Class-X

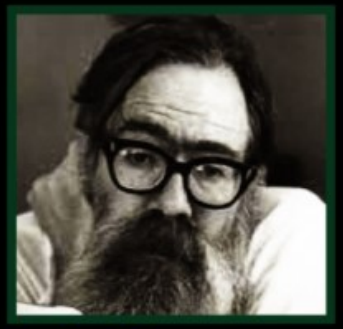
English

First Flight

Poem - 5

The Ball Poem

Part - 2



John Berryman

Neha Rajvanshi

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SUMMARY

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The poet John Berryman describes in the poem the grief and pain of the boy who has lost his ball. He suffers a sense of responsibility in the dispossession of the ball in this materialistic world. The poem shows that one has to go with the times when one gets or loses many things. It is a fact that one undergoes pain, grief and suffering with the loss of things. The boy who has lost the ball shall have to learn the 'epistemology of loss' and bear the grief. He has to learn how to stand up again.

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Literary Devices Used in the Poem

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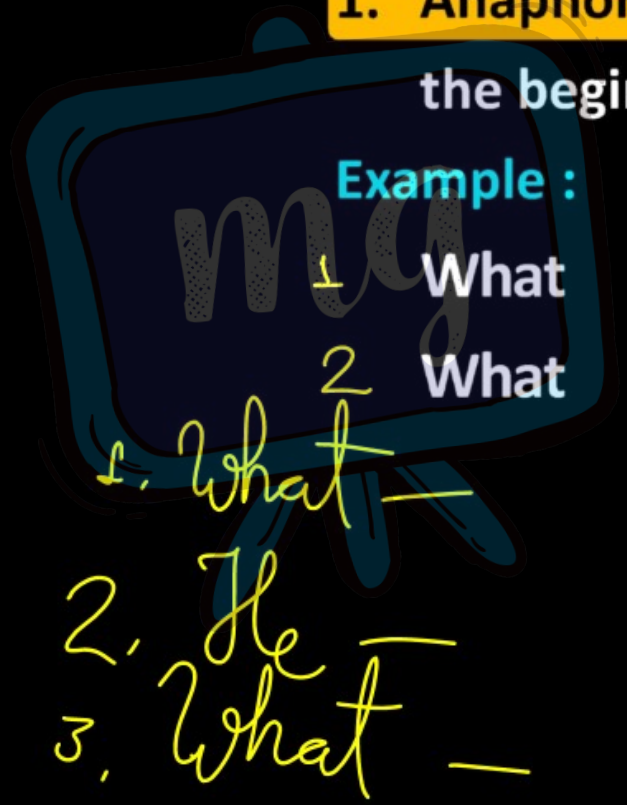
1. **Anaphora :** Repetition of a word at the beginning of successive line.

Example :

1 What
2 What
3 Merrily
4 Merrily



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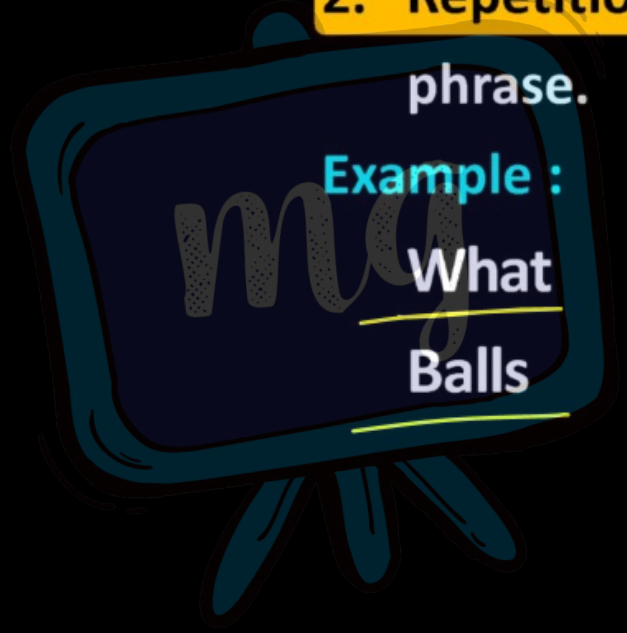

2. **Repetition :** To repeat any word or phrase.

Example :

What

Balls

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3. Personification : To give human qualities to any non-human object.

Example :

Ball is personified as it is presented as merrily bouncing.

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4. Symbolism : When one thing represents something else.

Example :

'Balls' word represents all the loving things, memories and beloved people.

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5. Alliteration : Repetition of same consonant sounds at the beginning of the word.

Example :

buys - ball - back

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6. Assonance : When similar vowel sound is repeated.

Example :

boy - now - who - lost

vowel 'O' is used prominently.

The Ball Poem
[Comprehension]

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Question 1. Why does the poet say, "I would not intrude on him"? Why doesn't he offer him money to buy another ball?

Answer : The poet does not want to intrude so that the boy can get a chance to learn the real truth of life. He has to learn to accept the loss. He does not offer him money to buy another ball as no ball can bring back the memories associated with that lost ball.

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Question 2. "...staring down/ All his young days into the harbour where / His ball went..." Do you think the boy has had the ball for a long time? Is it linked to the memories of days when he played with it?

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Answer : Yes, the boy had it for a long time. It is seen in 'staring down/All his young days...' The boy's staring into the harbour shows one thing. It is that the ball had links to the memories of many days.

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Question 3. What does "in the world of possessions" mean?

Answer : The world of possessions means that the world is full of materialistic things. Materialistic things are those things which bring comfort and luxury in life.

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Question 4. Do you think the boy has lost anything earlier ? Pick out the words that suggest the answer.



Answer : The boy has not lost anything earlier. The words that suggest the answer - "Now he senses his first responsibility ".

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Question 5. What does the poet say the boy is learning from the loss of the ball? Try to explain this in your own words.

Answer : The poet means that the boy will learn the real truth of life. He will learn how to move on in life despite of heavy loss.

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This is very normal and natural feeling in everyone's life when they lose either something or someone. This harsh reality that lost things never come back make people strong enough to live their life by accepting the truth.

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Question 6. Where has the boy lost his ball? What is the effect of the loss on his mind?

Answer : The boy was playing near the harbour. But unfortunately he has lost his ball while playing. The poet describes how the ball was lost. He says that the ball bounced down the street. Then it went into the water. The boy felt an emotional shock at this loss.

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Question 7. Explain the line, "And no one buys a ball back. Money is external".

Answer : This line means that no one can buy anything that is lost forever. No one will buy the boy that very ball which he has lost. Money is an external thing. It is a medium of possessing things. It can't take the place of things possessed.

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Question 8. What is the central point in the poem?

Answer : The central point in the poem is the loss of the ball by the boy. It is also his understanding the loss and bearing with it. In the world of materialism people lose things. But they have to forget that loss. The boy is doing this very thing.