

The Fun They Had—Isaac Asimov

Answers to NCERT Questions

Q.1. Thinking About The Text

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

1. How old are Margie and Tommy?

Ans: Margie is eleven years old and Tommy is thirteen years old.

2. What did Margie write in her diary?

Ans: Margie dated her diary as 17 May 2157 and wrote, “Today Tommy found a real book!”.

3. Had Margie ever seen a book before?

Ans: Margie had never seen a real book before.

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

Ans: She noticed the pages of the book were yellow and crinkly. The words were stationary and the pages could be turned physically. Also when one read it the second time, everything was the same as earlier. The book once read could be thrown away.

5. What do you think a telebook is?

Ans: A telebook is a virtual book that can be read on a screen. Millions of books can be installed and none needs to be thrown away. The words on the screen keep moving the way they were supposed to.

6. Where was Margie’s school? Did she have any classmates?

Ans: Margie’s school was actually a computer screen which was in a room, next to her bedroom. She didn’t have any classmates.

7. What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn?

Ans: Margie, Tommy and all the children learnt History, Geography and Maths as their subjects.

Q.2. 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 to by the speaker?

Ans: (i) Tommy says these words.

(ii) 'It' refers to the telebook.

(iii) The real book is being compared to the telebook.

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?

Ans:

(i) 'They' refers to the children who read the real book.

(ii) 'Regular' here means that the teacher teaching earlier was a teacher in the conventional sense of the word and not a mechanical teacher like theirs.

(iii) Here, the contrast is between the mechanical teacher and the human teacher, the man.

Q.3. Answer each of these questions in short paragraph. (about 30 words)

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

Ans: Margie and Tommy were taught by a mechanical teacher on the computer screen. All the lessons were flashed on the screen and they had to answer the questions that were asked. A slot was provided in the machine to insert all their homework and test papers.

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

Ans: Margie's mother sent for the County Inspector as Margie's performance in geography test was deteriorating. In spite of repeated tests given by the mechanical teacher, there seemed to be no progress.

3. What did he do?

Ans: The County Inspector took the mechanical teacher apart. He slowed up the geography section up to an average ten year level. Then he re-assembled the teacher back again.

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

Ans: Margie was doing badly in geography because the subject was set at a higher level in the mechanical teacher. He told her mother that she was not to be blamed for the drop in performance. He slowed down the level to suit Margie's age and assured her mother that she was progressing satisfactorily.

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

Ans: Once Tommy's teacher was taken away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely.

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

Ans: Yes, Margie had regular days and hours for school. Margie had to attend her school at the same time everyday except on Saturday and Sunday. Her mother insisted that little girls learnt better if they learnt 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. They had a man to teach them. All students went to a special building where all were taught the same thing, according to their respective ages.

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

Ans: Tommy described the old kind of teachers to be people who did not live in a house but in a special building. The students would go to this building to learn, where they were taught, according to their respective ages. The teacher gave them homework and asked them questions. A teacher taught many children at the same time.

Q.4. 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 school rooms that Margie and Tommy have in the story?

Ans: Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers to teach them. The teacher was a computer screen on which lessons were flashed/shown, explained, and then questions were asked. Thereafter, tests were given. All work had to be submitted in punch code, which was learnt at the age of six by all. The completed work had to be inserted in a slot that was provided on the machine. Assessment was done immediately. Every mechanical teacher was adjusted according to the age level of the child. The mechanical teacher lived in the house of the student. It was programmed to flash on the screen at a certain time each day except on Saturday and Sunday. It never fell ill, would assign homework regularly, questioned and tested without being prompted to do so. In case, there was any mechanical fault, a County Inspector was sent for, to rectify the error.

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

Ans: Margie's school was a computer screen in a room next to her bedroom. She had no classmates and learnt from a mechanical teacher. Of late, Margie had started to hate school more than ever as her performance in the geography test was worsening, and she hoped that the County Inspector wouldn't be able to put her teacher back together,

and she'd be off with the subject for a while. She hated the homework and the tests that she had to complete and submit systematically into the slot.

She thought the old schools must have been fun. She liked the thought that all the kids from the neighbourhood would be laughing and shouting in the schoolyard, sitting together in the schoolroom. They learned the same thing, 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 school in the story? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans: I would agree with Margie that schools today are more interesting and full of fun as compared to the mechanical schools. In Margie's days, schools constituted a computer screen placed in a room in the house. There was no interaction with other children as everyone studied in their own homes. All work was done in punch code and submitted in a slot in the computer screen. One can imagine how boring the school life must have been. Whenever we think of a school, we think of it as a building where students of the same age study together and are taught simultaneously by the same teacher/s. Students interact and also help one another with their studies. They also laugh and play.

Margie in her school could do none of these. There is no interaction between student and teacher which creates a problem in rectification after assessment. This is why, Margie's problem with geography could not be addressed. It required a human being in the form of the County Inspector to identify the problem and correct it.

