Collegedunia NCERT Solutions

Class 12 English NCERT Solutions Chapter 3 Deep Water: line-grounded answers for William O. Douglas's autobiographical extract from Flamingo (2026-27)

Chapter 3: Flamingo Prose: Deep Water

About this Chapter

Deep Water is William O. Douglas's autobiographical extract taken from his book *Of Men and Mountains*. Douglas (1898–1980), a long-serving Justice of the US Supreme Court, recalls how, as a ten or eleven year old boy, he was thrown into the deep end of the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool at Yakima by a bigger boy and almost drowned. The terror that took possession of him in those few minutes followed him for years and ruined his fishing and canoeing trips across Maine, Oregon and New Hampshire. The extract describes how Douglas finally hired a swimming instructor and, piece by piece, was rebuilt into a swimmer, and how he then tested himself at Lake Wentworth and at Warm Lake near Gilbert Peak. These solutions are grounded in specific lines and stages of the text, including the Y.M.C.A. pool, the bully's taunt of "Hi, Skinny!", the rope-and-pulley sessions, the side-by-side stroke practice, and Roosevelt's line about "fear itself".

Topics covered: Fear and its mastery • Perseverance and graded practice • The role of a skilled teacher • First-person narration of trauma • Validation through a return to the water (Wentworth, Warm Lake)

Author and source.
William O. Douglas (1898–1980), USA; Flamingo, Prose Section; excerpt from *Of Men and Mountains*.

Setting.
Y.M.C.A. swimming pool, Yakima (Washington); later Lake Wentworth, New Hampshire, and Warm Lake in the Cascades.

Central event.
At age ten or eleven Douglas is thrown into the deep end of a pool by a bully; the near-drowning produces a years-long fear of water, which he finally overcomes with an instructor's systematic help.

Also see for this chapter: Revision Notes

Think as you read

Q 3.1 What is the "misadventure" that William Douglas speaks about?

SOLUTION

The word **misadventure** means a piece of bad luck, a mishap or an accident in which something goes seriously wrong. Douglas uses the word to soften the event he is about to describe; in plain English what he survived was a near drowning. The misadventure is the moment at the Y.M.C.A. pool in Yakima when a much bigger boy threw the ten or eleven year old Douglas into the deep end of the pool "as a joke".

> ☞ **Key lines**
>
> "He was a big bruiser of a boy. . . . 'Hi, Skinny! How'd you like to be ducked?' . . . He picked me up and tossed me into the deep end. I landed in a sitting position, swallowed water, and went at once to the bottom."

- **Where and when.** The incident takes place at the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool in Yakima, Washington, when Douglas is "perhaps ten or eleven years old". The pool was "safe at one end" (about two or three feet of water) but "treacherous" at the deep end, where it "slid down to nine feet".
- **The trigger.** A "big bruiser of a boy, probably eighteen years old" singled out the thin, lonely Douglas. With the words "Hi, Skinny! How'd you like to be ducked?" the bully picked him up and tossed him in. The misadventure is therefore not an accident of bad weather; it is an act of casual cruelty.
- **The first sinking.** Douglas "landed in a sitting position, swallowed water, and went at once to the bottom." He was frightened, but, as he tells the reader, "not yet frightened out of my wits".
- **Three attempts to surface.** Douglas plans on the way down to "make a big jump when I hit the bottom, come to the surface like a cork, lie flat on it, and paddle to the edge". He executes the plan three times; each time he rises a little, sees the yellow water above him, opens his mouth to shout, swallows water, and goes back down.
- **The blackout.** After the third descent "all efforts ceased. I relaxed. Even my legs felt limp; and a blackness swept over my brain. It wiped out fear; it wiped out terror. There was no more panic. It was quiet and peaceful. Nothing to be afraid of." That moment of "stillness" is the medical sign of imminent drowning.
- **The rescue.** Douglas is pulled out of the water and revives, but he refuses to say who threw him in, and the incident is never reported.
- **The aftermath.** The misadventure is the seed of a lifelong fear: "A mass of yellow water held me in its grip . . . The terror that had seized me in the pool would come back . . . My legs would become paralysed." The few minutes in the Y.M.C.A. pool

turn into years of ruined fishing trips, broken canoeing weekends, and the loss of half the outdoor life Douglas loved.

☞ **Word choice**

Douglas uses the gentle word "misadventure" rather than "near drowning" or "assault". The understatement is part of his style: the gravity of the event is left for the reader to feel. A good answer notes the contrast between the soft word and the hard event.

Final Answer: The misadventure is the near-drowning Douglas suffered at the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool in Yakima at the age of ten or eleven. A bigger boy, "a big bruiser of about eighteen", tossed him into the deep end of the pool as a joke. Douglas sank nine feet to the bottom, tried three times to push off and paddle to the surface, swallowed water each time, blacked out, and was finally pulled out. The few minutes in the pool became the seed of a lifelong fear of water that he would only conquer many years later through structured swimming lessons.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Rohit Mehta, PhD Applied Linguistics, EFLU Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. The question rewards an answer that defines the keyword first, then narrates the misadventure with concrete textual detail, then closes by naming the long shadow it cast. Three moves, each anchored in a phrase from the text.

- *Define the keyword.* A "misadventure" is a mishap, a piece of bad luck, an accident. Douglas's choice of the word is deliberately understated; what actually happened was an assault that came within seconds of killing him.
- *Set the scene with two text-anchored coordinates.* The Y.M.C.A. pool at Yakima; age "ten or eleven". These two details establish setting and the boy's vulnerability in a single sentence.
- *The bully and his line.* The chapter does not soften the bully. He is "a big bruiser of about eighteen", and his greeting ("Hi, Skinny! How'd you like to be ducked?") is preserved on the page. A good answer keeps the line, because it lets the reader feel the casual cruelty.
- *The three descents.* Note the structural pattern of three. Douglas plans, fails, descends; plans again, fails, descends; plans again, fails, blacks out. The triadic structure is part of how the narrative builds dread.
- *The lifelong cost.* Close with the line that names the long shadow: "the haunting fear of the water followed me" from Maine to Oregon to the Cascades. The misadventure is therefore not a single moment but a wound that takes decades to heal.

Why this matters. The vocabulary of trauma in modern psychology comes from cases like this. A single event of less than five minutes generates a phobic response that lasts

decades and disables a particular environment (water) for the rest of the survivor's outdoor life. The chapter is, in literary terms, one of the earliest accessible accounts of what would later be called post-traumatic stress; the gentle word "misadventure" shows how survivors often understate what happened to them in order to survive the retelling.

Common mistakes.

- Confusing "misadventure" with a generic "adventure", and reading the question as asking about Douglas's swimming lessons. The misadventure is the cause, not the cure.
- Forgetting to identify the bully or his line.
- Treating the three descents as one descent. The chapter is careful to count: "I would be a cork . . . I came up slowly . . . I went down again . . . I came up a third time."
- Missing the wider effect: that the misadventure ruined fishing, canoeing and boating for years.

Final Answer: The misadventure is the near-drowning Douglas experienced at the Y.M.C.A. pool in Yakima at age ten or eleven, when a much bigger boy tossed him into the nine-foot deep end as a joke. He sank, tried three times to push off the bottom, swallowed water, and blacked out before being rescued. The few minutes of that event seeded a lifelong fear of water that ruined his canoeing, fishing and boating across five American states until, decades later, he hired an instructor and reconstructed himself into a swimmer.

Q 3.2 What were the series of emotions and fears that Douglas experienced when he was thrown into the pool? What plans did he make to come to the surface?

SOLUTION

Douglas's account of the few seconds between the toss and the blackout is one of the most precisely paced passages of fear in modern English prose. He freezes the experience into discrete frames, gives each frame an emotion or a plan, and lets the reader feel time stretching out. The question has two halves: the emotions in sequence and the plans he formed to come back to the surface.

☞ **Key sequence**

"A great big boy . . . tossed me into the deep end. I landed in a sitting position, swallowed water, and went at once to the bottom. I was frightened, but not yet frightened out of my wits."

- **First emotion: ordinary surprise, then frightened but not yet panicked.** On entering the water, Douglas writes, "I was frightened, but not yet frightened out of my wits." He is sinking, but his head is still working. This is the first frame.

- **First plan: the cork-and-paddle plan.** "On the way down I planned what I would do: I would make a big jump when I hit the bottom, come to the surface like a cork, lie flat on it, and paddle to the edge of the pool." The plan is touchingly logical; a child's version of physics.
- **Second emotion: hope as he rises.** "It seemed a long way down. Those nine feet were more like ninety . . . I came up slowly; I opened my eyes and saw nothing but water, water that had a dirty yellow tinge to it." The rising body feels the plan working.
- **First fear-spike: the surface refuses to give him air.** "I grew panicky. I reached up as if to grab a rope, and my hands clutched only at water. I was suffocating. I tried to yell, but no sound came out." Here panic begins.
- **Second descent: the planning mind tries again.** On the second descent Douglas plans a stronger jump: "This time it would be different. I would push hard enough . . . to get to the surface." Plans return even as fear rises.
- **Third emotion: pure terror.** "Stark terror took an even deeper hold on me, like a great charge of electricity. I shook and trembled with fright." This is the climax of fear; the chapter's word "terror" replaces "panic".
- **Third plan: a final push.** After the third descent Douglas tries one more time. "I came up. I sucked for air and got water. The yellowish light was going out. Then sheer, stark terror seized me, terror that knows no understanding, terror that knows no control, terror that no one can understand who has not experienced it."
- **Final state: stillness and blackout.** "And then all efforts ceased. I relaxed. Even my legs felt limp; and blackness swept over my brain. It wiped out fear; it wiped out terror. There was no more panic." Fear gives way to something Douglas describes as "quiet and peaceful", the last frame before the rescue.

☞ **Cinematic technique**

Notice how Douglas slows clock-time. The few seconds of falling expand into a sequence of frames, each with its own emotion and plan. Naming this technique (often called **cinematic prose** or **time dilation**) lifts the answer above plain narration.

Final Answer: The series of emotions runs: ordinary fright on entry; hope as Douglas rises with his cork-and-paddle plan; first panic when his hands clutch only water and no sound will come; stronger terror on the second descent, described as "a great charge of electricity"; final "sheer, stark terror" on the third; and at last a strange quiet stillness as a blackness sweeps over his brain. His plans, formed on each descent, were: (1) jump hard from the bottom, come up like a cork, lie flat, and paddle to the edge; (2) push harder this time and reach the surface; (3) push one last time and grab the air. Each plan failed in turn; the air refused to arrive, and the blackout came in place of the rescue.

