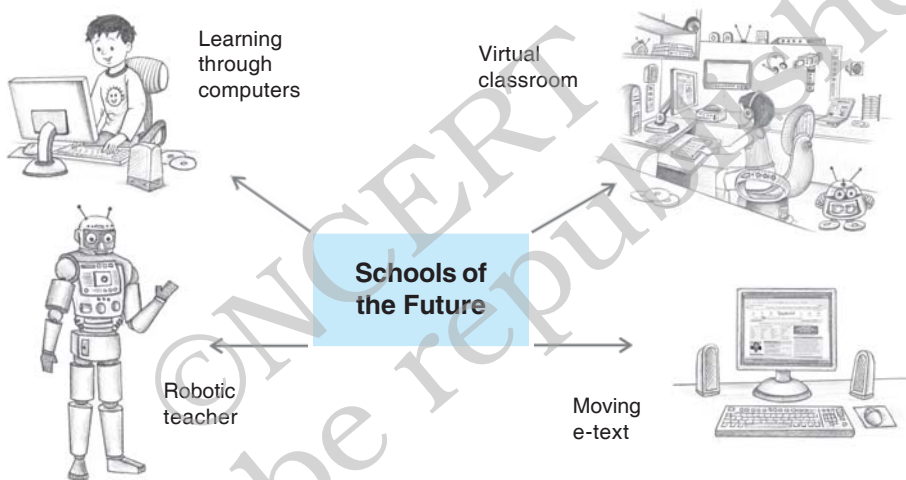




# 1. The Fun They Had

## BEFORE YOU READ

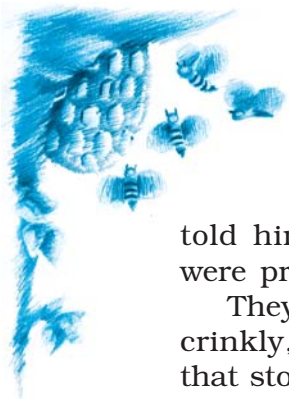
- *The story we shall read is set in the future, when books and schools as we now know them will perhaps not exist. How will children study then? The diagram below may give you some ideas.*



- *In pairs, discuss three things that you like best about your school and three things about your school that you would like to change. Write them down.*
- *Have you ever read words on a television (or computer) screen? Can you imagine a time when all books will be on computers, and there will be no books printed on paper? Would you like such books better?*

1. MARGIE even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed 17 May 2157, she wrote, "Today Tommy found a real book!"

It was a very old book. Margie's grandfather once said that when he was a little boy his grandfather



told him that there was a time when all stories were printed on paper.

They turned the pages, which were yellow and crinkly, and it was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to — on a screen, you know. And then when they turned back to the page before, it had the same words on it that it had had when they read it the first time.

*crinkly*: with many folds or lines

2. “Gee,” said Tommy, “what a waste. When you’re through with the book, you just throw it away, I guess. Our television screen must have had a million books on it and it’s good for plenty more. I wouldn’t throw it away.”

“Same with mine,” said Margie. She was eleven and hadn’t seen as many telebooks as Tommy had. He was thirteen.

She said, “Where did you find it?”

“In my house.” He pointed without looking, because he was busy reading. “In the attic.”

“What’s it about?”

“School.”

*attic*: a space just below the roof, used as a storeroom

3. Margie was scornful. “School? What’s there to write about school? I hate school.”

Margie always hated school, but now she hated it more than ever. The mechanical teacher had been giving her test after test in geography and she had been doing worse and worse until her mother had shaken her head sorrowfully and sent for the County Inspector.

*scornful*: contemptuous; showing you think something is worthless

4. He was a round little man with a red face and a whole box of tools with dials and wires. He smiled at Margie and gave her an apple, then took the teacher apart. Margie had hoped he wouldn’t know how to put it together again, but he knew how all right, and, after an hour or so, there it was again, large and black and ugly, with a big screen on which all the lessons were shown and the questions were asked. That wasn’t so bad. The part Margie hated

most was the slot where she had to put homework and test papers. She always had to write them out in a punch code they made her learn when she was six years old, and the mechanical teacher calculated the marks in no time.

*slot*: a given space, time or position

5. The Inspector had smiled after he was finished and patted Margie's head. He said to her mother, "It's not the little girl's fault, Mrs Jones. I think the geography sector was geared a little too quick. Those things happen sometimes. I've slowed it up to an average ten-year level. Actually, the overall pattern of her progress is quite satisfactory." And he patted Margie's head again.

