

ENGLISH LITERATURE (BEEHIVE)
CHAPTER 01: THE FUN THEY HAD ~ Isaac Asimov
(Textbook Q&A)

- 1. How old are Margie and Tommy?**
Margie is 11 years old and Tommy is 13 years old.
- 2. What did Margie write in her diary?**
Margie wrote about the amazement she felt when she saw the real book.
- 3. Had Margie ever seen a book before?**
No, Margie had never seen a book before.
- 4. What things about the book did she find strange?**
She found that the book was yellow and crinkly and the words were not moving from their places unlike the computer screen.
- 5. What do you think a telebook is?**
A telebook was a mechanical book which is displayed on a screen. Through the use of technology, the lessons were imparted into the kids.
- 6. Where was Margie's school? Did she have any classmates?**
Margie's school was in her home itself, right next to her bedroom. No, she did not have any classmates.
- 7. What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn?**
Margie and Tommy learned geography, history and arithmetic.
- 8. What kind of teachers did Margie and Tommy have?**
Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers. They had large, black and ugly screens on which all the lessons were shown and questions were asked. These mechanical teachers had a fixed time 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 thereafter.
- 9. Why did Margie's mother send for the County Inspector?**
Margie had been given many tests in geography by the mechanical teacher, but there was no improvement in her performance. Marks went from bad to worse. It is for this reason that Margie's mother sent for the County Inspector to find out the reason because of which this was happening.
- 10. Why was Margie doing badly in geography? What did the County Inspector do to help her?**
Margie was doing badly in geography because the geography sector of the mechanical teacher had been geared a little too quick. The County Inspector told it wasn't her fault that she was not performing well. 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 progress pattern was satisfactory.
- 11. What had once happened to Tommy's teacher?**
Once, the history sector of Tommy's teacher had once blanked out completely.
- 12. Did Margie have regular days and hours for school? If so, why?**
Yes, Margie had regular days and hours for school. Her mother believed that learning at regular hours helped little children learn better. Her mechanical teacher was also on at the same time weekday and wasn't available on Saturdays and Sundays.

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

Tommy described the old kind of school as a specific place where children came and were taught by a human teacher. They studied the same subject at once and were taught uniformly.

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

Tommy said that the old kind of teachers were men, who taught the students inside a special building. The teachers taught the children in groups and gave them homework and also asked them questions.

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

Margie and Tommy had mechanical teachers. These teachers were basically large black screens on which the lessons were shown and questions were asked. These teachers were adjusted according to the age and potential of the student concerned. They had a slot in which the students had to put their homework and test papers. The mechanical teacher immediately calculated the marks for the answers written in punch codes by the students. However, these teachers were prone to technical and mechanical failure and troubles.

Their schools were in their homes itself. In fact, Margie's school was right next to her bedroom. Students did not have classmates. They had regular days and hours for school. The mechanical teacher always turned on at the same time every day except Saturdays and Sundays.

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

Margie hated school because it was not fun. She hated the large black screen and the way she had to insert the homework and test papers in the slot on the mechanical teacher. She disliked fact that she had to write her answers in a punch code. Besides, her hatred for school was amplified by her failure to fare well in the geography tests given by her mechanical teacher.

Margie imagined the old kind of school with 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. Also, the teachers were people, making the learning process more interactive. All these aspects made her believe that the old kind of school must have been fun.

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

Yes, I agree that schools today are more fun than the school in the story. Studying and answering questions seems to be a boring idea without the presence of classmates. Writing homework in punch codes and that too without anybody's help would be draining. Children develop a better understanding about each other and their surroundings when they go to a school and interact with others.

Human teachers are people are more understanding and accommodating than mechanical ones that are programmed to teach in a specific way. The excitement in waiting for the marks scored in exams is greater when one is sitting in a classroom with fellow students. It does not have the same effect when marks are calculated immediately after a test has been taken. Therefore, schools today are more fun than the school in the story as they are more interactive and promote a healthier way of learning.