☞ Exam Tip

For a five-mark answer, organise the response in two columns or two paragraphs: a sequence of emotions (fright, panic, terror, stillness) and a sequence of plans (cork-and-paddle, harder push, final push). Tying each emotion to the corresponding descent shows the marker that the student has read the chapter as a structured narrative, not as a single dramatic moment.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Aanya Sharma, MA English Literature, Lady Shri Ram College Delhi*

Strategic angle. Read the chapter's drowning paragraphs as three discrete frames separated by surfacings and sinkings. Each frame has its own emotion and its own plan. The five-mark answer earns full marks when it pairs frames with feelings and notes the way the planning mind keeps working long after most readers would expect it to.

- *Frame one (going down).* Emotion: fright, not yet panic. Plan: "come to the surface like a cork . . . and paddle to the edge".
- *Frame two (rising and falling back).* Emotion: the first panic, the moment hands clutch only water, the moment "no sound came out". Plan: harder push from the bottom, "this time it would be different".
- *Frame three (third descent).* Emotion: "stark terror" compared to "a great charge of electricity", "terror that no one can understand". Plan: one final push toward the air.
- *Frame four (the stillness).* Emotion: a strange quiet, "no more panic", "quiet and peaceful". No plan; effort has ceased. This frame is the medical sign of imminent drowning.
- *Pattern.* On every descent the planning mind builds a new plan; on every ascent the plan fails. The passage thus stages the slow erosion of a child's rational hope by the body's submersion. Naming that pattern in the answer is what turns a recital of events into literary criticism.

Why this matters. Douglas is showing that fear is not a single emotion but a sequence; that the rational mind continues to plan for surprisingly long even when the body is

failing; and that the final "quiet" state is itself the most dangerous moment. A reader who absorbs this lesson learns to recognise the difference between the early surface of panic (still worth fighting) and the strange peace before drowning (when the rescue must already have arrived).

Common mistakes.

- Listing only one emotion (fear) instead of the full gradient (fright, panic, terror, stillness).
- Mixing the plans into a single "he tried to come up". The chapter gives three distinct plans across three descents; the answer should preserve them.
- Stopping at the blackout without explaining its significance (it is not relief but the body surrendering).
- Failing to quote the chapter. The vivid words ("cork", "great charge of electricity", "quiet and peaceful") are what make Douglas's account unforgettable.

Final Answer: The emotions move in a sequence: ordinary fright on entry, hope while rising, the first panic when no sound and no breath come, "stark terror" compared to an electric charge on the second descent, "sheer, stark terror" on the third, and then a strange quiet stillness as blackness sweeps the brain. The plans, formed once per descent, are: (1) jump from the bottom and rise like a cork, then paddle to the edge; (2) push harder than the first time; (3) push one last time to break through to air. The structural pattern of frame-after-frame is itself the chapter's literary technique, and noting it earns the answer literary credit alongside comprehension credit.

Q 3.3 How did this experience affect him?

SOLUTION

The Y.M.C.A. misadventure left two kinds of mark on Douglas. The first was the immediate set of symptoms a boy of ten or eleven took home after a near-drowning. The second was the lifelong, generalised fear of water that the chapter calls a "haunting" and that disabled half the outdoor life he loved.

☞ **Key line**

"The terror that had seized me in the pool would come back ... My legs would become paralysed. Icy horror would grab my heart."

- **Immediate physical aftermath.** After the rescue Douglas "revived" and went home in a state of shock. "I shook for days. I avoided water whenever I could." He refused to identify the bully and said nothing about the incident to anyone for a long time.

- **Short-term loss: ordinary boyhood pleasures.** He avoided every pool, every lake. "A few years later when I came to know the waters of the Cascades, I wanted to get into them . . . But I never did. Whenever I did, the terror returned." Friends went fishing without him; he was forced to find pretexts not to swim, not to take a canoe out, not to wade.
- **Generalisation: every body of water became the Y.M.C.A. pool.** Douglas lists the geographies the fear followed him into: "In canoes on Maine lakes fishing for landlocked salmon, bass fishing in New Hampshire, trout fishing on the Deschutes and Metolius in Oregon, fishing for salmon on the Columbia, at Bumping Lake in the Cascades." Whatever the river, the same paralysis appeared.
- **Physical symptoms whenever water was near.** "My legs would become paralysed. Icy horror would grab my heart . . . I lost the joy of fishing and canoeing and boating." A childhood mishap had become an adult disability.
- **The cost to identity.** Douglas was an outdoorsman by temperament; rivers and mountains were his natural habitat. A fear of water did not merely close off one hobby; it amputated half his self. The chapter's title, *Deep Water*, is therefore double-edged: it names the place the fear started and the inner place where the fear lived for years.
- **The lifelong shadow until he conquered it.** "As years rolled on this fear of water grew rather than diminished." Self-help failed: "I used every way I knew to overcome this fear, but it held me firmly in its grip." Only the deliberate programme of swimming lessons described in the chapter's next sections, an instructor, five days a week, an hour a day, broke the hold, and even that took months of disciplined practice plus self-tests at Lake Wentworth and Warm Lake before Douglas could write, "I had conquered my fear of water."

✗ Do not confuse cause with cure

This question asks about the effect of the misadventure, not about how Douglas eventually cured himself. Mentioning the cure is fine in one sentence at the end, but the body of the answer should stay on the damage the experience did, not on the swimming lessons that fixed it.

Final Answer: The misadventure affected Douglas in two ways. In the short term it left him shaking for days, avoiding water whenever possible, and missing the canoeing, fishing and swimming his friends enjoyed. In the long term the fear generalised: every river and lake in five American states (Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, Washington, the Cascades) became a return of the Y.M.C.A. pool. "Icy horror would grab my heart"; his legs would paralyse; the joys of fishing and canoeing were lost. The fear "grew rather than diminished" with the years and was only broken decades later by months of deliberate swimming lessons and a final self-test at Warm Lake in the Cascades.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Karan Joshi, MA English, Hindu College Delhi*

Strategic angle. Split the answer into two clean halves: the immediate effect on the boy, and the lifelong effect on the adult. Each half deserves three or four concrete sentences.

- *The boy.* Shaking for days; avoidance of water; loss of the ordinary boyhood pleasures of pool, lake and pond; refusal to name the bully; the silent decision to live around the fear rather than confront it.
- *The adult.* The geography of the fear (Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, Washington); the physical symptoms (paralysed legs, icy heart); the cost to his identity as an outdoorsman; the failure of every self-help attempt.
- *The two faces of the chapter's title.* The Y.M.C.A. pool's deep end is the literal deep water; the inner place where the fear lived for years is the metaphorical one. The chapter title invites both readings.
- *The cure as evidence of the depth of the damage.* The fact that it took months of professional lessons plus self-tests at Lake Wentworth and Warm Lake to fix the fear is itself a measure of how deeply the misadventure had marked him.
- *The wider point.* Douglas treats the experience as a case study in how a single short trauma can disable a part of life for decades unless deliberately addressed. The conclusion of the chapter generalises this into a lesson on the difference between death and the fear of death.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader, the value of the chapter is that it shows the long shadow of a single bad event and the structured discipline needed to lift it. Anyone who carries a fear from childhood, of public speaking, of heights, of authority, of failure, can read Douglas as a template: a long shadow is not a permanent shadow; structured practice with a teacher can shorten it.

Common mistakes.

- Limiting the answer to short-term effects (shaking for days). The chapter's emphasis is on the lifelong shadow.
- Forgetting to list the specific geographies (Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, the

Columbia, Bumping Lake). The specifics show that the fear was generalised, not site-bound.

- Treating the cure as part of the effect. The cure is the next section of the chapter; mention it in one sentence at most.
- Reducing the answer to "he became afraid of water" without quoting the physical symptoms ("legs paralysed", "icy horror").

Final Answer: The misadventure affected Douglas first as a short shock (he shook for days, avoided water, missed boyhood swimming and fishing trips) and then as a long shadow: a generalised fear that followed him from the Y.M.C.A. pool to every lake, river and stream of his outdoor life, paralysing his legs and freezing his heart whenever water came close. The fear "grew rather than diminished" until he hired an instructor and rebuilt himself into a swimmer, and even that cure took months of practice and two further self-tests at Lake Wentworth and Warm Lake before he could write that he had finally conquered his fear of water.

Q 3.4 Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?

SOLUTION

Douglas's determination is grounded in two things he names directly in the extract: a long list of outdoor activities the fear was ruining, and the dignity-cost of being defeated by an irrational terror. The fear was not abstract; it had real, daily consequences on the life of a man who loved rivers, lakes and mountains.

☞ **Key lines**

"It ruined my fishing trips; deprived me of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming." … "I used every way I knew to overcome this fear, but it held me firmly in its grip."

- **The fear was actively ruining his outdoor life.** Douglas lists the specific water bodies on which the "haunting fear" returned: "In canoes on Maine lakes fishing for landlocked salmon, bass fishing in New Hampshire, trout fishing on the Deschutes and Metolius in Oregon, fishing for salmon on the Columbia, at Bumping Lake in the Cascades … wherever I went, the haunting fear of the water followed me." The cost was concrete: "it ruined my fishing trips; deprived me of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming."
- **Earlier efforts had failed.** "I used every way I knew to overcome this fear, but it held me firmly in its grip." Self-help had reached its limit; only structured instruction remained.
- **The fear had a triggering memory.** Whenever he waded the Tieton or bathed in

Warm Lake, "the terror that had seized me in the pool would come back . . . My legs would become paralysed. Icy horror would grab my heart." The physical symptoms (paralysis, racing heart) made even simple wading impossible.

- **He refused to live as a permanent prisoner of the Y.M.C.A. memory.** Douglas was a grown man, an outdoorsman by temperament; allowing one episode from age ten to keep him out of every lake in America was an unacceptable surrender. The determination is, at heart, a refusal to let the bully who threw him in win permanently.
- **The remedy he chose proves the depth of the determination.** "Finally, one October, I decided to get an instructor and learn to swim. I went to a pool and practised five days a week, an hour each day." Five hours of deliberate practice every week, for months, is not casual wish; it is sustained, costly resolve.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas was determined to get over his fear of water because the fear was actively ruining his outdoor life: it followed him from Maine to Oregon, paralysing him on canoes, fishing trips and lake bathes, and the methods he had tried by himself had failed. The depth of the determination is shown by the remedy he chose: five days a week, an hour a day, with a paid instructor, beginning "one October" and continuing into July of the following year.

☞ Exam Tip

For a clean answer name (i) the cost of the fear (ruined fishing, canoeing, boating), (ii) the failure of self-help, and (iii) the depth of the remedy (five days a week with an instructor). That triple converts a vague "he wanted to overcome fear" into a specific, exam-grade answer.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ananya Iyer, PhD English Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Quick reading. Notice how Douglas builds the case for his determination through accumulation, not argument. He does not say "I was determined"; he lists the places the fear had touched (Maine lakes, New Hampshire bass-fishing waters, the Deschutes, the Metolius, the Columbia, Bumping Lake), and lets the reader feel the geographical sweep of the problem.

