

8th Grade Language Arts

Mrs. Kolo

Week of May 18-22

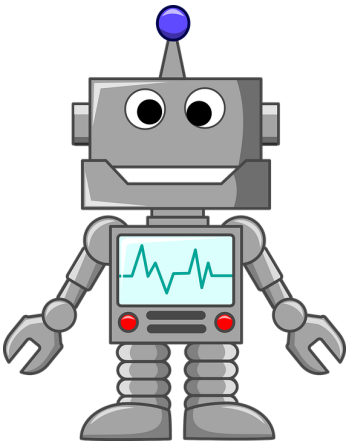
We never thought we would be going to school like THIS, right? Here is a fun story that might make you think about all of the ways people might go to school. Who knows??

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read the following story.
2. You can choose to do ONE of the following or you may do both if you can.
 - a. Answer study questions in complete sentences. Provide evidence from the text whenever possible.
 - b. Write a paragraph. The directions can be found right after the study questions. Use the graphic organizer provided and then write your paragraph.

The Fun They Had

by Isaac Asimov



Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 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.

"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."

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.

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 mark in no time.

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 quickly. 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.

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?"

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 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." "A man isn't smart enough." "Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher." "He can't. A man can't know as much as a 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."

"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?"

"Maybe," 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, 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."

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 on the homework and talk about it.

And the teachers were people...

The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: "When we add the 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.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1) What does Margie write in her diary? What can you infer from her using the word "real" to describe a book?
- 2) Looking at paragraph 2 and 3, what did Margie and Tommy think about the book at first? Cite textual evidence to show their impressions.
- 3) Looking at paragraph 10, explain Margie's perspective on school. Why does she have this perspective? Cite textual evidence.
- 5) What can we infer about computer education at home when the inspector tells Margie's mom in paragraph 11, "It's not the little girl's fault...I think the geography sector was geared a little too quick..." and "The overall pattern of her progress is quite satisfactory"?
- 6) How does Margie feel in paragraph 12 after the inspector gives her the apple and says her progress is satisfactory? Considering her feelings, what is one of the disadvantages of a computer teacher?
- 7) Why does Margie ask in paragraph 17 "How can a man be a teacher?"
- 8) When Margie says, "He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher," what does she express about the limitations of a human teacher? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

9) What does Margie's mom think a teacher must do in paragraph 27? Cite her words. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

10) At the end of the story in paragraph 37, what are the advantages Margie thinks about of the "old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy"? Which of these advantages do you think is most important?

12) With which claim would the author most likely agree?

- a) Children will learn faster and better in the future with technology.
- b) Computers are much better teachers than human teachers.
- c) Schools of the past did not do a good job of teaching children.
- d) Learning with others posing different ideas results in true learning.

Which quote from the text best supports your answer above?

- a) "a teacher has to be adjusted to fit the mind of each boy and girl it teaches"
- b) "He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher,"
- c) "Actually, her progress is quite satisfactory."
- d) "They learned the same things, so they could help one another on homework and talk about it."

14) List 4 advantages (at least 2 from the text) of studying at home with a computer teacher.

15) List 4 advantages (at least 2 from the text) of studying in a school with other students

Paragraph

Do you believe that it is better for people to learn from an individual computer-based tutor in their homes or in a traditional school? Cite evidence from this text and other examples from real life to support your claim.

Plan your paragraph

Topic Sentence: I believe it is better for people to learn from _____.

Reasons	Evidence (at least 1 from the text)
Conclusion: Restate your claim/topic sentence.	