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Thinking About Text

I. Answer these questions in a few words or a couple of sentences each.

1. How old are Margie and Tommy?
2. What did Margie write in her diary?
3. Had Margie ever seen a book before?
4. What things about the book did she find strange?
5. What do you think a telebook is?
6. Where was Margie's school? Did she have any classmates?
7. What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn?

Answer:

1. Margie is eleven and Tommy is thirteen-year-old.
2. Margie wrote, "Today Tommy found a real book!".
3. No, Margie had never seen a book before.
4. Margie found it strange that the words printed on a book stood still instead of moving the way they did on a screen. She also found it odd that the words on a page always remained the same as the first time they were read. Besides, the idea that someone would write a book about schools was itself strange for Margie.
5. A book that can be displayed on a screen is called telebook.
6. Margie's school was in her home itself, right next to her bedroom. No, she did not have any classmates.
7. Margie and Tommy learned geography, history and arithmetic.

II. Answer the following with reference to the story.

1. "I wouldn't throw it away."
(i) Who says these words?
(ii) What does 'it' refer to?
(iii) What is it being compared with by the speaker?

Answer:

- (i) Tommy said these words.
(ii) 'It' refers to the television screen, on which you could read over a million books
(iii) Tommy is comparing the television screen to the real books in earlier times in which words were printed on paper. He thought that after reading such books, one would have to throw them away. However, he would never have to throw away his telebooks.

2. "Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn't a regular teacher. It was a man."

- (i) Who does 'they' refer to?
(ii) What does 'regular' mean here?
(iii) What is it contrasted with?

Answer:

- (i) They refer to the students who studied in the old kind of schools centuries before the time the story is set in.

(ii) Here, 'regular' refers to the mechanical teachers that Tommy and Margie had.

(iii) The mechanical teacher is contrasted with the teacher of the earlier times, who was a human being.

III. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).

1. What kind of teachers did Margie and Tommy have?

Answer:

Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers. They were large and black and ugly and had large black screens on which all the lessons were shown and questions were asked. These mechanical teachers had a slot in which the students had to put their homework and test papers. They had to write their answers in a punch code and the mechanical teacher calculated the marks immediately.

2. Why did Margie's mother send for the County Inspector?

Answer:

Margie had been given many tests in geography by the mechanical teacher, but there was no improvement in her performance. It only kept getting worse. It is for this reason that Margie's mother sent for the County Inspector to find out why this was happening.

3. What did he do?

Answer:

The County Inspector gave Margie an apple and started working on the mechanical teacher. He took it apart and then checked it. Margie had hoped that the Inspector would not know how to put the mechanical teacher together again, but he managed to reassemble it. He slowed down the geography sector of the teacher because it was geared a little too quick for an average ten-year-old.

4. Why was Margie doing badly in geography? What did the County Inspector do to help her?

Answer:

Margie was doing badly in geography because the geography sector of the mechanical teacher had been geared a little too quick. The County Inspector rightly told her that she could not be blamed for her poor performance.

The County Inspector slowed down the geography sector of the mechanical teacher to an average ten-year level. He also told Mrs. Jones that Margie's overall progress pattern was satisfactory.

5. What had once happened to Tommy's teacher?

Answer:

Once, The history sector of Tommy's teacher had once blanked out completely.

6. Did Margie have regular days and hours for school? If so, why?

Answer:

Yes, Margie had regular days and hours for school. This was because her mother believed that learning at regular hours helped little girls learn better. Her mechanical teacher was also on at the same time everyday except Saturday and Sunday.

7. How does Tommy describe the old kind of school?

Answer:

Tommy described old kind of school as a special building where all kids studied together. There were hundreds of students studying and playing together. They used to shout and laugh together in an open yard.

8. How does he describe the old kind of teachers?

Answer:

Tommy said that the old kind of teachers was men, who taught the

students inside a special building. The teachers taught the children in groups and gave them homework and asked them questions.

IV. Answer each of these questions in two or three paragraphs (100–150 words).

1. What are the main features of the mechanical teachers and the schoolrooms that Margie and Tommy have in the story?

Answer:

Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers. They had large black screens on which all the lessons were shown and questions were asked. They had a slot in which students had to put their homework and test papers. They had to write their answers in a punch code and the mechanical teacher calculated the marks immediately. Their schools were in their homes itself. They did not have any classmates. They learned geography, history and arithmetic. They had regular days and hours for school. Margie's school was right next to her bedroom. The mechanical teacher always turned on at the same time every day except Saturdays and Sundays because her mother said that little girls learned better when they learned at regular hours.

2. Why did Margie hate school? Why did she think the old kind of school must have been fun?

Answer:

Margie hated school because it was not fun. A mechanical teacher used to teach her everyday at a fixed time. Recently, she had been doing badly in the geography tests that her mechanical teacher had been giving her. Her mother was not happy with the performance and sends for the County Inspector, she hopes that the inspector would take the mechanical teacher away. She is disappointed when the County Inspector manages to assemble all the parts of the mechanical teacher. The part that she hated the most was inserting the homework and test papers in the slot on the mechanical teacher. She did not like the fact that she had to write her answers in a punch code. She thought that the old kind of school must have been fun as she imagined all the kids from the entire neighbourhood coming together, laughing and shouting in the schoolyard. She imagined that they would sit together in the classroom and go home together at the end of the day. They would learn the same things and could help one another with the homework and talk about it. Also, the teachers were people. All these aspects made her believe that the old kind of school must have been fun.

3. Do you agree with Margie that schools today are more fun than the school in the story? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Yes, I agree schools today are more fun than the school in the story. In the story, there is no interaction among students regarding studies. Studying and answering questions seems to be a boring idea. Doing homework without anybody's help and writing them in a punch code would also be draining. Moreover, children develop a better understanding about each other and of their surroundings when they go to a school and interact with each other. It is a healthier way of learning.

Listening to teachers explaining lessons is always more interesting than reading the entire lesson on a mechanical computer. Also, if any student faces any problem with the subject or in homework, he can discuss it with the teacher and other kids. It is impossible to discuss problems and situations with a mechanical teacher that is only programmed to teach in a particular manner.

The excitement of waiting to know the marks scored in exams is greater when one is sitting in a classroom with other students. It does not have the same effect when the marks are calculated immediately after a test has been taken.

Finally, the friends that you make at school are most probably the best friends that you will ever make in your entire life. The various qualities that you learn in school like obedience, respect, kindness for others, sharing, taking part in school games, sports, and other activities are all a part of school education today. Therefore, schools today are more fun than the school in the story as they are more interactive. They promote a healthy environment for the students to study and learn.

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