- The list is deliberately wide: five states are named in a single paragraph. The fear is therefore not site-specific (Yakima Y.M.C.A.); it has generalised to every body of water he encounters. The determination is the only response proportionate to that scale.
- Douglas also makes the determination ethical, not just practical. "Icy horror would grab my heart" is the language of a man humiliated by his own nervous system. Overcoming the fear is a way of recovering self-respect.

- The decision is dated ("one October") and quantified ("five days a week, an hour each day"). Both details are signals to the reader that this is not a passing wish but a measurable programme.
- For Class 12 readers, the lesson is that determination is not a feeling but a schedule. Douglas demonstrates it by what he is willing to do every Monday through Friday, not by what he is willing to say about himself.
- Finally, the determination is connected to Douglas's larger life. He is an outdoorsman; rivers and mountains are his natural habitat. Letting one childhood mishap close off half of nature to him would have been the deepest possible loss for someone of his temperament.

Why this matters. For a young reader, the takeaway is that the strength of a resolve can be measured by the structure that backs it up. Hiring an instructor, fixing a five-day weekly schedule, accepting that the project will take months: these are the marks of serious, mature determination. Saying "I will overcome my fear" is cheap; accepting hours of weekly discomfort, month after month, is what makes the resolve real, and Douglas's account quietly teaches the difference. A useful diagnostic for any reader's own resolutions is to ask whether they have a structure like Douglas's: a place to show up, a frequency to keep, a teacher or coach to be accountable to, and a timeline measured in months rather than days.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas was determined to get over his fear of water because the fear, traceable to the Y.M.C.A. near-drowning, had generalised to every river and lake he loved, was ruining his life as an outdoorsman, and had defeated every self-help attempt. He proved the depth of his determination by hiring a professional instructor and committing to five hours of practice every week from October onwards, a measured programme rather than a vague resolution.

Q 3.5 How did the instructor "build a swimmer" out of Douglas?

SOLUTION

The phrase "build a swimmer" is Douglas's own. He uses it to capture the instructor's method: not a single miracle session but a step-by-step assembly of separate skills, each practised until automatic, then **integrated** into a whole. The verb "build" is the key: the instructor treats swimming as a structure made of independent parts that have to be put together in the right order.

☞ **Stage by stage**

List the stages in the exact order Douglas gives them. The order matters: each stage builds on the previous one.

- **Stage 1: the rope and pulley.** "The instructor put a belt around me. A rope attached to the belt went through a pulley that ran on an overhead cable. He held on to the end of the rope, and we went back and forth, back and forth across the pool, hour after hour, day after day, week after week." The pulley let the instructor catch the boy at any moment, giving him safety without removing the experience of being in deep water. This stage lasted about three months, until "the tension began to slack".
- **Stage 2: face under, exhale; nose up, inhale.** "Then he taught me to put my face under water and exhale, and to raise my nose and inhale." This trains the single most counter-instinctive skill in swimming, exhaling into water, by isolating it from every other motion. "I repeated the exercise hundreds of times. Bit by bit I shed part of the panic that seized me when my head went under water."
- **Stage 3: legs only.** "Next he held me at the side of the pool and had me kick with my legs. For weeks I did just that. At first my legs refused to work. But they gradually relaxed; and finally I could command them." The instructor held the upper body still so the entire attention could go to the kick.
- **Stage 4: piece-by-piece assembly.** "Thus, piece by piece, he built a swimmer. And when he had perfected each piece, he put them together into an integrated whole." The separate skills (breath, kick, arm pull, body position) are practised in isolation and then combined.
- **Stage 5: the test dive.** "In April he said, 'Now you can swim. Dive off and swim the length of the pool, crawl stroke.' " This is the controlled hand-off: the instructor releases the swimmer only after every component is reliable.
- **Stage 6: the instructor is finished.** "I did. The instructor was finished." Notice the modesty of the sentence: the instructor's job ends with a competent student, not with a celebration. The work has been transferred from teacher to learner.

Final Answer: The instructor built a swimmer out of Douglas through a six-month, six-stage programme: a rope-and-pulley belt to take him back and forth across the pool for three months; then exhale-under, inhale-up breathing; then kicking only; then the assembly of all separate pieces (breath, kick, stroke, body position) into "an integrated whole"; then the test dive of crawl stroke down the length of the pool in April. "Piece by piece, he built a swimmer" is Douglas's own summary of the method.

♥ Why This Matters

The instructor's approach is a small classic of skilled teaching: break a complex skill into independent parts, isolate each part for deliberate practice, then re-assemble. Notice it in Douglas's language ("piece by piece . . . integrated whole") and you will see why this paragraph is so often quoted in writing on pedagogy and on overcoming fear.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Arjun Mehra, MA English, Delhi University*

Structural observation. Read the building process as four ascending levels of trust: trust in the rope, trust in the breath, trust in the legs, and finally trust in the integrated body. Each level is achieved by isolating a single source of anxiety and practising it alone until the anxiety dies.

- *Rope-and-pulley level.* The fear here is of sinking; the instructor neutralises it with the overhead cable. The student can panic; the rope cannot. Three months of this teaches the body that the deep end is no longer fatal.
- *Breath level.* The fear here is of inhaling water. The instructor isolates exhale-under and inhale-up from every other motion, so that the breath cycle becomes automatic before any limb motion is added.
- *Leg level.* The fear here is of paralysis. Douglas recalls that his legs "refused to work" at first, exactly as they had in the near-drowning. The instructor breaks that learned paralysis by anchoring the upper body and asking only the legs to move, until "finally I could command them."
- *Integration level.* Once breath, kick and arm motion are each reliable, the instructor combines them. "Piece by piece, he built a swimmer. And when he had perfected each piece, he put them together into an integrated whole." This is the engineering of a swimmer, not the inspiration of one.
- *Independence level.* "Now you can swim. Dive off and swim the length of the pool, crawl stroke." The instructor's last act is to declare the student finished. The pedagogy is honoured precisely by ending.

Why this matters. For Class 12 readers, this paragraph is an extremely clear case of **deliberate practice**: small units, high repetition, expert feedback, gradual integration. The phrase "piece by piece" is what makes the method visible; mastering anything difficult (a sport, an instrument, a board paper) involves the same architecture. Douglas's instructor is doing in six months what a swimming coach today might describe as "drill-based learning with progressive load", and the structure is so widely applicable that the same paragraph could be re-written for any motor skill: piano, batting, driving, public speaking. That transferability is precisely why this passage gets quoted so often outside its original swimming context.

Final Answer: The instructor used a step-by-step method: rope-and-pulley crossings of the pool for three months to defeat the fear of sinking; isolated breathing practice to overcome the fear of inhaling water; isolated kicking to break learned paralysis in the legs; integration of breath, kick and stroke into "an integrated whole"; and a final crawl-stroke test in April. The whole programme is a textbook example of deliberate practice, and Douglas's own phrase "piece by piece, he built a swimmer" is the neatest summary of the method.

Q 3.6 How did Douglas make sure that he conquered the old terror?

SOLUTION

Once the instructor declared him finished, Douglas did not trust the lab result; he wanted a field test. He took the recovered skill into progressively harder, more open waters until he was sure the fear had no hidden corner left. **Validation under conditions of risk** is the principle: a fear is conquered only when it has been tested in the very setting that first produced it.

☞ **The three tests**

Test 1: the pool, alone ("swam the length up and down").
Test 2: Lake Wentworth, New Hampshire ("swam two miles across the lake").
Test 3: Warm Lake in the Cascades ("dived into the lake, and swam across to the other shore and back").

- **Test 1: alone in the pool.** "I still wondered if I would be terror-stricken when I was alone in the pool. I tried it. I swam the length up and down." Even now "tiny vestiges of the old terror would return", but he confronted them by speaking back: "Trying to scare me, eh? Well, here's to you! Look!" Talking down the terror was part of the cure.
- **Test 2: Lake Wentworth crossing.** "So I went to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire, dived off a dock at Triggs Island, and swam two miles across the lake to Stamp Act Island." He used every stroke he had learned: "the crawl, breast stroke, side stroke, and back stroke." The terror returned only once, in the middle of the lake, when he looked down at "nothing but bottomless water". He laughed it off: "Well, Mr Terror, what do you think you can do to me?" It fled.
- **Test 3: Warm Lake, the symbolic site.** Still carrying "residual doubts", Douglas hurried west, climbed through the Tieton and Conrad Meadows up to Meade Glacier, and camped beside Warm Lake, the same lake whose waters had earlier "brought back the terror". "The next morning I stripped, dived into the lake, and swam across to the other shore and back, just as Doug Corpron used to do. I shouted with joy, and

Gilbert Peak returned the echo. I had conquered my fear of water."

- **The principle.** Each test took place in a setting more like the original trauma than the last: from supervised pool, to inhabited New Hampshire lake, to a high, remote glacial lake in the Cascades. Only after the hardest setting produced no terror did Douglas declare the fear conquered.
- **The verbal step.** Notice that Douglas keeps addressing the terror as a separate being: "Mr Terror", "trying to scare me, eh?". Naming the fear as an opponent and speaking back to it is part of the conquest.

Final Answer: Douglas made sure he had conquered the old terror by running three increasingly difficult field tests: swimming the pool alone, swimming two miles across Lake Wentworth using every stroke he had learned, and finally diving into Warm Lake in the Cascades, the very kind of remote glacial water that used to trigger his terror. Only after Warm Lake, where "Gilbert Peak returned the echo" of his shout of joy, did he write, "I had conquered my fear of water."

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to stop at the pool test or even at the Lake Wentworth crossing. Douglas himself does not stop there; he explicitly says, "Yet I had residual doubts", and goes to Warm Lake. The Warm Lake hike must appear in the answer for it to be complete, because it is the test that the author trusts.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Kavita Rao, MPhil Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University*

Strategic angle. Read the three tests as a journey from the most controlled to the least controlled body of water. The pool is enclosed and walled; Lake Wentworth is open but domesticated, with docks and named islands; Warm Lake is high, glacial, remote, and carries the personal memory of Doug Corpron's crossings. Douglas's narrative arc is a deliberate climb up this ladder of openness.

- *Controlled water:* the pool alone. Same walls, same tiles, same depth as in his training, but no instructor. This first test isolates the variable of being alone.
- *Open water with markers:* Lake Wentworth. Two miles, every stroke, named landmarks (Triggs Island to Stamp Act Island). Open water tests visibility, depth and stamina; the named geography offers psychological anchors.
- *Wild water at altitude:* Warm Lake in the Cascades, reached by a hike through Conrad Meadows and Meade Glacier. No dock, no instructor, no spectator. Diving in "as Doug Corpron used to do" folds in a piece of his Yakima boyhood: the lake he had been afraid of as a child is now the lake where he proves the fear gone.
- *Each test passes a tighter gate.* Pool: "tiny vestiges of the old terror". Wentworth: "only

once did the terror return . . . It fled and I swam on." Warm Lake: "I had conquered my fear of water." The tests do not just succeed; they succeed against a progressively higher threshold.

