

# The Ball Poem By John Berryman

What is the boy now, who has lost his ball.  
What, what is he to do? I saw it go  
Merrily bouncing, down the street, and then  
Merrily over—there it is in the water!  
No use to say 'O there are other balls':  
An ultimate shaking grief fixes the boy  
As he stands rigid, trembling, staring down  
All his young days into the harbour where  
His ball went. I would not intrude on him,  
A dime, another ball, is worthless. Now  
He senses first responsibility  
In a world of possessions. People will take balls,  
Balls will be lost always, little boy,  
And no one buys a ball back. Money is external.  
He is learning, well behind his desperate eyes,  
The epistemology of loss, how to stand up  
Knowing what every man must one day know  
And most know many days, how to stand up  
And gradually light returns to the street,  
A whistle blows, the ball is out of sight.  
Soon part of me will explore the deep and dark  
Floor of the harbour . . . I am everywhere,  
I suffer and move, my mind and my heart move  
With all that move me, under the water  
Or whistling, I am not a little boy.