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Que. Notice these words and expressions in the text. Infer their meaning from the context.

Ans: **Treacherous:** unpredictably dangerous; unreliable or trustworthy.

Subdued my pride: to reduce or limit the level of one's self-esteem and confidence.

Flailed at the surface: Strike or lash out violently at the water's surface in an attempt to get out.

Fishing for landlocked salmon: to go salmon fishing in a certain lake for a specific type of salmon.

Misadventure: an accident that ends up being a disaster.

Bob to the surface like a cork: to float or resemble a cork in water in terms of buoyancy.

The curtain of life fell: to denote the end of life or a near-death experience.

Back and forth across the pool: to swim from one side of a swimming pool to the other.

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Think as you read

Que. What is the "misadventure" that William Douglas speaks about?

Ans. The near-drowning incident at the Y.M.C.A. swimming pool occurred when the author was probably ten or eleven years old and had only just started to learn to swim by copying others. Douglas refers to this incident as a "misadventure." Someone who couldn't swim shoved him into the water, where he started to drown. As a result of his struggle to stay above water and prevent drowning, he experienced a severe phobia of water that kept him from engaging in water-related activities for many years.

Que. 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?

Ans. When Douglas noticed he was being thrown into the pool, he did not go insane right away. He made a strategy to reach the surface despite his dread, but he was unable to follow through. He was afraid and thought the water was suffocating him. His body became paralysed by fear, his senses dimmed, and his heart beat loudly. His lungs hurt and his thoughts were spinning as he sipped water in an effort to get out of the water. He eventually lost the will and energy to continue fighting and was unconscious. Douglas had planned to allow himself to fall until his feet struck the floor, at which point he would spring back up to the surface like a cork. Then he would lie flat on the water's surface and paddle to the pool's edge.

Que. How did this experience affect him?

Ans. His near-death drowning incident had a significant psychological impact on him. He had a seriously off-balance emotional equilibrium for many years. Because he couldn't handle being near water, he was denied any activities involving water.

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Think as you read

Que. Why was Douglas determined to get over his fear of water?

Ans. Douglas wished to experience all that life has to offer. He was unable to fully experience the delights because of this anxiety. the life. His dread made every fishing excursion a failure. Any water recreation, such as swimming, canoeing, or fishing, was out of the question for him. He was therefore determined to conquer his phobia of the sea.

Que. How did the instructor build a swimmer out of William Douglas?

Ans. William Douglas was transformed into a swimmer over time by his tutor. The instructor used to fasten a belt around his waist with a rope and a pulley. Along submerging his head and kicking his legs by the pool's edge, Douglas practised using this apparatus every day. William Douglas was transformed into a swimmer over the course of three months by the instructor's deliberately timed, rigorous practise.

Que. How did Douglas make sure that he had conquered the old terror?

Ans. Douglas had the impression that he would have a small amount of previous anxiety while by himself in the water. He travelled to Lake Wentworth in New Hampshire, dove off a dock at Triggs Islands, and swam two miles across the lake to Stamp Act Island to be sure he had conquered his fear of the sea. After that, he felt convinced that his long-standing dread of water was over.

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Understanding the text

Que. 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.

Ans. Douglas nearly perished when he was thrown into the pool by a bruiser. Despite his fear, he maintained hope. He made plans to save himself as he descended into the water. He made the decision that as his feet touched the bottom, he would jump dramatically to the surface, lay down, and paddle to the edge of the pool. But for him, this strategy fell flat. He subsequently fell again. Douglas attempted again, but in vain. Panic now overcame him. He understood that he would drown. His lungs ached and were full with water; his limbs were paralysed. He was so horrified by the quantity of yellow water that he began to lose consciousness.

Que. How did Douglas overcome his fear of water?

Ans. For many years, Douglas struggled with a phobia of the water. He made the decision to hire a swimming coach and began regular swimming practise in order to get over his fear. The instructor came up with a pretty creative plan to teach him how to swim. A rope tied to a belt that Douglas once wore around his waist passed through a pulley that was mounted on an overhead cable. So whenever he experienced panic while swimming, it pulled him out. Following three months of diligent practise, he began to feel at ease.

By the pool's edge, Douglas also paddled his legs in the water. Although Douglas initially felt paralysed and his legs were immobile, he eventually overcome his anxiety. The instructor informed Douglas that his training was complete and that he was now a proficient swimmer. Douglas, though, swam in a variety of lakes to gain confidence. He finally understood that he had conquered his phobia of the water after swimming in Warm Lake.

Que. 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?

Ans. Douglas describes his terrifying childhood memory as an adult. For him, it felt like a close experience with death. He was aware of the fear he was experiencing as he was ready to fall into the pool and drown. Years of this fear plagued him, but eventually his will to get over it made him stronger. He overcame the innate dread in his heart by diligent practise, bravery, perseverance, and persistence and earned confidence. Douglas learned from this experience that holding onto our worries from the past only distorts the present. Fear is a person's worst enemy in life since it prevents him from acting on ideas. Douglas recognised that even if there are risky situations in life, there are times when one must have the bravery to take them head-on.

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Talking about the text

Que. 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, his perseverance to achieve his mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor as depicted in his autobiography. The story 'We're Not Afraid To Die,' which you have read in Class XI, is an apt example of how courage and optimism helped a family survive under the direst stress.

Ans. In his autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom," Nelson Mandela recounts his remarkable life's journey. His spectacular exploits as an underground commander and the infamous Rivonia Trial of 1964, during which he was sentenced to life in prison, bring to life the rising political conflict between the African National Congress and the government in the 1950s. He describes the remarkably interesting twenty-seven years he spent behind bars as well as the intricate, sensitive discussions that resulted in both his release and the beginning of apartheid's demise. Mandela fought against both the segregation of universities and the exploitation of workers. He persisted in order to complete his task and free both the oppressed and the oppressor. He was released from prison in 1990.