- *The verbal weapon.* At each stage Douglas addresses the fear as an interlocutor ("trying to scare me, eh?", "Well, Mr Terror, what do you think you can do to me?"), a technique recognisable today as cognitive distancing. Naming the fear converts it from a possession into an opponent that can be answered.

Why this matters. For Class 12 readers, the three-test structure is itself the lesson: certifying that a fear is gone requires the discipline to seek out the conditions that originally produced it and to survive them in full sight. The shout of joy at Gilbert Peak is the audible proof that the work is done. A practical reading also helps: this is exactly the protocol used in modern exposure therapy, which exposes a patient first to mild, controlled forms of the feared stimulus and then to progressively more demanding ones until the conditioned fear extinguishes. The Class 12 reader who notices the parallel sees how a 1950s autobiographical paragraph quietly anticipates contemporary clinical practice.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas made sure he had conquered the old terror by testing the new swimming skill in three settings of increasing difficulty: the pool alone, a two-mile open-water crossing of Lake Wentworth using all four strokes, and finally a dive into Warm Lake in the Cascades, the very kind of glacial water that used to trigger him. The shout that "Gilbert Peak returned" is the moment he certifies the conquest. The three-test ladder is itself the lesson on how a fear is really put down.

Understanding the text

Q 3.7 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.

SOLUTION

Douglas conveys the panic through **sensory writing**: sight (yellow water, dark water), touch (tiles under toes), kinaesthesia (paralysed legs, frozen screams), sound (pounding head, silenced shrieks), and a tight cadence of short sentences that mimic shallow, frightened breathing. The description is vivid because it is not told from outside the experience; it is rendered from inside it, second by second.

☞ **Three layers of vividness**

Group the techniques: (i) bodily symptoms, (ii) visual detail, (iii) sentence rhythm. Use one quotation per layer.

- **Bodily symptoms named precisely.** The panic is anchored in the body: "my lungs were ready to burst"; "my lungs ached, my head throbbed. I was getting dizzy"; "my legs hung as dead weights, paralysed and rigid"; "my arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move." Each symptom is given a verb, so the reader can feel the progression from breathlessness to dizziness to total paralysis.
- **Visual detail of the underwater world.** Douglas gives the water a colour: "nothing but water, water that had a dirty yellow tinge to it" and later "dark water that one could not see through." The yellow tinge is what makes the scene memorable; it is not generic "deep water" but a specific, slightly polluted municipal pool, seen by a child's frightened eyes.
- **Internal monologue and planning.** The narration gives us the thoughts that ran through his head: "When my feet hit the bottom, I would make a big jump, come to the surface, lie flat on it, and paddle to the edge of the pool." The reader is therefore not watching a child drown; the reader is inside the child's calculations as they fail one after another.
- **Repetition of the word 'terror'.** Douglas piles up the word in a famous triplet: "sheer, stark terror seized me, terror that knows no understanding, terror that knows no control, terror that no one can understand who has not experienced it." The triple anaphora does the emotional work of an alarm bell: each repetition of 'terror' raises the pitch.
- **Short, choppy sentences.** "Nothing but water. A mass of yellow water held me . . . My arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move. I tried to call for help, to call for mother. Nothing happened." The sentences shorten as the panic peaks; the prose rhythm itself becomes breathless.
- **The metaphor of the long descent.** "Those nine feet were more like ninety." Douglas distorts the objective measurement to match the subjective experience. A nine-foot drop felt ninety feet long; this single line captures the way fear stretches time.
- **The journey-back-to-the-bottom image.** "I had started on the long journey back to the bottom of the pool" makes the second descent feel epic, as if the boy were dying in stages. The word "journey" is what makes it literary instead of clinical.

Final Answer: Douglas makes the panic vivid by writing it from inside the body: he names the precise bodily symptoms (lungs bursting, legs as dead weights, throbbing head), gives the pool water a specific dirty-yellow colour, gives us his failing internal calculations, repeats the word *terror* in a famous triple, shortens his sentences so the prose becomes breathless, and uses distortions of scale ("nine feet were more like ninety") to match the subjective experience. The cumulative effect is that the reader feels the panic rather than merely hearing about it.

♥ Why This Matters

This question is a small workout in close reading. The marker is looking for a student who can name the techniques, not just feel the effect. Use phrases like "triple repetition", "short sentence rhythm" and "sensory detail" to make the analysis visible; back each with one short quotation.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Meenakshi Pillai, PhD American Literature, University of Delhi*

Strategic angle. Douglas is not writing a memoir of swimming; he is writing the experience of nearly dying. The literary task is to put a reader who has never almost drowned inside the body of a child who almost did. The prose makes the unfamiliar experience available by translating it into familiar sensations: a throbbing head, a held breath, a stretched second.

- *Time dilation.* Fear stretches subjective time. The line "those nine feet were more like ninety" is the clearest single instance: an objective measurement becomes a felt measurement. Douglas teaches the reader, through that ratio, exactly how time runs in the moments before you think you will die.
- *The yellow.* The pool water's "dirty yellow tinge" is a small but striking specificity. We expect drowning water to be either generic "blue" or "black"; the yellow is the colour of a slightly old, slightly soiled municipal pool. The detail is exact enough to be believable and uncommon enough to be memorable.
- *The triplet on terror.* "Terror that knows no understanding, terror that knows no control, terror that no one can understand who has not experienced it." The triple is rhetorically marked: it lifts the prose from memoir to oration. The reader is being told that this is not an ordinary scare; this is the kind that splits a life into before and after.
- *The collapse into the body.* The high point of the panic is not a thought but a paralysis: "my arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move. I tried to call for help, to call for mother. Nothing happened." The prose strips away every adjective and runs on subject-verb-object only, like a list of failures. The grammar mirrors the helplessness.
- *The cry to mother.* The detail of trying "to call for mother" is what makes the scene a child's, not an adult's. In one phrase, Douglas places the reader back in the body of a

ten-year-old, where the last resort against death is still mother. The choice of word is what makes the description tender as well as terrifying.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader, the value of analysing this passage is double: you learn what a near-drowning feels like, and you learn how prose creates that feeling. Naming the techniques (time dilation, sensory specificity, triplet repetition, grammatical stripping, the mother detail) is what turns a moved reader into a critical reader. The pattern transfers to any vivid description in literature: when a passage is doing strong sensory work, ask which senses are being used, which rhythm the sentences carry, and which single specific detail (here, the yellow tinge) anchors the whole scene in memory. Once you train the eye to spot these moves, you can rewrite the same analysis for the storm scene in *We're Not Afraid to Die*, or the fire scene in any number of memoirs, with the same toolkit.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas makes the panic vivid by combining time dilation ("nine feet were more like ninety"), specific sensory detail ("dirty yellow tinge" to the water), grammatical stripping ("My arms wouldn't move. My legs wouldn't move"), rhetorical triplets ("terror that knows no understanding . . . "), and the single tender detail of trying to "call for mother". The reader is put inside a ten-year-old's body and given a near-death experience second by second.

Q 3.8 How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

SOLUTION

The chapter answers this question in two parts. First, Douglas hires an instructor and follows a structured, months-long programme of graded practice in a pool. Second, he tests the new skill against progressively harder open waters until the fear has nowhere left to hide. **Graded exposure** plus **deliberate practice** is the recipe.

> ☞ **Two halves of the answer**
>
> Half 1: the instructor phase (October to April). Half 2: the self-testing phase (April to the next summer, ending at Warm Lake). Always show both halves; an answer that stops at the pool is incomplete.

- **The decision to seek help.** "I used every way I knew to overcome this fear, but it held me firmly in its grip. Finally, one October, I decided to get an instructor and learn to swim." Self-help had failed; the breakthrough is the willingness to be taught.
- **The pool programme: hours per week.** "I went to a pool and practised five days a week, an hour each day." The hours add up: roughly twenty hours a month, for at least six months. The fear is met not with bravery but with attendance.

- **The rope-and-pulley method.** For three months the instructor took him "back and forth, back and forth across the pool". The rope let the boy panic without sinking; the panic gradually slackened.
- **Isolated skills.** Once the gross fear of deep water was reduced, the instructor isolated the parts of swimming: face-under exhale, kicking, body position. Each piece was practised hundreds of times until automatic.
- **Assembly and certification.** The pieces were put together "into an integrated whole". In April the instructor said, "Now you can swim. Dive off and swim the length of the pool, crawl stroke." The pool phase ends with a clean hand-off.
- **Self-testing.** Douglas did not stop at the instructor's permission. He swam the pool alone, then Lake Wentworth (two miles, four strokes), then climbed to Warm Lake in the Cascades. The terror returned in tiny amounts during the first two tests; at Warm Lake it was gone. "I shouted with joy, and Gilbert Peak returned the echo. I had conquered my fear of water."
- **The verbal tactic running through both halves.** Douglas keeps speaking back to the terror. "Trying to scare me, eh? Well, here's to you! Look!" ... "Well, Mr Terror, what do you think you can do to me?" Naming the fear as an opponent and answering it is part of the cure.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas overcame his fear of water in two phases. First, he hired a swimming instructor and practised five days a week for roughly six months, working through a graded programme of rope-and- pulley crossings, isolated breathing, isolated kicking, and final integration into a crawl-stroke length in April. Second, he self-tested the new skill in increasingly difficult open waters: the pool alone, a two-mile crossing of Lake Wentworth using all four strokes, and finally a dive into Warm Lake in the Cascades, where his shout of joy returned as an echo from Gilbert Peak. Sustained instruction plus graded self-testing is the full recipe.

☞ Exam Tip

This is a stock board-paper question. Two-phase structure is the mark: pool phase + open-water testing phase. Inside each phase name two concrete details (rope-and-pulley + isolated drills for the first; Wentworth crossing + Warm Lake dive for the second). Anything less reads as half an answer.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Rohit Banerjee, MA English, University of Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. The conquest of fear in this extract is both a swimming story and a model of how any large fear can be disassembled. Douglas's two-phase structure (skill-building in controlled conditions, then exposure in increasingly real conditions) is

recognisable today as the architecture of exposure therapy.

- Pool phase, as deliberate practice. Twenty hours a month is comparable to what modern coaches recommend for intermediate-level skill acquisition. The number is not glamorous; it is just enough, sustained for long enough.
- Pool phase, as motor learning. The pieces (breath, kick, stroke, body position) are isolated so they can be over-learned. Once each is automatic, attention can be spent on the integration rather than on remembering each one. This is exactly how complex motor skills are taught across domains: musical instruments, sports, surgical technique.
- Open-water phase, as exposure. The three tests rise in difficulty: empty pool, populated lake, remote glacial lake. The principle is to step outside the safety of the learning environment in measured increments.
- Open-water phase, as identity recovery. Warm Lake was the kind of water that used to trigger Douglas's symptoms. By swimming across it "just as Doug Corpron used to do", he ties the conquest back to a childhood self that admired Doug Corpron's example. The conquest is not just over fear but over the part of him that had been small in the pool.
- Cognitive tactic, throughout. Talking back to the fear, naming it as "Mr Terror", is a small but persistent verbal habit. Modern psychology calls this cognitive distancing: by addressing the fear as a separate being, the sufferer takes its power away.

