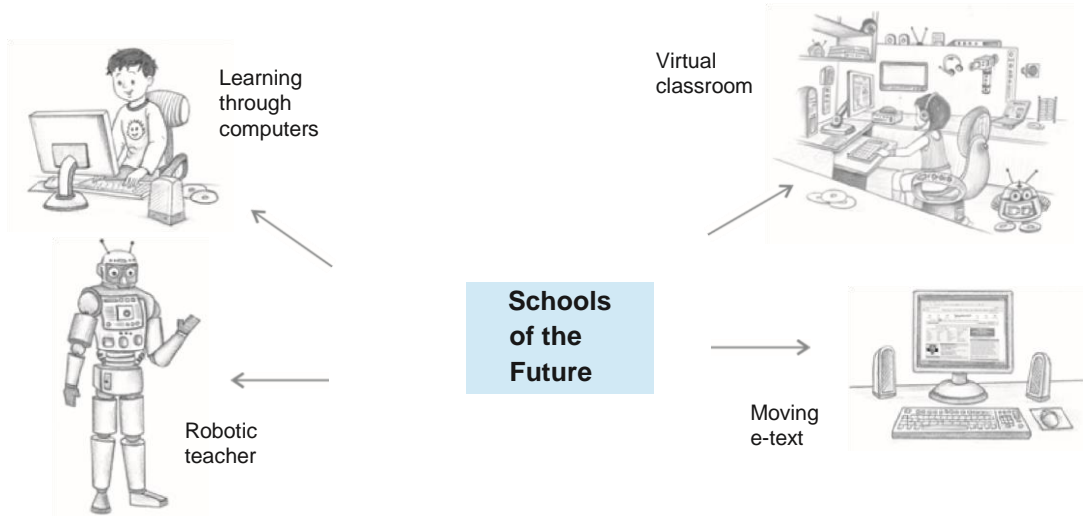




C-1. The Fun They Had

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- The story is set in the future, when books and schools as we now know them will perhaps not exist. The diagram below may give you some ideas.



CHAPTER SKETCH –

In this chapter, the author tries to tell us about the classrooms and schools of the future. They will be generally automated, with teaching through robotic or mechanical teachers. The story describes the feelings of two students about the schools of the past. They loved the schools of the past and wanted to be a part of that. They rejoice at the feeling of being taught by a human teacher. They anticipate the fun of being together with other children of their age.



Thinking about the Text

Activity

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

Q1. How old are Margie and Tommy?

Ans1. Margie is eleven and Tommy is thirteen years old.

Q2. What did Margie write in her diary?

Ans2. Margie entered in her diary, "Today Tommy found a real book!"

Q3. Had Margie ever seen a book before?

Ans3. No, Margie had never seen a book before.

Q4. What things about the book did she find strange?

Ans4. Margie found many things strange about the book. The pages were yellow and crinkly. The words were stationary and didn't move. Also, when one read it the second time, everything was the same as earlier.

Q5. What do you think a telebook is?

Ans5. A telebook is a virtual book that can be read on a screen. One doesn't have to turn pages because the words themselves move across the screen.

Q6. Where was Margie's school? Did she have any classmates?

Ans6. Margie's school was next to her bedroom. No, she didn't have any classmates.

Q7. What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn?

Ans7. *They learnt History, Geography, and Mathematics in their school.*

II. Answer the following with reference to the story.

1. "I wouldn't throw *it* away."

i. Who says these words?

- *These words were said by Tommy.*

i. What does 'it' refer to?

- *'It' refers to a real book.*

i. What is it being compared with by the speaker?

- *The book has been compared with telebooks.*

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

(i) Who does 'they' refer to?

Ans. *'They' refers to forefathers of Tommy's grandfather.*

(i) What does 'regular' mean here?

Ans. *It refers to the mechanical teachers that Tommy and Margie have.*

(ii) What is it contrasted with?

Ans. *The human teacher of earlier times is contrasted with a mechanical teacher.*

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

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

Ans. *Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers. The teacher had a big black screen on which all the lessons were flashed and the questions asked. The 'teacher' also had a slot where students had to put their homework and test papers.*

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

Ans. *The mechanical teacher had been giving Margie test after test in Geography and she had been doing worse and worse. Her mother suspected that there was something wrong with Margie and to resolve the problem the County Inspector was sent for.*

3. What did he do?

Ans. *He took the mechanical teacher apart, slowed up the geography section, as it was adjusted to be too quick and then assembled the teacher back again.*

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

Ans. *The geography sector of the mechanical teacher was somehow adjusted to a higher level therefore Margie was performing poorly. The County Inspector slowed it up to an average ten-year level to help her.*

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

Ans. *Tommy's teacher was taken away once for nearly a month because the history sector of his mechanical teacher had blanked out completely.*

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

Ans. Yes, Margie certainly had regular days and hours for school. Margie had to attend her school at the same time everyday except for Saturday and Sunday. Her mother endured this because little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

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

Ans. Tommy said that the old kind of school existed centuries ago. Instead of a mechanical teacher, the teacher used to be a 'human'. All the students went to a special building where they all learned the same thing according to their respective ages.

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

Ans. Tommy said that the old kind of teacher was a 'human' who taught in a special building where all the kids went together. The human teacher used to tell the kids things, 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?

Ans. Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers for them. The mechanical teacher was a computer screen on which lessons were shown, questions asked and tests given. The students had to put answers to their tests and their homework in a slot. The mechanical teacher took almost no time in calculating their marks. Every mechanical teacher was adjusted according to the level of the student. The mechanical teacher lived in the house of the student and started flashing everyday at a certain time except on Saturday and Sunday. It never fell ill, never forgot to assign homework, never forgot to conduct tests and never forgot to ask questions while teaching the students.

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

Ans. The School of Margie was right next to her bedroom. It wasn't fun at all. She had no classmates and her teacher was mechanical. Lately she had started to hate her school more, as her mechanical teacher had been giving her test after test in geography and she had been doing badly. She hated it much that she hoped that the County Inspector wouldn't be able to put her teacher back together. She thought that the old Schools must have been fun because all the kids from the whole neighbourhood came laughing and shouting in the school yard, sitting together in the schoolroom and going home together at the end of the day. They learned the same things, so they could help one another with the homework and talk about it. Moreover, the teachers were humans.

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

Ans. I totally agree with Margie that schools today are more fun than the school in the story. In the story, Margie had a school in her house. Her teacher was mechanical and she had no classmates. One can imagine what a boring and dull school she was having. Whenever we hear the word school, images of children having fun start running through our minds. This wasn't the case with Margie. She could neither play with her friends in the school playground, nor could they all come home together, nor could she think of helping other kids with the homework. Moreover, the mechanical teachers gave test after test even if one wasn't performing well without understanding the student's level of understanding.

