

Important Questions & Answers on The Fun They Had

Extract-Based Questions and Answers

Extract 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!""

Question: What significant event did Margie record in her diary on May 17, 2157, and what made this finding so unusual for her?

Answer: On May 17, 2157, Margie recorded in her diary that "**Tommy found a real book!**". This was highly unusual for her because it was a "**very old book**" that her grandfather's grandfather had seen, where "**all stories were printed on paper**". Unlike the digital "telebooks" they were accustomed to, she found it "**awfully funny to read words that stood still instead of moving**" on a screen.

Extract 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.'"

Question: How did Tommy react to the physical book, and what does his reaction reveal about the nature of books in his time?

Answer: Tommy reacted to the physical book by exclaiming, "**what a waste**". He believed that once read, "**you just throw it away**". This reveals that in his time, books were primarily digital, referred to as "telebooks," which existed on "**television screen[s]**" and could hold "**a million books**" without being discarded. His perspective highlights the shift from tangible, consumable paper books to reusable, vast digital libraries.

Extract 3: "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."

Question: What was the immediate reason for Margie's increased hatred for school, and what action did her mother take as a result?

Answer: Margie's hatred for school intensified because her "**mechanical teacher had been giving her test after test in geography and she had been doing worse and worse**". Concerned by her declining performance, her mother "**shaken her head sorrowfully and sent for the County Inspector**" to examine the mechanical teacher.

Extract 4: "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."

Question: What was the County Inspector's diagnosis regarding Margie's poor performance in geography, and what solution did he implement?

Answer: The County Inspector diagnosed that the "geography sector was geared a little too quick" for Margie, indicating that the mechanical teacher's pace was beyond her current learning level. To help her, he "slowed it up to an average ten-year level," ensuring the difficulty matched her age and capacity. He also reassured her mother that Margie's "overall pattern of her progress is quite satisfactory".

Extract 5: "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."

Question: What key difference in teachers did Margie reflect upon, and what emotion did she associate with the schools of the past?

Answer: Margie reflected on the crucial difference that in old schools, "**the teachers were people**". While her own "**mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen**" with arithmetic problems, she found herself thinking about "**how the kids must have loved it in the old days**". She specifically considered "**the fun they had**," implying a strong sense of nostalgia and longing for the communal, human-led learning experience that was absent in her solitary, machine-taught environment.

Short Answer Questions (50 words each)

1. **How old are Margie and Tommy, and what kind of books are they familiar with?**

Margie is **eleven** years old and Tommy is **thirteen**. They are familiar with "**telebooks**," which are displayed on a "**television (or computer) screen**" and contain millions of books. Unlike physical books, the words on their screens are "**moving e-text**".

2. **What did Margie find strange about the "real book" Tommy discovered?**

Margie found several things strange about the physical book. She was amazed to see **words that stood still instead of moving** like on a screen. She also noted that when they turned back pages, the "**same words**" were there, which was different from her experience with telebooks.

3. **Where was Margie's school located, and did she have classmates?**

Margie's schoolroom was located "**right next to her bedroom**". She did not have any classmates in a traditional setting, as her learning took place individually with her "**mechanical teacher**". This highlights the isolated nature of education in her time.

4. **What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn from their mechanical teachers?**

Margie learned **arithmetic** and **geography** from her mechanical teacher. Tommy also learned subjects like **history**, as his teacher's "history sector had blanked out completely" at one point. The mechanical teachers provided various lessons and asked questions.

5. **Why did Margie's mother call for the County Inspector, and what was his occupation?** Margie's mother called for the County Inspector because Margie was "**doing worse and worse**" in her geography tests given by the mechanical teacher. The County Inspector's occupation appears to be that of a repairman or technician specializing in mechanical teachers, as he arrived with "**a whole box of tools with dials and wires**".

6. **What did the County Inspector do to fix Margie's mechanical teacher and improve her performance?**

The County Inspector took Margie's mechanical teacher apart. He determined that the "**geography sector was geared a little too quick**," so he "**slowed it up to an average ten-year level**". This adjustment was made to suit Margie's cognitive development and help her improve.

7. **What happened to Tommy's mechanical teacher in the past, and how did Margie react to this?**

Tommy's mechanical teacher was once "**taken away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely**". Margie was disappointed that her own teacher wasn't taken away for a similar period, as she was hoping they would remove it altogether.

8. **Did Margie have regular school hours? If so, why were they important according to her mother?**

Yes, Margie had regular school hours. Her mechanical teacher was "**always on at the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday**". Her mother believed that "**little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours**," emphasizing consistency for optimal learning.

9. **How did Tommy describe the "old kind of school" to Margie?**

Tommy described the "old kind of school" as a "**special building**" where "**all the kids went there**". He explained that these children "**learned the same thing**" if they were the same age, implying a communal learning environment, unlike their individualized setup.

10. **What was Margie's initial reaction to the idea of a human teacher, and why?**

Margie was surprised and skeptical about the idea of a human teacher. She asked, "**A man? How could a man be a teacher?**". She doubted a man could be "**smart enough**" to teach as much as her mechanical teacher, and she expressed discomfort with a "**strange man in my house to teach me**".

11. **How did Margie imagine the social aspect of the old schools?**

Margie imagined that in the old schools, "**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**". She thought they "**learned the same things, so they could help one another with the homework and talk about it**," emphasizing the communal and collaborative learning environment.