Why this matters. Douglas's account is so often cited because it is, in effect, an early autobiographical case study in how to defeat a phobia. The two-phase structure he uses (build the skill in safety, then test the skill in risk) is exactly the structure recommended by clinical psychologists today. The ten-year-old who almost drowned is rescued, decades later, by an instructor's curriculum and the man's own discipline. That this self-rescue is also a literary memoir is part of what makes the chapter teach so well: a reader gets a working model of how to defeat a fear and a beautiful piece of prose in the same six pages.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas overcame his fear by combining six months of graded pool training under an instructor (rope-and-pulley, isolated breathing, isolated kicking, integration, crawl-stroke test in April) with a self-administered ladder of open-water exposure (the pool alone, then a two-mile crossing of Lake Wentworth using all four strokes, then a dive into Warm Lake in the Cascades). Skill in safety, then exposure to risk: that is the full recipe.

Q 3.9 Why does Douglas as an adult recount a childhood experience of terror and his conquering of it? What larger meaning does he draw from this experience?

SOLUTION

Douglas recounts the episode because the experience taught him something he wants to pass on: a working relationship with the fear of death. The larger meaning he draws is philosophical and is stated openly in the closing paragraphs of the extract, including the Roosevelt quotation that is the spine of the whole essay.

> ☞ **Key lines**
>
> "In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death, as Roosevelt knew when he said, 'All we have to fear is fear itself.' " ... "At last I felt released, free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear."

- **Why an adult tells a childhood story.** The instructional value is only available in hindsight. Douglas the man can see what Douglas the boy could not: that the terror in the pool was a usable rehearsal for every later fear in life. The adult voice is needed to draw the lesson.
- **The first larger meaning: peace lies in death, terror lies in the fear of death.** "In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death." Douglas is making a distinction that is older than him: it is the fear of dying, not death itself, that does the damage. The near-drowning taught him this directly.
- **The second larger meaning: Roosevelt's line.** "All we have to fear is fear itself." Roosevelt said this in his 1933 First Inaugural to a Depression-era America. Douglas applies it to private experience: fear is the only enemy worth defeating, because fear is what amplifies every other danger.
- **The third larger meaning: the will to live grows sharper after a brush with death.** "Because I had experienced both the sensation of dying and the terror that fear of it can produce, the will to live somehow grew in intensity." Survivors are not necessarily more anxious afterwards; they are often more vivid. The brush with death intensifies the appetite for life.
- **The fourth larger meaning: release, the trails and the peaks.** The essay ends with movement: "At last I felt released, free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear." The metaphor of walking trails and climbing peaks turns the conquest of fear into a permission slip for the rest of life. Notice how the language of movement closes a chapter that began with paralysis.
- **The didactic purpose.** The essay is in a school textbook because the lesson is transferable. Any reader who has a fear, of exams, of public speaking, of social rejection, of failure, can read this paragraph as a general protocol: confront the fear, work through it under guidance, test the recovery, and live the bigger life that becomes possible afterwards.

Final Answer: Douglas as an adult recounts the childhood near-drowning because the episode taught him to distinguish death (peaceful) from the fear of death (terrifying), and that distinction is the foundation of every later courage in his life. The larger meaning is stated in three lines from the extract: "In death there is peace. There is terror only in the fear of death"; Roosevelt's "All we have to fear is fear itself"; and the closing release, "free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear." The childhood story is told so that the reader can borrow the same protocol for any later fear.

♥ Why This Matters

For Class 12 boards, this is the philosophical question of the chapter. Quote Roosevelt's line and the closing trails-and-peaks sentence; both are signature lines that markers expect. Without them the answer reads as merely descriptive.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Saira Khan, PhD American Studies, Aligarh Muslim University*

Strategic angle. Douglas the Justice (he served on the US Supreme Court longer than anyone in its history) is writing in the genre of **lesson-memoir**: an episode from one's own life told so that strangers can learn from it. The form has roots in Marcus Aurelius and in Gandhi's *Story of My Experiments with Truth*; Douglas's version is brisker and more practical.

- The recounting separates two things that beginners often confuse: dying and the fear of dying. The first is a biological event over which we have little control; the second is a psychological response which can be retrained. Douglas's whole essay is the demonstration of this retraining.
- The Roosevelt line lifts the personal story into political and historical company. Roosevelt was addressing a country terrified by economic collapse; Douglas is addressing a boy terrified by a pool. By using the same line, Douglas is saying that the fear-amplifies-everything principle applies at every scale, from a Depression to a Y.M.C.A. deep end.
- The closing sentence ("free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear") is the most quoted in the chapter. Notice the verbs: walk, climb, brush aside. Action verbs of motion. The end of the essay is the opposite of the beginning, where the legs would not work. The arc is from paralysis to motion.
- The didactic frame is gentle, not preachy. Douglas does not say "you should overcome your fears"; he says, "This is what I did and what I learned." The reader is left free to translate the protocol into their own setting. That openness is part of why the essay is on the syllabus year after year: each new cohort of Class 12 students finds its own fear in it.

- For a Class 12 answer at the higher end, draw out the link between the form (lesson-memoir) and the content (lesson about fear). The essay teaches by telling a story, not by lecturing, which is itself a lesson about how humans actually learn.

Why this matters. For a young reader staring down board exams or the next chapter of their life, this question is unusually direct: what does one do with fear? Douglas's answer is specific. Confront it under guidance; train through it; test it in real conditions; and afterwards walk the trails you were too afraid to walk before. The recounting exists so that this protocol is available to anyone who reads the chapter. The lesson is portable across domains because the protocol is generic; only the names of the trails change.

> **Final Answer:** Douglas the adult recounts the boyhood near-drowning to distinguish death (peaceful) from the fear of death (terrifying), to ground Roosevelt's "All we have to fear is fear itself" in a concrete personal experience, and to model the protocol by which any reader might convert their own paralysis into motion. The closing line, "free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear", is the chapter's gift to the reader: a permission slip earned by working through one specific fear, made available now to any fear at all.

Talking about the text

Q 3.10 **"All we have to fear is fear itself." Have you ever had a fear that you have now overcome? Share your experience with your partner.**

SOLUTION

The exercise is reflective and open-ended. The job is to apply the chapter's protocol (confront, train, test, live) to a personal fear of your own, briefly and honestly. A strong answer names a specific fear, names the trigger, names the graded steps taken to overcome it, and ends with the small change in life that the conquest made possible. Below is a sample answer in the first person, of the kind a Class 12 student might write.

> ☞ **Structure for your own answer**
>
> (i) Name the fear and the moment it started; (ii) describe what the fear cost you; (iii) describe the help or the small steps that moved you forward; (iv) describe the test that proved the fear gone; (v) end with what you can now do that you could not before.

- **The fear.** I had a strong fear of speaking in front of an audience. It began in Class 6 when I forgot my lines in the school annual play and the auditorium laughed. After that, even small classroom presentations made my hands shake and my mouth go dry.
- **The cost.** For three years I avoided every opportunity to speak. I never volunteered

for class debates, never read aloud in English period, and turned down a chance to host an inter-house quiz. The fear was small but it was actively shrinking my school life.

- **The help.** In Class 9 my English teacher took me aside and proposed a graded plan, just like Douglas's instructor. First I had to read aloud to her, alone, twice a week. Then I had to read aloud in a group of three. Then I had to make a one-minute presentation to the class on a familiar topic (my favourite book). Each step was small enough that I could manage it.
- **The test.** By Class 10 I anchored the school's Republic Day function in front of three hundred people. My hands still shook for the first two sentences, but then the practice took over. I finished the script, improvised one joke, and got off the stage with a steadier pulse than I expected.
- **The afterward.** Today I still get nervous before any speech, but the nervousness has become a working partner, not a paralyser. I run for class representative, speak in the morning assembly, and answer in board-style viva sessions without freezing. Like Douglas after Warm Lake, I can now walk into rooms that used to be closed to me.

> **Final Answer:** (Sample first-person reply.) The author had a public- speaking fear that began with a school-play incident in Class 6 and shut down classroom and stage participation for three years. A graded plan led by a teacher, reading aloud one-to-one, then in a small group, then to the class, then to an auditorium, gradually defeated it. The fear has not vanished; it has become manageable. The Roosevelt line is borne out: the fear of speaking, not speaking itself, was the real opponent.

☞ Exam Tip

The exercise is open-ended, but the marker still wants structure: name the fear, name the trigger, name the steps, name the test, name the after. A vague "I was afraid and then I was not" loses the marks the exercise is designed to test.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Naveen Pillai, MA Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences*

Strategic angle. Notice that Douglas's protocol maps onto almost any fear a Class 12 student is likely to share with a partner: speaking in public, swimming, riding a cycle on a busy road, climbing heights, sitting an exam, even social conversations. The technique is the same; only the names of the trails change.

- Many adolescent fears have a specific trigger episode (a fall, a public mistake, a panic during an exam). Naming the trigger is itself a step in the conquest, because it converts a vague dread into a known event.

- The cost of avoidance is usually larger than the cost of confrontation. Three years of avoiding the stage cost me far more friendships and opportunities than two months of graded practice ever did. Douglas's adult observation that the fear "ruined my fishing trips; deprived me of the joy of canoeing, boating, and swimming" is the same observation in adult form.
- Graded steps require a guide. Douglas had the instructor; the student in the sample answer had her English teacher. Almost no major fear is overcome alone. Asking for help is the move that makes the protocol available.
- The test should be slightly bigger than the worst trigger. Douglas tested himself at Warm Lake, harder than the Y.M.C.A. pool. The sample student tested herself at a Republic Day function in front of three hundred, larger than the Class 6 play that produced the fear. The test is the certification.
- The afterward is the proof. The recovered swimmer fishes again, the recovered speaker hosts again, the recovered cyclist commutes again. The fear has been replaced not by fearlessness but by ordinary, working ability.

Why this matters. The exercise asks for personal experience, but the marker rewards the student who can frame the personal experience inside the chapter's protocol. Share a real story; analyse it in Douglas's terms. The sample answer is a template, not the only correct response; the student should replace the specific fear and the specific steps with their own. The structural points (trigger, cost, graded steps, test, afterward) carry across to any fear; the content is personal.

> **Final Answer:** The exercise asks for a personal first-person account of a fear overcome. Strong replies follow Douglas's protocol: name the fear and its trigger, count the cost of avoidance, describe the graded steps and any help, describe the test that certified the conquest, and end with what is now possible. The Roosevelt line is the chapter's spine, and a good answer plants its own life on the same spine.

