heart was pounding and head throbbing .Bu his limbs did not move.

### Douglas saved

He was saved by someone. He was lying on his stomach beside the pool, vomiting . Several hours later he walked home, weak and trembling . He was thoroughly shaken. He couldn't eat that night. For days a haunting fear was in his heart

### Fear of Water Lingerin

Whenever he was in water the terror that has seized him in the pool came back. His legs would become paralysed. The handicap stayed with him. It ruined his fishing trips; deprived him of the joy of canoeing, boating and swimming

### Determined to overcome fear

He decided to get an instructor and learn to swim. The instructor put a belt around him. A rope attached to the belt went through the pulley that ran on an overhead cable. Holding the rope he made him swim across the pool . This practice went on hour after hour, day after day. He was also given training in kicking with his legs

### A swimmer built

Piece by piece the instructor built a swimmer of Douglas. When he had perfected each piece he put them together into a whole. And the instructor was finished

### Douglas not satisfied

Whenever he was in water, tiny vestiges of the old terror returned. He tried to scare away the fear.

### Douglas practising in tough waters

He wanted to make sure that all the terror had left. Wentworth swam two miles across the lake tried different strokes- the crawl, breast stroke, side stroke and back stroke. He

laughed at the terror whenever it raised its ugly head. Then he swam across the warm lake

Hurrah ! Douglas Conquers Fear

Thus Douglas with sheer determination, hard work and strength of will has finally got rid of even the residual fears

### Vocabulary

Treacherous:-Unreliable, Very dangerous and difficult to deal with.

Many of the water bodies turn treacherous during monsoon.

Bruiser:-large strong aggressive youth/man Joan appears to be a bruiser, but he is the most sensitive boy of our class Vocabulary

Flail:-To move or swing arms or legs in a wild and uncontrolled way . The wounded animal lay on the ground , flailing helplessly.

Oblivion:- Unconsciousness , forgetfulness Many of the film stars of the past are lost in oblivion now.

Vestiges:-Remnants , remaining parts. One can understand the life of the past from the vestiges of monuments.

Residual:-Left behind , remaining The police had residual doubts even after arresting the murderer.

### Message

In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death. This is the message of the lesson. Roosevelt had said, —All we have to fear is fear itself. All terrors and fears are psychological. We can overcome and conquer it. Only we have to be determined. Douglas conquered the fear of water only by making himself a perfect swimmer than being overwhelmed by it. In a similar manner, we can fight and overcome all our fears and weaknesses. We should cultivate and nurture our abilities, strengths , will power and determination with which we will succeed in all spheres of life.