Why is education democratic in bookless, tribal societies?

Education is one of the keywords of our time.

A man without an education, many of us believe, is an unfortunate victim of adverse circumstances, deprived of one of the greatest twentieth-century opportunities.

Convinced of the importance of education, modern states invest in institutions of learning to get back ‘interest’ in the form of a large group of enlightened young men and women who are potential leaders.

Education, with its cycles of instruction, so carefully worked out, punctuated by textbooks—those purchasable wells of wisdom—what would civilization be like without its benefits?

So much is certain: that we would have doctors and preachers, lawyers and defendants, marriages and births—but our spiritual outlook would be different.

We would lay less stress on ‘facts and figures’ and more on a good memory, on applied psychology, and on the capacity of a man to get along with his fellow-citizens.

If our educational system were fashioned after its bookless past, then we would have the most democratic form of ‘college’ imaginable.

Among tribal people all knowledge inherited by tradition is shared by all; it is taught to every member of the tribe so that in this respect everybody is equally equipped for life.

It is the ideal condition of the ‘equal start’ that only our most progressive forms of modern education try to regain.

In primitive cultures, the obligation to seek and receive traditional instruction is binding on all.

There are no ‘illiterates’—if the term can be applied to people without a script—while our own compulsory school attendance became law in Germany in 1642, in France in 1806, and in England in 1876, and is still non-existent in a number of ‘civilized’ nations.

This shows how long it was before we deemed it necessary to make sure that all our children could share in the knowledge accumulated by the ‘happy few’ during the past centuries.

Education in the wilderness is not a matter of monetary means.

All are entitled to an equal start.

There is none of the hurry which, in our society, often hampers the full development of a growing personality.

There, a child grows up under the ever-present attention of his parents; therefore, the jungles and the savannahs know of no ‘juvenile delinquency’.

No necessity of making a living away from home results in neglect of children and no father is confronted with his inability to ‘buy’ an education for his child.

Education can be said to be an ‘investment’ since the state (or people) in the future will be able to use the skills educated people have been taught.

The author appears to be opposed to formal education because it ignores our spiritual side.

According to the author, a primitive society is superior to a civilized society because it gives every one of its members an equal start.

The Foreign Secretary was a key figure in the negotiations about the borders.

Adverse circumstances forced the family to sell their large home and buy a small flat.

Young people today are a lot more enlightened than they were even fifty years ago.

He’s still weighing up the potential benefits and disadvantages of investing in the company.

Certain modern education systems place less stress on exam results than many did years ago.

Once the four people sign this contract, the conditions in it are binding on all of them.

Illiterates are people who have not learned to read and write, and who are regarded as badly educated.

In Britain, as in most other countries, Income Tax is compulsory for people who work and earn money.

Has that young man got the means to support a family?

Is everyone entitled to an Old Age Pension in this country?

Damage to property, graffiti, and other acts of vandalism are often the result of juvenile delinquency.

Without formal education and without books, our spiritual outlook would be different and we could lay more stress on memory, applied psychology and love for our fellow-citizens than on the acquisition of factual information.

Among tribal people, all traditionally acquired knowledge is shared among all, and there is a situation in which all have an ‘equal start’.

The introduction of compulsory school attendance has been fairly recent in European countries, which tends to suggest that compulsory education might be slightly unnatural.

In a primitive society, all receive an education at their own pace and under the attention of parents.

Modern society in many countries is based on a system of formal education whereby young people expect to spend the first part of their lives in education before entering the world of work for the rest of it.

There are very few places in the world where education is not now compulsory, usually from about the age of five to about the age of fifteen or sixteen, and beyond that, of course, is the world of higher education—colleges and universities.

The concept of compulsory schooling is to provide a whole population with basic education, and anyone who misses this education will almost certainly be at a disadvantage later in life.

Pupils in Infant Schools and Junior Schools (as schools in primary education are called in Britain) need to learn basic literacy skills: they must learn to read and write.

They also need to begin to learn basic mathematics or arithmetic.

And they need to acquire social skills in order to get on with each other in their everyday lives.

And further, young children nowadays are also beginning to acquire basic computer skills.

Pupils in secondary schools continue to build on the education that they have acquired early on, and broaden their interests and abilities in art, music, dance, sports and so on.

Indeed, these ‘subjects’ give many pupils further opportunities for careers as well as for enjoyment both in school and in later life.

Again, anyone who misses these opportunities misses a great deal.

There was a time not very long ago when a young man needed no more education than what his father needed in order to carry on the same profession.

And young women, of course, apparently needed no education at all.

In the second half of the twentieth century, education was vital since it opened the doors of opportunity to a wide variety of professions for both young men and women, and many entered a profession for life.

Now, however, a profession or a career is not always for life; indeed, young people are already finding that they have to or want to change professions after a few years.

In fact, with the introduction of new industrial practices and more and more computerisation, some professions are beginning to disappear.

In the face of this social movement, then, basic education is more and more essential for people to be able to undertake retraining for new professions.

Anyone who does not have a basic education is at a distinct disadvantage.

We use inverted commas (or quotation marks) around what is actually spoken, i.e., direct speech.

We also enclose book and film titles in inverted commas.

However, individual words and phrases are enclosed in inverted commas (or quotation marks) in English for a variety of other purposes.

The verb ‘invest’, for example, is in inverted commas to indicate that the word is not being used in its normally defined meaning.

The phrase ‘facts and figures’ is in inverted commas because again the author has extended the normal use of the phrase to suit his own purpose and to mean something like ‘factual information’.

The phrase ‘happy few’ (l.18) is a direct quotation from Shakespeare (Henry V, Act 4, Sc. 3).

There, it refers to the small number of English soldiers that faced the French army.

In the text it refers to the fortunate small number of extremely privileged people who received education in the past.

Most people would consider Chinese very difficult.

I find it incredible that he still can't read at his age.

He thought it funny that I had taken up chess.

She felt it necessary to tell her best friend her news.

I believed her incapable of doing any job properly.

We would lay less stress on ‘facts and figures’.

There were fewer opportunities to get a good education in the past.

Fewer people die of tuberculosis these days.

I have less time now than I used to have.

If there were fewer buses on the roads, it would be easier to drive to work.

Our holiday allowed us to get fit.

Book now, or you won’t have a chance of getting a seat.

We met by chance at London Airport.

Think of him as a potential friend rather than an alarming stranger.

The film is full of potent images of war.

Posters were plastered on every imaginable surface.

Congratulations on finding such an imaginative solution to the problem.

The Seringa tribe will be wiped out by the construction of the new dam.

Global warming poses a threat to the survival of the human race.

In China, education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15.

Is it necessary to wear a tie?

Our spiritual outlook would be different.

He’s usually such a quiet person. I can’t account for this outburst, can you?

There was an outbreak of dysentery among the troops.

One unexpected outcome of the new policy has been a fall in prices.

A modern state hopes to reap a reward for what an individual's education has cost.

According to the writer, among tribal peoples, the most important thing is to learn how to live together.

Formal school education in modern societies is relatively recent.

According to the writer, in primitive cultures, children have time to develop at their own pace.

Being convinced of the importance of education, modern societies...

How would civilization be without its benefits?

It is taught to every member of the tribe. Consequently, everybody is equipped...

No ‘illiterates’ exist in primitive cultures.

A man without an education is an unfortunate victim of adverse conditions.

We would lay more stress on recall.

We would have the most democratic form of ‘college’ that can be imagined.

Our obligatory school attendance became law relatively recently.