Q 3.11 Find and narrate other stories about conquest of fear and what people have said about courage. For example, you can recall Nelson Mandela's struggle for freedom and the story *We're Not Afraid To Die* from Class XI.

SOLUTION

The exercise asks students to read Douglas's account against a tradition: other lives, both Indian and global, in which fear has been confronted and named. Three or four examples, each developed briefly, do the job better than a long unannotated list.

☞ How to pick examples

Choose at least one from the textbook (Mandela, or the Class XI chapter *We're Not Afraid To Die*), one from Indian history (Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Kalpana Chawla), and one from contemporary life (sports, exploration, public service). Spread your examples across kinds of fear: physical, political, existential.

- **Nelson Mandela.** In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela writes, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." Twenty-seven years in prison, much of it on Robben Island, did not erase his fear of failure or of dying without seeing a free South Africa; it taught him to walk past the fear and continue the work.
- ***We're Not Afraid To Die . . . If We Can All Be Together* (Class XI, Gordon Cook & Alan East).** A family on a year-long voyage from England to New Zealand meets a 50-foot wave in the southern Indian Ocean. The boat is half-sunk, the children are injured. Six-year-old Jonathan says the line that gives the chapter its title. The parents' calm, their bailing for thirty-six hours without sleep, and the children's quiet courage are an instance of fear named and worked through together.
- **Mahatma Gandhi.** In *An Autobiography* Gandhi recalls a childhood fear of ghosts, snakes and the dark, cured slowly through reciting Ramanama (the name of Rama) on his nurse Rambha's advice. Decades later, he writes, the same technique, naming the fear and answering it with prayer, helped him face crowds, prisons and assassination threats. The book is full of small private conquests of fear that prepared him for the public ones.
- **Helen Keller.** In *The Story of My Life* Keller describes the years of frustration before her teacher Anne Sullivan broke through her blind-deaf isolation. The fear of being permanently shut out from language was real; Sullivan's slow, hand-spelling exposure was an early form of the kind of graded instruction Douglas would later get in a swimming pool. "Although the world is full of suffering," Keller wrote, "it is also full of the overcoming of it."
- **Kalpana Chawla.** The first Indian-born woman in space had to push past the very real fear of catastrophic failure that every astronaut carries. Her own words, "You are just your intelligence . . . you can be anywhere if you have a dream and the courage to follow it", echo Douglas's after-Warm-Lake feeling that the trails and the peaks are now open.
- **Famous lines on courage.** Roosevelt's "All we have to fear is fear itself" (1933 Inaugural). Mark Twain's "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear." Maya Angelou's "Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practise any other virtue consistently." Rabindranath Tagore's prayer in *Gitanjali*: "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high . . . into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

Final Answer: Examples include Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom* ("courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it"), the family in the Class XI chapter *We're Not Afraid To Die* who bail their boat for thirty-six hours after a storm, Gandhi's childhood ghost-fear cured by Ramanama, Helen Keller's emergence from sensory isolation under Anne Sullivan, and Kalpana Chawla's quiet courage in space. Famous lines on courage range from Roosevelt's "All we have to fear is fear itself" to Tagore's "Where the mind is without fear". Each instance shows fear confronted under structure, not avoided.

♥ Why This Matters

This exercise is also an invitation to read across the curriculum. The Class XI chapter *We're Not Afraid To Die*, Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (which is itself elsewhere in Class 12 Flamingo), and Gandhi's autobiography are not mentioned by accident: the textbook is building a network of fear-conquest stories that you are expected to recognise.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Aditya Banerjee, MA English, Presidency University Kolkata*

Strategic angle. Notice that the textbook itself points you to two of the strongest examples (Mandela, and the Class XI *We're Not Afraid To Die*). A high-mark answer treats these two as the spine and then adds one or two more drawn from outside the textbook to show breadth of reading.

- *Mandela's distinction* ("courage is not the absence of fear"). This is the single most quotable line on courage in the Class 12 corpus. Pair it with Roosevelt's line from Douglas: together they form a small, balanced philosophy. Roosevelt says the enemy is fear; Mandela says the victory is over fear, not without it.
- *The Class XI seafaring family.* Use it to show that ordinary, non-public people also conquer fear. The family's thirty-six hour bailing operation in the Indian Ocean shows the protocol working at a domestic, parental scale. Pair it with Douglas's pool: both are about ordinary lives confronting extraordinary fear.
- *An Indian historical example.* Gandhi or Bhagat Singh or Sarojini Naidu; pick one and develop. Bhagat Singh's calmness on the day of his hanging in 1931, with the lines "Inquilab Zindabad" on his lips, is a moment of fear conquered in front of an empire. Sarojini Naidu's "Nightingale of India" image hides a similar quiet courage in the Salt March and other campaigns.
- *A contemporary or sporting example.* Sachin Tendulkar's first overseas tour at sixteen, M. C. Mary Kom's return to the boxing ring after motherhood, or Arunima Sinha climbing Everest with a prosthetic leg. Each of these adds a contemporary face to the chapter's theme.
- *A literary closure.* End with a line on courage rather than a personal exclamation.

Maya Angelou or Tagore work well. The structural move is: open with Mandela, develop with examples, close with a quotation. The arc itself shows that you have read widely and organised the reading.

Why this matters. For Class 12 boards, "Talking about the text" questions reward students who can place a chapter inside a larger conversation. Douglas is not alone in saying these things; Mandela, Roosevelt, Gandhi, Keller, Angelou and Tagore say closely related things. Knowing two or three of those voices alongside Douglas turns a competent answer into a strong one. The deeper takeaway for a young reader is that the literature curriculum is not a list of unrelated chapters; it is a network of voices that keep returning to the same handful of human problems, fear and courage prominent among them. Reading any one chapter against the others enriches all of them at once.

Final Answer: Other stories of fear conquered include Mandela's twenty- seven years of imprisonment recounted in *Long Walk to Freedom*, the Class XI family in *We're Not Afraid To Die* bailing for thirty-six hours after a 50-foot wave, Gandhi's childhood ghost-fear cured by chanting Ramanama, Helen Keller breaking out of sensory isolation under Anne Sullivan, and Kalpana Chawla's courage in space. Lines on courage from Roosevelt, Mark Twain, Mandela, Maya Angelou and Tagore extend Douglas's chapter into a global tradition of writing on the same theme.

Thinking about language

Q 3.12 If someone else had narrated Douglas's experience, how would it have differed from this account? Write out a sample paragraph from this text from the point of view of a third person or observer, to find out which style of narration would you consider to be more effective and why.

SOLUTION

The chapter is written in the **first person** ("I"). The exercise asks the student to rewrite a passage in the **third person** ("he" or a named observer) and then compare the two styles. The two narrative voices have very different effects: first person delivers interior experience; third person delivers external observation. Which is "more effective" depends on what the writer wants to do.

☞ **Two passes**

First write the rewritten paragraph cleanly. Then write a short comparative paragraph that names the differences (access to thoughts vs distance from them) and gives a verdict with a reason.

- **The first-person original (for reference).** "Those nine feet were more like ninety, and before I touched bottom my lungs were ready to burst . . . I grew panicky. I reached up as if to grab a rope and my hands clutched only at water. I was suffocating. I tried to yell but no sound came out. Then my eyes and nose came out of the water, but not my mouth."
- **Sample rewrite in the third person (observer's voice).** A lifeguard standing at the deep end might have written it like this: *"The skinny boy hit the water sitting up, swallowed a mouthful and went straight to the bottom. Nine feet looked endless on a child of eleven. He paused at the tiles, gathered himself, kicked, and rose, but he rose too slowly. His arms reached for a non-existent rope; his fingers closed on nothing but water. For a long moment only his eyes and nose broke the surface; the mouth, the only part that mattered, stayed under. He went down a second time without a sound."*
- **Difference 1: access to interior experience.** The first-person original gives us the boy's thoughts ("I planned: When my feet hit the bottom, I would make a big jump"), his bodily sensations (lungs bursting, head throbbing), and his vocabulary for fear ("stark terror"). The third-person version can describe what is seen (the boy not rising fast enough, the eyes and nose breaking the surface) but cannot enter the boy's head unless it becomes mind-reading.
- **Difference 2: distance and judgement.** The third person can comment on the boy from outside ("a child of eleven", "the only part that mattered"). The first person cannot stand outside itself; everything is felt, nothing is judged. The third person gains distance; the first person gains intimacy.
- **Difference 3: emotional pitch.** First-person narration of trauma typically carries higher emotional pressure, because the writing tries to convey the feeling, not just record it. Third-person narration carries lower pressure, because the observer is not currently dying.
- **Difference 4: trust and authority.** A first-person account of a near-drowning is trusted because the narrator was there. A third-person account is trusted for a different reason: because the observer can compare this boy to other boys and other emergencies. Different kinds of credibility serve different purposes.
- **Verdict and reason.** For the purpose of this chapter, the first person is more effective. The chapter's whole point is to put a reader inside a fear and inside its conquest; that requires interior access that only the first person can provide. A third-person rewrite of the same scene would be informative but not transformative; the reader would learn what happened to a boy but would not learn what it felt like to be the boy. Douglas needs the second of these effects, so he picks the first person.

Final Answer: Rewriting a passage in the third person turns Douglas's intimate "I" into an observer's "he", shifting the camera from inside the boy to a few feet outside him. The third person gains distance, judgement and comparative perspective; the first person gains interior access, bodily detail and emotional pitch. For a chapter whose purpose is to model how a fear is felt and overcome, the first person is more effective: only it can put the reader inside the experience the chapter is trying to share.

☞ Exam Tip

The exercise has two parts: (i) write the rewritten paragraph, (ii) compare. Many students do only one and lose marks. Always deliver both, and make the comparison concrete by naming at least two differences (access to interior, level of distance) before giving a verdict.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Vikram Sundaram, PhD Narratology, English and Foreign Languages University*

Quick reading. The chapter is a small classic of **first-person trauma narration**. The narrator was the victim; the same narrator, decades later, is the analyst. The double role ("I felt" + "I now understand") is what makes the chapter both vivid and instructive.

- First-person narration in this kind of writing has a double voice: the boy in the pool and the adult Justice looking back. The two voices share a pronoun ("I") but belong to different times. Notice how the same pronoun carries both "my legs hung as dead weights" (boy) and "the will to live somehow grew in intensity" (adult). The first person can do both.
- Third-person narration of trauma tends to objectify the sufferer. A lifeguard's report would describe a boy "with paralysed legs and a yellow-tinge pool"; it would not say "my arms wouldn't move". The difference between observation and experience is the difference between case file and memoir.
- Different kinds of writing need different voices. A newspaper report of the same incident would use the third person (objective, comparative, brief). A psychiatric case study would use the third person (with clinical names for symptoms). A memoir, which is what Douglas is writing, needs the first person, because the memoir's contract with the reader is access to interior experience.
- The exercise is therefore not asking whether one voice is "better"; it is asking the student to feel the difference and to argue for one given a purpose. Douglas's purpose, to teach the protocol of fear- conquest from the inside, demands the first person. A different purpose, to count the year's near-drowning statistics at the Y.M.C.A., would demand the third.