*geared (to)*: adjusted to a particular standard or level

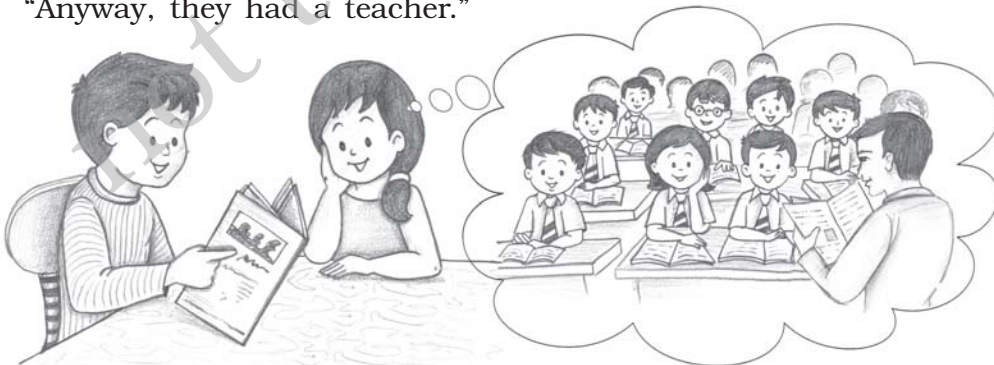
Margie was disappointed. She had been hoping they would take the teacher away altogether. They had once taken Tommy's teacher away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely.

So she said to Tommy, "Why would anyone write about school?"

6. Tommy looked at her with very superior eyes. "Because it's not our kind of school, stupid. This is the old kind of school that they had hundreds and hundreds of years ago." He added loftily, pronouncing the word carefully, "Centuries ago."

*loftily*: in a superior way

Margie was hurt. "Well, I don't know what kind of school they had all that time ago." She read the book over his shoulder for a while, then said, "Anyway, they had a teacher."



*They had a teacher... It was a man.*

“Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn’t a regular teacher. It was a man.”

“A man? How could a man be a teacher?”

“Well, he just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions.”

7. “A man isn’t smart enough.”

“Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher.”

“He knows almost as much, I betcha.”

Margie wasn’t prepared to dispute that. She said, “I wouldn’t want a strange man in my house to teach me.”

Tommy screamed with laughter. “You don’t know much, Margie. The teachers didn’t live in the house. They had a special building and all the kids went there.”

“And all the kids learned the same thing?”

“Sure, if they were the same age.”

8. “But my mother says a teacher has to be adjusted to fit the mind of each boy and girl it teaches and that each kid has to be taught differently.”

“Just the same they didn’t do it that way then. If you don’t like it, you don’t have to read the book.”

“I didn’t say I didn’t like it,” Margie said quickly. She wanted to read about those funny schools.

They weren’t even half finished when Margie’s mother called, “Margie! School!”

Margie looked up. “Not yet, Mamma.”

“Now!” said Mrs Jones. “And it’s probably time for Tommy, too.”

Margie said to Tommy, “Can I read the book some more with you after school?”

9. “May be,” he said nonchalantly. He walked away whistling, the dusty old book tucked beneath his arm.

Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her. It was always on at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday,

*regular*: here, normal; of the usual kind

*betcha* (informal): (I) bet you (in fast speech): I’m sure

*dispute*: disagree with

*nonchalantly*: not showing much interest or enthusiasm; carelessly



*The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen...*

because her mother said little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

The screen was lit up, and it said: "Today's arithmetic lesson is on the addition of proper fractions. Please insert yesterday's homework in the proper slot."

10. Margie did so with a sigh. She was thinking about the old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy. All the kids from the whole neighborhood came, laughing and shouting in the schoolyard, sitting together in the schoolroom, 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.

And the teachers were people...

The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: "When we add fractions  $\frac{1}{2}$  and ..."

Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.

ISAAC ASIMOV



## Thinking about the Text

### Activity

Calculate how many years and months ahead from now Margie's diary entry is.

- 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?
- 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?
  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?
- III. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).
  1. What kind of teachers did Margie and Tommy have?
  2. Why did Margie's mother send for the County Inspector?
  3. What did he do?
  4. Why was Margie doing badly in geography? What did the County Inspector do to help her?
  5. What had once happened to Tommy's teacher?
  6. Did Margie have regular days and hours for school? If so, why?
  7. How does Tommy describe the old kind of school?
  8. How does he describe the old kind of teachers?
- 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?
  2. Why did Margie hate school? Why did she think 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.

