

Pamela Gillian wrote this poem about long distance swimming in a different kind of pool - a 'sea-pool'. There are not very many of these around the country. They are 'tidal' pools which fill up with seawater at every high tide. When the tide goes down, the sun heats the water and makes an ideal swimming pool, without the dangers of waves or unexpected currents.



The half-mile

I was twelve when I swam the half-mile,
up and down the tide-fed cold concrete
pool, with a slow steady side-stroke.
My father counted the lengths,
at first from the deep-end board
and then, as I moved more laboriously,
pacing alongside, urging me on.

The race was only against myself
and distance. The grainy salt water,
though not translucent like the chlorinated
blue lidos of town, buoyed me helpfully,
lapped softly against the bath's grey sides
variegated with embedded hardcore pebbles.
I swam from goal to alternate goal; he counted.

When he called enough I scrambled
over the sharp shutter-cast lip,
shuddered into a dry towel, drank
the words of praise. The planks
of the changing-room walls
were warm to touch. It had seemed to be
a great deal of swimming; still does.

1. Pamela Gillian describes the half-mile swim as being both a positive and a negative experience.

Identify and **explain** one positive and one negative phrase from the poem in the table below.

Positive experience	Negative experience
Phrase <hr/> <hr/>	Phrase <hr/> <hr/>
Explanation <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	Explanation <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

2 marks

2. **Find** and **copy one** phrase in the poem which suggests that Pamela Gillian followed a rhythm when swimming.

1 mark

3. What do you find out about the father's character from the poem?
Explain your answer, using evidence from the text.

3 marks

4. Look at verse 2.

*The grainy salt water,
though not **translucent**...*

Give the meaning of the word *translucent* in this sentence.

1 mark

Mark schemes

1.

Positive experience	Negative experience
<p>Phrase - Acceptable points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (with a slow) steady (side stroke) 2. urging me on 3. (the race was) only against myself (and the distance) 4. (the grainy salt water) buoyed me (helpfully) 5. lapped softly 6. (I swam from) goal to alternate goal 7. (shuddered) into a dry towel 8. (drank the words of) praise 9. (changing-room walls were) warm (to touch) 10. (It had seemed to be) a great deal of swimming(; still does). 	<p>Phrase - Acceptable points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. up and down 12. (the tide-fed) cold / concrete (pool) 13. (as I moved more) laboriously 14. urging me on 15. (the race was) only against myself (and distance) 16. not translucent 17. (I swam from) goal to alternate goal 18. scrambled 19. (the) sharp (shutter-cast lip) 20. shuddered (into a dry towel) 21. (It had seemed to be) a great deal of swimming(; still does).
<p>Explanation</p> <p>Accept any reasonable explanation of the phrase given, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>shows she is calm</i> [B1] • <i>her dad helped her to keep up the good work and not to stop</i> [B2] • <i>because she had it all to herself and not racing other people and not distracted by other people</i> [B3] • <i>helped her float which was handy for swimming</i> [B4] • <i>there weren't too many waves and it was nice to swim in that</i> [B5] • <i>she's proud of herself for doing a lot of</i> 	<p>Explanation</p> <p>Accept any reasonable explanation of the phrase given, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>it's boring and repetitive</i> [B11] • <i>as it was cold it would be hard to get used to and it would take your breath away for a bit due to how cold it was</i> [B12] • <i>she was tired and had to move slower because it drained her</i> [B13] • <i>her father was making her carry on swimming</i> [B14] • <i>she had to fight against herself which is mostly quite hard; and you want to stop</i>

<p><i>laps and it's an achievement [B6]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>it shows it was nice to get a dry towel because she had been cold and wet [B7]</i> • <i>she was happy that her father praised her and she remembered them [B8]</i> • <i>it was a pleasant contrast from the very cold water [B9]</i> • <i>that even though it was a lot she remembers it and is proud that she did it [B10].</i> 	<p><i>but you know you shouldn't [B15]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>suggests that the water is dirty, salty, murky and not pleasant to swim in than a swimming pool [B16]</i> • <i>it seemed to go on and on and on [B17]</i> • <i>glad to be out and really not wanting to do it again, quickly getting over and in a big rush to get out [B18]</i> • <i>it will be sharp and it may cut you [B19]</i> • <i>she got badly cold and shivering [B20]</i> • <i>it must have been very hard to swim that much [B21].</i>
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Award **2 marks** for identifying and explaining both a positive and a negative phrase.

Award **1 mark** for identifying and explaining a positive or a negative phrase.

Do not accept:

- explanations using general words that paraphrase positive / negative in the question (eg nice / horrible) without further development.

Up to 2 marks

2. Award **1 mark** for either of the following:

1. (with a slow) steady side-stroke
2. (I swam from) goal to alternate goal.

Accept quotations that add 'and' before 'steady'.

1 mark

3. Acceptable points:

1. supportive / helpful
2. encouraging
3. proud
4. patient
5. committed
6. pushy / determined for her to win
7. unsympathetic.

Award **3 marks** for reference to three of the acceptable points together with evidence from

the text to support each point, eg:

- *I think he was quite helpful, as it says 'my father counted the lengths'. I think he's determined for his child to win because 'he was pacing along the side, urging me on'. I think he was encouraging because it says; drank words of praise' which shows he congratulates her. [B1 + B6 + B2 with evidence for each]*

Award **2 marks** for reference to two of the acceptable points together with evidence from the text to support each point, eg:

- *you find out that he was a very supportive dad as he was counting all of the lengths, first from the deep-end board and then he was pacing along side her, urging her on. From the text you could also hear he was proud of her as she said 'As I drank the words of praise'. [B1 and B3 with evidence for both]*

Award **1 mark** for reference to one of the acceptable points together with evidence from the text, eg:

- *the father seems to be very competitive because 'he was pacing alongside, urging me on'. He wants his child to do well at all costs. [B6 + evidence].*

Also award **1 mark** for simple reference to more than one of the acceptable points without evidence from the text, eg:

- *you find out the father is a very encouraging person and has all the confidence in his daughter. He believes in her and is very proud of her. [B2 + B3, no evidence]*

Accept the same evidence for more than one acceptable point, if appropriate.

Up to 3 marks

4. Award **1 mark** for answers that recognise it as allowing light to pass through but not clearly defined objects eg:

- you can see through it but a but blurred
- semi-transparent

1 mark