Q.5. THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

Adverb

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

Ans: The sentences in the lesson which have the adverbs are:

Awfully: 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.

Sorrowfully: 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.

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

Loftily and Carefully: He added loftily, pronouncing the word carefully, "Centuries ago."

Differently: "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.

Quickly: "I didn't say I didn't like it, Margie said quickly.

Nonchalantly: "May be, he said 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.

Ans:

(i) carefully (ii) nonchalantly (iii) differently (iv) sorrowfully

(v) completely (vi) loftily (vii) awfully (viii) quickly

3. Make adverbs from these adjectives.

Ans:

Adjectives	Adverbs
(i)angry	angrily
(ii) happy	happily
(iii)merry	merrily

(iv)sleepy	sleepily
(v)easy	easily
(vi)noisy	noisily
(vii)tidy	tidily
(viii)gloomy	

Q.6. If Not and unless

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

(i) If I don't go to Anu's party tonight, _____

Ans: she will be very upset.

(ii) If you don't telephone the hotel to order food _____

Ans: we will have to go without food.

(iii) Unless you promise to write back, I _____

Ans: will not write to you.

(iv) If she doesn't play any games _____

Ans: we will teach her a new game.

(v) Unless that little bird flies away quickly, the cat _____

Ans: will feast on her.

Q.7. 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

Ans: Your letter might look like this:

M – 3256,

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New Delhi – 110024

January 15, 20xx

Mindfame Private Limited

Asaf Ali Road

New Delhi, 110003

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Book Release

It has been brought to my notice that a new and revised volume of Isaac Asimov's short stories has been released by Mindfame Private Limited. I enjoy his style of writing, and have read nearly all his books. I have been trying to buy the new book, but it is seeming to be fairly difficult to get a copy of the new edition. I would like to place an order for one set of the same, with your office.

I request you to kindly send it to the above address, by Value Payable Post (VPP) after reducing the discount that is being offered. It would be appreciated if you could confirm my order, and also let me know the expected date of receipt.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

(Simran)

Additional Questions

Extract Based Questions

(4 Marks each)

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions the follow:

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 when they read it the first time.

- (a)** When did Margie write her diary?
- (b)** What was peculiar about the book Tommy had found?
- (c)** Who revealed the information of printed story books?
- (d)** What was awfully funny about the printed books?

Ans:

- (a) Margie wrote her diary on the night of 17 May 2157.
- (b) The book Tommy had found, had crinkly yellow pages. The words were printed on the pages and did not move.
- (c) Margie's grandfather had been told about this by his grandfather when he was a little boy.
- (d) It was awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving the way they were supposed to as they did on a screen.

2. 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.

- (a) Why was Margie scornful?
- (b) Why did Margie hate her school 'more then ever'?
- (c) Which word in the passage means the same as 'dejection'?
- (d) Why was the County Inspector sent for?

Ans: (a) Margie was scornful because she could not understand why anyone would write about school. She hated school and the book was about school.

(b) She hated it 'more than ever' because her teacher was giving her test after test in geography and her performance was not good.

(c) Sorrowfully.

(d) The County Inspector was sent for because Margie's mother was very disappointed with her failure to perform well in geography.

3. 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."

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."

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

- (a) What school is Tommy talking about?

- (b) “Anyway, they had a teacher!” Who is ‘they’ and ‘teacher’ in the given line?
- (c) Which word in the passage is the opposite of ‘inferior’?
- (d) What do you find strange in Tommy’s interpretation of a “regular teacher”? Why does he do so?

Ans:

- (a) Tommy is talking about the old school that existed centuries ago.
- (b) ‘They’ refers to children taught centuries ago and ‘teacher’ was a man who taught in the old school.
- (c) The opposite of inferior is superior.
- (d) It is strange that Tommy is referring to the mechanical teacher as regular teacher. He does so because of the kind of teaching he has experienced. ‘Man’ was not a regular teacher.

4. “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.”

- (a) ‘You don’t know much’. Who said these words and what is ‘much’ referred to?
- (b) Where did the teachers in the old school teach?
- (c) Which word in the passage means the same as ‘argument’?
- (d) How could students learn the same things?

Ans:

- (a) Tommy said these words and ‘much’ refers to Margie not having enough knowledge about how teachers taught in the old school.
- (b) The teachers taught in a special building and all the kids went there.
- (c) The synonym of argument is dispute.
- (d) Children could learn the same things if they were of the same age group.

5. 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 neighbourhood 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 $\frac{1}{4}$..."

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

- (a) What did Margie like about the old school?
- (b) How did Margie's teacher teach her mathematics?
- (c) What was the advantage of the old school, according to Margie?
- (d) Why did Margie sigh?

Ans:

(a) Margie liked the fact that all the kids from the neighbourhood played, laughed and shouted together in the school yard. They sat and studied together in the schoolroom.

(b) Margie's teacher taught by flashing numbers and fractions on the screen.