12. **What is the primary aim of the Beehive textbook according to the "Notes for the Teacher"?**

According to the "Notes for the Teacher," the Beehive textbook primarily aims at "**helping the child to read for meaning, and to learn to communicate in English with confidence and accuracy**". It emphasizes a **learner-friendly approach** where the child is central to the teaching-learning process.

13. **How does the Beehive textbook encourage vocabulary enrichment and grammar learning?**

The textbook attempts vocabulary enrichment through various tasks, including **matching words to meanings, word building, and using a dictionary**. For grammar, it draws attention to "**grammar-in-context**" that emerges from the reading text, such as the use of tenses, voice, and clauses.

14. What types of communication skills are targeted by the Beehive textbook, and how are they practiced?

The Beehive textbook targets **speaking and writing skills**. Speaking tasks involve **working in pairs or groups** to present arguments, express viewpoints, or enact plays. Writing tasks include producing newspaper reports, articles, argumentative pieces, narration, and description.

15. How does the textbook encourage students to engage with poetry, beyond just factual understanding?

The textbook encourages engagement with poetry by helping learners "explore this great source of language" and "derive the joy of learning through poetry". It guides them to "apprehend the poem through the visual, the auditory, the tactile, the intellectual, or the emotional channels" and understand the "suggestiveness of the images," moving beyond mere summary.

Long Answer Questions (120 words each)

1. How does "The Fun They Had" emphasize the stark contrast in the social and communal aspects of learning between Margie's highly individualized future education and the "old kind of school"? Discuss what Margie misses by not having classmates in a shared physical space.

"The Fun They Had" highlights a significant difference in learning environments by contrasting Margie's isolated future education with the communal "old kind of school". Margie's schoolroom is "right next to her bedroom", and she learns alone from a "mechanical teacher". This setup provides no social interaction or shared experience with peers. In stark contrast, the "old kind of school" involved a "special building" where "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". Margie deeply misses this collective experience, the camaraderie, and the joy of shared learning that she imagines the children in the past must have felt, leading her to think about "the fun they had".

2. The discovery of a "real book" is central to the story. Discuss the significance of this physical book to Margie and Tommy, contrasting its characteristics and their reactions to it with their experience of telebooks. What does the "real book" represent in the narrative?

The "real book" is central because it introduces Margie and Tommy to a past they had only heard about. This physical book is "very old" with "yellow and crinkly" pages, containing "words that stood still instead of moving". Tommy finds it a "waste" because, unlike their telebooks which hold "a million books" and are never thrown away, a physical book is considered disposable after reading. Margie is fascinated, though initially scornful about its topic ("School? What's there to write about school?"). However, it sparks her curiosity about "those funny schools". The "real book" represents a **tangible connection to the past, a different era of knowledge, and a physical interaction with text** that is absent in their digital world. It acts as a catalyst for Margie's reflection on the "fun" of older educational methods.

3. Margie's mother states that a teacher "has to be adjusted to fit the mind of each boy and girl". How does this philosophy of individualized mechanical teaching compare with the human teacher model of the "old schools" in terms of student engagement and the overall learning experience?

Margie's mother believes a mechanical teacher "**has to be adjusted to fit the mind of each boy and girl it teaches**". This means learning is highly individualized, as seen when the "**geography sector was geared a little too quick**" for Margie. While tailored, this system proves isolating; Margie "**hated school**" more than ever, experiencing "**test after test**" and doing homework in a "**slot**". Her engagement is low, marked by a "**sigh**" when starting lessons. In contrast, the **human teachers** in "old schools" were simply "**a man**" who "**just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions**". This model, while not individually geared, fostered **collective learning**: kids "**learned the same thing**" and "**could help one another with the homework and talk about it**". This communal aspect likely fostered greater student engagement and a more enjoyable learning experience, characterized by shared "**fun**".

4. The story "**The Fun They Had**" subtly critiques or raises questions about the complete digitalization of education. Discuss how the narrative explores the potential drawbacks of a solely computer-based learning system for children, beyond just the mechanics of learning.

"The Fun They Had" subtly critiques complete digitalization by highlighting its **social and emotional drawbacks**. Margie's school, with its "**mechanical teacher**" and classroom "**right next to her bedroom**," emphasizes **isolation** and the **absence of classmates**. This leads to a lack of social interaction, contrasting sharply with the "**laughing and shouting**" and mutual help seen in the old schoolyard. Margie's "**hated**" for her school and her "**sigh**" when submitting homework indicate a lack of joy and engagement. The rigid schedule, where the teacher is "**always on at the same time every day**," lacks spontaneity and human flexibility. The story suggests that while computer-based learning may be efficient, it risks losing vital elements like **human connection, collaborative learning, and the communal joy** that are crucial for a child's holistic development and positive learning experience.

5. The story concludes with Margie thinking about "**the fun they had**". Beyond simple nostalgia, what deeper insights does the narrative offer about the elements that truly make education enjoyable and effective, elements that seem to be lost in Margie's future classroom?

When Margie thinks about "**the fun they had**," it's more than just nostalgia; it highlights the essential elements missing from her digital education. The story suggests that **social interaction and community** are crucial for enjoyable learning. Margie yearns for the experience of "**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**". This communal setting allowed students to "**help one another with the homework and talk about it**," fostering **collaboration and peer support**. The presence of **human teachers**, rather than emotionless machines, also implied a deeper, more empathetic connection. Margie's constant frustration and sighing with her mechanical teacher contrast with the perceived joy of learning in a shared, human-centered environment, suggesting that **shared experiences, human connection, and collaborative problem-solving** are fundamental to making education truly enjoyable and effective.