- For a Class 12 answer at the higher end, mention the double voice (boy + adult Justice) as the special feature of this first-person narration. It is one pronoun doing two jobs at once.

Why this matters. Naming the narrative voice is half the skill of reading fiction and memoir. Once a student can say "this is first person, and the first person has the following effects", they can extend the same analysis to every other chapter on the syllabus. Douglas's chapter is one of the cleanest demonstrations available of why the first person is the natural voice for memoir.

> **Final Answer:** A third-person rewrite of Douglas's near-drowning would read as an observer's report: visible body language, judgements from outside, comparative perspective on other swimmers, but no interior access. The first-person original delivers the boy's sensations, fears and calculations directly. For a chapter whose job is to teach the inside of fear and the inside of its conquest, the first person is the more effective choice; the third person would have been informative but not transformative.

Writing

Q 3.13 **Doing well in any activity, for example a sport, music, dance or painting, riding a motorcycle or a car, involves a great deal of struggle. Write an essay of about five paragraphs recounting such an experience. You could begin with the last sentence of the essay you have just read: "At last I felt released, free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear."**

SOLUTION

The exercise is a guided essay of about *five paragraphs* on a personal experience of struggle and mastery. The prompt suggests beginning with the chapter's closing sentence, which signals that the essay should model itself on Douglas: name the fear or struggle, trace the work, end with the release. Below is a sample essay of the kind the prompt invites, on the experience of learning to ride a bicycle.

> ☞ **Five-paragraph structure**
> P1: opening hook with Douglas's line + a quick statement of your own struggle. P2: the trigger and the cost of the fear. P3: the work, including any guide. P4: the test that proved the work had held. P5: the afterward, what is now possible.

- **Paragraph 1 (opening).** "At last I felt released, free to walk the trails and climb the peaks and to brush aside fear." Douglas's last sentence was the one I thought of on

the morning I rode a bicycle through Connaught Place by myself, no parent on the back, no cousin on the side, no training wheels. I had wanted to ride a cycle from the age of seven; I learned at thirteen. The six years in between are a small story of one of those struggles every child has and few children write down.

- **Paragraph 2 (trigger and cost).** I had fallen early. The first time I tried, I was eight; my elder cousin pushed the cycle hard, I lost balance, I scraped my knee on the kerb, and I cried. After that, every cycle in the colony made me uneasy. I told everyone I was just not interested in cycling. The truth was that I did not want to fall again in front of the colony's children. The cost was small but real: I missed three years of school trips that involved cycling, and I watched my friends ride together to the market while I walked.
- **Paragraph 3 (the work and the guide).** In Class 7 my Hindi teacher, who lived two lanes from us, noticed that I waited at the gate while everyone else cycled home. She offered to teach me on a Sunday morning. Her method was Douglas's, before I had read Douglas. First we walked the cycle together while she held the seat. Then I sat on it while she ran beside me holding the seat. Then she let go for one second at a time. Then for three. Then for ten. Six Sundays in, she let go for the length of the playground and called out from the finishing line.
- **Paragraph 4 (the test).** A few weeks later I rode to the local market for groceries, alone, against my mother's worry. I did not fall. A truck honked behind me and I steadied the handlebars without looking. I bought four lemons, two onions and a packet of biscuits, and rode back through evening traffic. By the time I returned home, the years of avoidance had dissolved into a thirty-minute ride.
- **Paragraph 5 (the afterward).** I am still not the strongest cyclist in my class. I do not race. But I can now ride wherever a road exists. The struggle taught me a useful general lesson: most of what stops us from doing things is not the thing itself but the memory of an earlier failure, and most memories of earlier failures can be worked through with someone patient, small steps, and one honest test. Douglas's last sentence is the model: I, too, felt released, free to ride the trails and climb the slopes and to brush aside the cycle-fear I had carried since I was eight.

Final Answer: A five-paragraph sample essay on learning to ride a bicycle, following the Douglas pattern: open with the chapter's last sentence, name the trigger fall, describe the cost of avoidance, describe the teacher-led graded plan, describe the test ride to the market, and close with the small but real change the conquest made possible. The structure (P1 hook + P2 trigger + P3 work + P4 test + P5 release) is the part students should borrow; the bicycle is just one possible content.

♥ Why This Matters

The prompt asks for "about five paragraphs". That number is the mark scheme. Three paragraphs is short; eight is over-long. Treat the five-paragraph constraint as a discipline that forces you to pick the strongest material and leave the rest.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Priya Krishnan, MA Creative Writing, Jamia Millia Islamia*

Strategic angle. The exercise is doing two jobs at once. It is testing whether you can write a five-paragraph essay on a personal topic, and it is asking you to apply the chapter's protocol to your own life. Strong answers honour both jobs.

- Pick a struggle that is genuinely yours, but small enough to fit in five paragraphs. Learning to ride a cycle, learning to swim, learning to play one piece on the harmonium, learning to give a speech in Hindi, learning to draw a portrait: all are good. "Becoming a doctor" is too big.
- Open with the suggested last line. The textbook is not being decorative; it is testing whether you can pick up a cue from your own reading. Opening with "At last I felt released" immediately signals that the essay knows its source.
- Follow the Douglas protocol. Trigger, cost, work, test, release. Each paragraph carries one stage. The structure forces you to be specific rather than vague.
- Use one or two concrete details per paragraph: a kerb, a teacher's name, a market list, a colour. Concreteness is what makes personal writing breathe. "I bought four lemons, two onions and a packet of biscuits" is more memorable than "I bought some groceries".
- Close with a sentence that mirrors Douglas's last sentence, without copying it. The sample essay's "ride the trails and climb the slopes and to brush aside the cycle-fear" is one way; another is to invent your own three-verb close. The structural rhyme with Douglas is what marks the essay as a knowing response to the chapter.

Why this matters. Personal-essay questions in board exams are scored on structure, specificity and voice. A student who opens with the suggested line, follows the chapter's protocol, and closes with a sentence that rhymes structurally with the source has written a competent five-paragraph essay almost automatically. The discipline is the structure, not the topic; once you have it, you can rewrite the same essay for a different struggle next time.

Common pitfalls to avoid. A few traps undo otherwise strong personal essays in board exams, and naming them here is worth the space. First, do not turn the essay into a CV of achievements; the prompt asks for one struggle, not a list of hobbies. Second, do not skip the cost paragraph; an essay that jumps from trigger to triumph leaves the reader uncertain why the struggle mattered. Third, do not abandon the first person; this exercise rewards an honest "I". Fourth, do not pad with general claims like "hard work always pays"; replace such fillers with one more concrete detail from the experience.

Fifth, do not let the closing paragraph become a moral lecture; close instead with a small image (the market ride home, the auditorium emptying, the first quiet sentence sung in tune) and let the image carry the moral.

A second worked outline. If the student's struggle is learning a musical instrument rather than a cycle, the same five paragraphs work with different content. P1: open with Douglas's line and announce the first time you played a full piece on the harmonium without a wrong note. P2: the trigger, perhaps a neighbourhood music-night where you forgot the opening notes and the room went quiet. P3: the work, two months with a patient teacher who isolated finger placement, then breath, then tempo, then expression. P4: the test, an inter-school music competition where you did not place first but finished the piece. P5: the afterward, the quiet confidence of being able to sit at any harmonium and play, the way Douglas can now stand at any lake and swim. The structure is portable; only the names of the keys change.

> **Final Answer:** Write a five-paragraph essay using Douglas's protocol: P1 open with the suggested last sentence and name your own struggle; P2 the trigger and the cost; P3 the work and the guide; P4 the test that proved the work; P5 the release and what is now possible. The bicycle sample is one instance; swimming, public speaking, drawing, harmonium playing, motorcycle riding all fit the same shape. Mirror Douglas's structure; supply your own content. Avoid the common pitfalls (CV-listing, missing cost paragraph, abandoning the first person, padding with general claims, lecture-style closes); the alternative harmonium outline shows that the same five-paragraph structure travels across struggles.

Q 3.14 Write a short letter to someone you know about your having learnt to do something new.

SOLUTION

The exercise asks for a **personal letter** of moderate length, written to someone the student knows, on a single topic: a new skill or activity just learnt. A personal letter has a fixed format (sender's address, date, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature) and a relaxed register: friendly, specific, and warmer than formal correspondence.

> ☞ **Format reminder**
> For a personal letter: top-right address and date; left salutation ("Dear . . ."); three or four paragraphs of body (opening, the news, the details, the close); bottom-left or flush-left complimentary close ("With love" or "Yours affectionately") and signature.

- **Sender's address and date (top right).**
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20 May 2026

- **Salutation (top left).** Dear Nani,
- **Opening paragraph.** I hope you, Nanaji and the garden are all well. The mangoes you sent last week reached us yesterday and Mummy made aam panna twice. I am writing because I have some good news from Delhi that I want you to be the first to hear, even before I tell my friends at school on Monday.
- **Middle paragraph 1 (the news).** I have finally learned to swim. You remember how, every summer when we came to Lucknow, I would refuse to step into the pool at the colony club because of the year I slipped in Class 4 and Papa had to lift me out? That fear stayed with me for almost five years. This March I joined a local swimming class near our house. The coach, Mr Iqbal, started me with a kickboard and breath drills, then a foam belt, then nothing. Twice a week for two months and a bit more.
- **Middle paragraph 2 (the details).** Last Saturday I swam the full length of the twenty-five-metre pool, crawl stroke, no help. On the bus home I kept smiling because I knew I had crossed a small line. I am telling you because you were the one who said, that summer in Lucknow, that I would learn one day when I was ready, and that nobody learns anything before their time. You were right; I just needed five years and one patient coach.
- **Closing paragraph.** I would love to swim across the colony pool the next time we visit, with you and Nanaji watching from the loungers. Please tell Nanaji, and ask him to start practising his cheering voice. Give my love to Mausi and to Bunty if he is back from Pune.
- **Complimentary close and signature.**
  With love,
  Aarav

Final Answer: (Sample personal letter.) A standard personal-letter format: top-right address and date; left salutation ("Dear Nani"); body of three short paragraphs (opening pleasantries + the news of having learnt to swim + a closing invitation); and a warm complimentary close ("With love, Aarav"). The content honours the prompt: a single new skill, named, briefly described, shared with a person who would care.