(c) Margie felt that as they learned the same things, they could help each other with their work, besides the teachers were human beings.

(d) Margie followed the instructions and inserted her homework in the slot with a sigh because she hated school and was thinking about the old kind of schools.

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words: 2 marks each)

1. What did Margie's grandfather tell her about the old book?

Ans: Margie's grandfather told her that when he was a child, his grandfather had told him that stories were printed on paper.

2. Why did Tommy consider the book 'a waste'?

Ans: Tommy called the book 'a waste' because once the books were read, they were just thrown away. Whereas, the e-book had the capacity of holding more than a million books.

3. Who called for the County Inspector and why?

Ans: Margie's mother called for the County Inspector because Margie's performance in geography was very poor, inspite of repeated tests.

4. What hope did Margie have when the County Inspector come? Did her wish come true?

Ans: Margie had hoped that the County Inspector would not be able to repair the mechanical teacher. Her wish did not come true because he rectified the fault soon.

5. What was the fault with Margie's teacher, according to the County Inspector?

Ans: The County Inspector said that the geography sector was geared up a bit too fast and that was the reason for Margie's poor performance. He had adjusted the geography sector to an average ten year level. He also said that Margie's overall performance was good.

6. Describe the County Inspector.

Ans: The County Inspector was incharge of repairing any problem the mechanical teacher had. He was a round little man with a red face. He carried with him a whole box of tools with dials and wires. He offered an apple to Margie before attending the mechanical teacher.

7. How were the students taught in the future schools?

Ans: The mechanical teacher would flash the subject on the screen and start to explain. Then, work was assigned and tests were conducted. The students were taught punch code from the age of six. All work was written down in a punch code and then, the homework and tests were inserted in the slot in the mechanical teacher.

8. What kind of a teacher did the old schools have? How did they perform their task?

Ans: The old schools had a regular teacher in the form of a human being. The old school teachers interacted with their students in the class where students of the same age studied.

9. Where did Margie and the old school kids study?

Ans: Margie studied in a room next to her bedroom, whereas the 'old school' kids studied in a building made specially for the purpose.

10. Why was Margie's mother particular about regular study hours?

Ans: Margie's mother was particular about the regular study hours because she felt that kids learnt better, if they followed a routine.

Long Answer Questions (100-50 words: 8 marks each)

1. What is the difference between the two types of schools as mentioned in the lesson, 'The Fun They Had'?

Ans: The school of Margie's time was a computer screen which was kept in a room next to her bedroom. Students had to insert all tests and homework in a slot. They had to write them down in a punch code which they learnt at the age of six. The mechanical teacher calculated the tests in no time. On the other hand, in the old school, students went to a school building. They laughed and played in the playground. Students of the same age studied together. They helped and talked to each other. More importantly, the teachers were humans.

2. Where did Tommy find the real book? How was it different from the books that Margie and Tommy use?

Ans: Tommy found the real book in the attic of his house. The real book had stories printed on paper. The words stood still and when pages were turned back, it had the same words on it. In time, the pages of the book turn crinkly and yellow. After a book is read, it could be thrown away. However, the e-books Margie used, need not ever be thrown as it could hold millions of stories. The words kept moving on the screen. In case there was any problem, the County Inspector was called for, and he corrected any fault that was being encountered by the mechanical teacher or the screen of the computer.

3. If you were given a choice, which school would you prefer and why?

Ans: If I were given a choice, I would definitely opt for the old school as there is more interaction with peer group in the school ground and classroom. Students can help each other in studies. Human teachers can attend to all personal problems or issues immediately. In a real situation, problems are identified and solutions are arrived instantly. If it were the old school, Margie would not have had to undergo mental torture when she was facing problems with the geography sector that was set at a higher level. The problem was sorted only when the County Inspector slowed it up to an average ten year level. Learning is better in an atmosphere where human interaction is possible. A student learns much more in life, from real learning as compared to virtual learning.

4. How would you compare a mechanical teacher to a human teacher?

Ans: A teacher is a guide or a mentor who has the ability to understand human psychology. She should be able to interact well with the children and handle all their queries. A mechanical teacher, made of machines and wires, does not have an insight of the human psychology. As a result, they can simply give prior information without reading the psyche of the student. A human teacher knows a child completely. He/She works with empathy, love and care with the children. They work towards the mental, physical, intellectual and emotional development of children. Unlike the machine, that only gives information.

Self-Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

1. How important is the use of technology in education?
2. What is the environmental advantage of technology?
3. Write a small paragraph on the emotional trauma faced by Margie.
4. Do you agree with the view of Margie's mother on education? Explain.
5. Describe the mechanical teacher that Tommy and Margie have.

Long Answer Questions

1. Write an article for your school magazine on, "Technology a boon or a bane."
2. It was a very warm day. Unfortunately, the current supply had failed. Shyam had to use his computer to Complete the story and give it a suitable title.
3. You are Margie. Write a letter to the County Inspector, requesting him to introduce the old style of education.