

Class XII - Flamingo

DEEP WATER

By - William Orville Douglas

About the author

William Orville Douglas

(1898 -1980)

Born in USA

Douglas was a leading advocate of individual rights. He was a judge at the Supreme Court of USA, retired in 1975 with a term lasting thirty-six years and remains the longest-serving Justice in the history of the court.

The following excerpt is taken from Of Men and Mountains by William O. Douglas.

Introduction to the Chapter:

In this story, Douglas talks about his fear of water and how he finally overcomes it with strong will power, courage, hard work, and firm determination. Once he took courage, the fear vanished. That Shows most of our fears are baseless. Fear creates dangers where there is none. The writer's Experiences further confirm the proverbial truth, "Where there is a will, there is away."

Characters & Places:

" Douglas: Narrator of the story

" YMCA Pool: A swimming pool runs by Young Men's Christian Association

" Yakima: Yakima is a US city located about 60 miles southeast of Mount Rainier in Washington.

Deep Water – Summary:

Deep Water is about the writer's journey of overcoming the fear of water, which is deeply rooted in him since childhood. The author started fearing water since the age of four. It starts when he was visiting California with his father. He visits a beach where a wave knocks him down and sweeps over him. This terrifies the author, although the father laughs at this knowing, suggesting that it was not dangerous. However, this experience terrifies the author and develops a fear of water. After that, when the author is 11 years old, he experiences another incident which escalates his fear.

He is at a swimming pool in Yakima, trying to learn swimming. On one fine day, a bully decides to pull a dangerous prank. He pushes him in the deep end of the pool which frightens the author. He reaches nine feet into the water and starts struggling desperately to hold on to something.

Moreover, he yells for help but he starts feeling paralyzed and only his heart was moving now. Thus, he gives up and readies himself to die but wakes up at the side of the pool. However, the terror he experiences while drowning never goes away. It continues to haunt him for many years and even spoiled his future expeditions concerning canoeing, swimming, fishing and more.

He even visits Marine Lakes, Columbia, New Hampshire and more but is not able to enjoy it. Thus, he decides to overcome this fear by every possible way. He enrolls himself in a swimming class and tries to learn from the instructor. The instructor teaches him many tips and tricks for swimming. He begins with the inhaling and exhaling part then he practices it for many weeks.

Further, he moves on to the kicking the legs on the side of the pool. Finally, he combines all this with the final move of swimming. Although the author knows how to swim, he is still terrified of water. Thus, in order to get rid of the fear, he decides to confront it. He mocks it by thinking what can it really do? Consequently, he plunges in to the water and to his surprise, his fear goes away. He faced it in many places and at last, manages to conquer it.

Conclusion of Deep Water:

To sum up, Deep Water summary, we learn that if we are determined enough and have the courage, we can overcome any fear that comes our way without letting the fear overpower us.