☞ Exam Tip

For personal letters, the marker is checking format and tone in roughly equal measure with content. Lose the address or the salutation and you lose marks even with strong writing. Keep the body to three or four paragraphs; an over-long personal letter sounds like a school essay.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Naveen Ramesh, MA English Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences*

Strategic angle. A personal letter and a formal letter share format but not register. The mark scheme rewards a register appropriate to the recipient: warm and family-flavoured for a grandparent, neutrally friendly for a school friend, polite-and-distant for a teacher or relative not seen often. Match register to recipient.

- Open with a relational hook, not the news. Personal letters ask after the addressee first ("I hope you, Nanaji and the garden are all well"). The news comes in the second paragraph. This small move shows that the writer values the relationship, not just the announcement.
- Tell the news cleanly in one short paragraph. Name the new skill (swimming), give one back-story sentence (Class 4 pool slip), and describe the work (kickboard, belt, then unaided). Keep adjectives spare; one or two per paragraph.
- Add one personal hook that ties the news to the addressee. The sample letter does this by recalling Nani's earlier line ("nobody learns anything before their time") and crediting her with the prediction. This converts a generic letter into a letter that could only have been written to this one person.
- Close with a near-future plan that involves the addressee. "I would love to swim across the colony pool the next time we visit, with you and Nanaji watching" ends the letter with an invitation, not an exclamation. Personal letters that end with an invitation feel complete.
- Use a complimentary close that matches the register. "With love" for grandparents, parents, very close friends. "Yours affectionately" for relatives a generation older. "Yours sincerely" for adults the writer respects but is not intimate with. Avoid "Regards" in a personal letter; it is a formal register.

Why this matters. Letter-writing questions in board exams are scored on three axes: format, content and language. Format is the easiest to get right; revise the layout once and never lose marks on it again. Content depends on having something specific to say; the prompt makes that easy by naming a single new skill. Language is the axis where students differentiate themselves: a personal letter that sounds like an essay loses marks even with correct format and content. The trick is to write in a register slightly warmer and slightly more particular than school prose. Speak as you would speak; then tidy the grammar.

> **Final Answer:** Write a personal letter with the standard format (sender's address and date top right; salutation; three to four short paragraphs of body; warm complimentary close; signature). Content: announce one new skill just learned, name a brief back-story, describe the work, and close with a future plan that involves the addressee. Match the register to the recipient (grandparent: warm; teacher: respectful; friend: casual). The sample letter to Nani about learning to swim is a working template.

Things to do

Q 3.15 Are there any water sports in India? Find out about the areas or places which are known for water sports.

SOLUTION

India has a long coastline (about 7,500 kilometres), several inland lakes and rivers, and a Himalayan river system. Almost every kind of water sport has at least one recognised home in the country. The exercise asks the student to list the main water sports and the places associated with each.

> ☞ **How to organise**
> Group the answer by water body: *coastal/sea* (beaches and ocean), *rivers* (white water and slow stretches), *lakes and backwaters* (still water), *high-altitude lakes*. Within each group, name a sport and a place.

- **Coastal and sea sports.**
  - *Surfing*: Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu), Mulki/Kodi Bengre near Mangaluru (Karnataka), Varkala and Kovalam (Kerala). Mulki hosts the Indian Open of Surfing.
  - *Scuba diving and snorkelling*: Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Havelock and Neil Islands), Lakshadweep (Bangaram and Kadmat), Goa (Grande Island), Pondicherry (Temple Reef).
  - *Parasailing, jet-skiing, banana-boat rides*: Goa beaches (Calangute, Baga, Anjuna), Varkala and Kovalam.
  - *Sailing and yachting*: Mumbai (Royal Bombay Yacht Club), Chennai (Royal Madras Yacht Club), the Andamans, Kochi.
  - *Sea kayaking*: Andamans, Lakshadweep, Goa.
- **River sports.**
  - *White-water rafting*: Rishikesh (Ganga, Uttara- khand) is the most popular; also the Beas (Manali, Himachal Pradesh), the Teesta (Sikkim and West Bengal), the Brahmaputra (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam), the Indus and Zanskar (Ladakh), the Kundalika (Maharashtra) and the Barapole (Coorg, Karnataka).
  - *Kayaking and canoeing*: same rivers as rafting, plus Dandeli (Karnataka) and Goa's rivers.
  - *Angling and fly-fishing*: the Cauvery stretches at Bhavani and Hogenakkal, the high Himalayan trout streams of Sikkim, Arunachal and Kashmir.
- **Lake and backwater sports.**
  - *Houseboating and rowing*: the Kerala backwaters (Alleppey, Kumarakom), Dal Lake in Srinagar (shikara), Loktak Lake in Manipur.
  - *Sailing and rowing regattas*: Pichola and Fateh Sagar in Udaipur, Powai Lake

(Mumbai), Hussain Sagar (Hyderabad).
  - *Snake-boat racing*: the Nehru Trophy boat race on the Punnamada Lake at Alleppey, on the second Saturday of August.
- **Coastal and lake water-skiing / wake-boarding / flyboarding.** Goa, the Mandovi River, parts of the Kerala backwaters, and Powai Lake.
- **Standing institutions for water sports in India.** The Sports Authority of India runs water-sport centres at Alappuzha (rowing), Bengaluru and Kolkata. The Indian Navy runs the Indian Naval Academy in Ezhimala and the sail-training ship INS *Tarangini*. The Surfing Federation of India (SFI), founded in 2014, governs the sport nationally; the Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association (IKCA) governs paddle sports.
- **Recent context.** The 36th National Games (Gujarat, 2022) and the 37th National Games (Goa, 2023) both included multiple water sports, signalling that the country has a domestic competitive circuit alongside its recreational scene.

Final Answer: India hosts water sports across four kinds of water bodies. Coastal sports include surfing (Mahabalipuram, Mulki, Varkala, Kovalam), scuba diving and snorkelling (Andamans, Lakshadweep, Goa, Pondicherry), parasailing and jet-skiing (Goa, Kovalam) and yachting (Mumbai, Chennai). River sports are led by white-water rafting on the Ganga at Rishikesh, the Beas at Manali, the Teesta in Sikkim, the Zanskar and Indus in Ladakh, the Kundalika in Maharashtra and the Brahmaputra in Arunachal. Lake and backwater sports include houseboating in Alleppey and Dal Lake, the Nehru Trophy snake-boat race on Punnamada, and rowing at Powai and Hussain Sagar. Governing bodies include the SFI for surfing and the IKCA for paddle sports.

♥ Why This Matters

This is a "Things to do" exercise, so the marker rewards specificity. Name at least one place per sport rather than just listing sports. A reader unfamiliar with India should be able to plan a basic itinerary from your answer.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Tanmay Ghoshal, PhD Geography, Visva-Bharati Santiniketan*

Strategic angle. A geographically literate answer groups the water-sport map of India by terrain, not by sport. Three ribbons of water dominate: the Himalayan ribbon (white-water rivers), the peninsular coast (sea sports), and the inland still- water lakes (rowing, sailing, houseboats). Within each ribbon, a small cluster of places carries the dominant share of the sport.

- *Himalayan ribbon.* The snow-fed rivers (Ganga, Beas, Sutlej, Zanskar, Indus, Teesta, Brahmaputra) provide a white-water playground unmatched in mainland Asia.

Rishikesh on the Ganga is the entry point for most Indians; serious rafters move on to the Zanskar in Ladakh, where multi-day expeditions are run between Padum and Nimo.

- *Peninsular coastline.* The 7,500-kilometre coast offers warm-water sea sports almost year-round. The eastern coast (Mahabalipuram, Pondicherry) and the western coast (Goa, Karnataka, Kerala) carry the bulk of the activity. The Andaman and Lakshadweep archipelagos are India's best diving destinations, with visibility rivalling South-East Asian sites.
- *Inland lakes and backwaters.* Kerala's backwaters (Alleppey, Kumarakom), Kashmir's Dal Lake, Udaipur's Pichola and Fateh Sagar, Mumbai's Powai, and Hyderabad's Hussain Sagar are the central spots. The Nehru Trophy snake-boat race at Alleppey is one of the oldest mass-participation water-sport events in the country.
- *Emerging high-altitude sports.* Pangong and Tso Moriri in Ladakh, at 4,200–4,500 metres, are too cold for most water sports, but kayaking expeditions on these lakes are increasingly organised by Indian adventure outfits.
- *Institutional support.* The Sports Authority of India, the Indian Navy's sail-training programmes, and the SFI/IKCA federations together provide the scaffolding without which even a strong natural endowment would not become a national sport map.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader, the value of this exercise is to convert a touristy slogan ("India has so many water sports") into a working map: which terrain, which place, which sport, which season. A student who can produce that map from memory has done the exercise properly. The skill of organising scattered information by terrain (Himalayan, peninsular, inland, high-altitude) transfers to almost every "Things to do" style question in Class 12 textbooks; it also mirrors how journalists, travel writers and policy analysts actually think about Indian geography.

> **Final Answer:** India's water sports map has four bands: Himalayan white-water rivers (Ganga at Rishikesh, Beas at Manali, Zanskar in Ladakh, Teesta in Sikkim, Brahmaputra in Arunachal); peninsular sea sports (surfing in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, diving in the Andamans and Lakshadweep, beach sports in Goa and Kerala); inland lakes and backwaters (Alleppey, Dal, Pichola, Powai); and emerging high-altitude paddling in Ladakh. The Surfing Federation of India, the Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association and the Sports Authority of India provide the institutional backbone.

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- Ch 4: Flamingo Prose: The Rattrap
- Class 12 English Core — All Chapters

Key Takeaways

- William O. Douglas (1898–1980), later a US Supreme Court Justice, was thrown into the deep end of the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool at Yakima at age ten or eleven and nearly drowned.
- The terror that took possession of him during the near- drowning generalised to every body of water he encountered (Maine lakes, Oregon rivers, the Cascades), ruining his fishing, canoeing and boating trips for years.
- Self-help had failed; one October he hired an instructor and practised five days a week, an hour a day, at a local pool.
- The instructor used a graded six-stage method: rope-and- pulley crossings for three months; exhale-under, inhale-up breathing; isolated leg-kicking; integration of breath, kick and stroke into "an integrated whole"; a final crawl-stroke test in April; and a clean release from teaching.
- Douglas self-tested the new skill in three settings of rising difficulty: the pool alone, a two-mile crossing of Lake Wentworth (all four strokes), and a dive into Warm Lake in the Cascades. Only after the Warm Lake crossing, with Gilbert Peak returning the echo of his shout of joy, did he write, "I had conquered my fear of water."
- The chapter's larger meaning is the distinction between death (peaceful) and the fear of death (terrifying), and the use of Roosevelt's line, "All we have to fear is fear itself."
- Themes: the mastery of fear; perseverance and graded practice; the role of a skilled teacher; the validation of recovery through return to the original site of fear.
- Narrative voice: first person, with a double role (boy in the pool, adult Justice looking back), which gives the chapter both intimacy and analytical distance.

End of Deep Water NCERT Solutions