## Thinking about Language

### I. Adverbs

Read this sentence taken from the story:

They had once taken Tommy's teacher away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out *completely*.

The word *complete* is an adjective. When you add *-ly* to it, it becomes an adverb.

1. Find the sentences in the lesson which have the adverbs given in the box below.

awfully sorrowfully completely loftily  
carefully differently quickly nonchalantly

2. Now use these adverbs to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- (i) The report must be read \_\_\_\_\_ so that performance can be improved.
- (ii) At the interview, Sameer answered our questions \_\_\_\_\_, shrugging his shoulders.
- (iii) We all behave \_\_\_\_\_ when we are tired or hungry.
- (iv) The teacher shook her head \_\_\_\_\_ when Ravi lied to her.
- (v) I \_\_\_\_\_ forgot about it.
- (vi) When I complimented Revathi on her success, she just smiled \_\_\_\_\_ and turned away.
- (vii) The President of the Company is \_\_\_\_\_ busy and will not be able to meet you.
- (viii) I finished my work \_\_\_\_\_ so that I could go out to play.

#### Remember:

An adverb **describes action**. You can form adverbs by adding *-ly* to adjectives.

**Spelling Note:** When an adjective ends in **-y**, the **y** changes to **i** when you add *-ly* to form an adverb.

For example: angr-**y** → angr-**i**-ly

3. Make adverbs from these adjectives.

- |             |       |               |       |
|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| (i) angry   | _____ | (ii) happy    | _____ |
| (iii) merry | _____ | (iv) sleepy   | _____ |
| (v) easy    | _____ | (vi) noisy    | _____ |
| (vii) tidy  | _____ | (viii) gloomy | _____ |

## II. If Not and Unless

- Imagine that Margie's mother told her, "You'll feel awful *if* you *don't* finish your history lesson."
- She could also say: "You'll feel awful *unless* you finish your history lesson."

*Unless* means *if not*. Sentences with *unless* or *if not* are negative conditional sentences.

Notice that these sentences have two parts. The part that begins with *if not* or *unless* tells us **the condition**. This part has a verb in the present tense (look at the verbs *don't finish*, *finish* in the sentences above).

The other part of the sentence tells us about a **possible result**. It tells us what **will happen** (if something else doesn't happen). The verb in this part of the sentence is in the future tense (*you'll feel/you will feel*).

Notice these two tenses again in the following examples.

### *Future Tense*

- |                                 |               |                            |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| • There won't be any books left | <i>unless</i> | we preserve them.          |
| • You won't learn your lessons  | <i>if</i>     | you don't study regularly. |
| • Tommy will have an accident   | <i>unless</i> | he drives more slowly.     |

### *Present Tense*

Complete the following conditional sentences. Use the correct form of the verb.

1. If I don't go to Anu's party tonight, \_\_\_\_\_
2. If you don't telephone the hotel to order food, \_\_\_\_\_
3. Unless you promise to write back, I \_\_\_\_\_
4. If she doesn't play any games, \_\_\_\_\_
5. Unless that little bird flies away quickly, the cat \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing

A new revised volume of Issac Asimov's short stories has just been released. Order one set. Write a letter to the publisher, Mindfame Private Limited, 1632 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi, requesting that a set be sent to you by Value Payable Post (VPP), and giving your address. Your letter will have the following parts.





- Addresses of the sender and receiver
- The salutation
- The body of the letter
- The closing phrases and signature

Your letter might look like this:

Your address

---

---

---

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (DD/MM/YY)

The addressee's address

---

---

---

Dear Sir/Madam,

---

---

---

---

Yours sincerely,

Your signature

Remember that the language of a formal letter is different from the colloquial style of personal letters. For example, contracted forms such as 'I've' or 'can't' are not used.





## Speaking

In groups of four discuss the following topic.

'The Schools of the Future Will Have No Books and No Teachers!'

Your group can decide to speak *for* or *against* the motion. After this, each group will select a speaker to present its views to the entire class.

You may find the following phrases useful to present your argument in the debate.

- In my opinion ...
- I/we fail to understand why ...
- I wholeheartedly support/oppose the view that ...
- At the outset let me say ...
- I'd/we'd like to raise the issue of/argue against ...
- I should like to draw attention to ...
- My/our worthy opponent has submitted that ...
- On the contrary ...
- I firmly reject ...

*False science creates atheists; true science  
prostrates Man before divinity.*

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