

UNIT 6

The Fun They Had

Isaac Asimov



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Speak confidently and fluently in a wide range of contexts, for example, (conflict resolution, panel discussion, role-play, dialogue etc.) to fulfil different purposes.
- Comment on implied meaning, e.g. writer's viewpoint, relationships between characters.
- Explain whether predictions about the content of a text are acceptable or should be modified and why.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as give inferences drawn from text.
- Acquire and use appropriate words and phrases for reading, writing, speaking, and listening; independently gather vocabulary when considering a word or phrase important for comprehension or expression.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
 - Introduce a topic, organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aid comprehension.
 - Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
 - Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
 - Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
 - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.



Pre-reading:

- How do you think studying with a mechanical teacher and digital screens would be different from learning in a traditional school with human teachers and classmates?

Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2155, 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."



While-reading

Why did Tommy think printed books were a "waste,"?

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 her 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 she 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 her 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 over-all 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 them 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, "Well, 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 on 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 neighborhood



While-reading

Why did Margie think that a human teacher was not smart enough?

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** $1/2$ and $1/4$..." Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.

Theme

It highlights the contrast between modern, technology-driven education and traditional human-centered learning. The story shows how excessive dependence on machines can make learning lonely, mechanical, and less enjoyable. Through Margie's experiences, it suggests that personalized digital teaching may lack the warmth, interaction, and emotional connection of real classrooms. The idea of old schools reflects the importance of social learning, where students learn together, share ideas, and support one another. It also emphasizes that human teachers provide understanding and encouragement that machines cannot fully replace. Overall, the story reminds us that progress in technology should not take away the joy and human element of education.

About the author

Isaac Asimov was a famous American writer known for his works in science fiction and popular science. He was born in 1920 and showed great interest in reading and writing from an early age. Asimov wrote hundreds of books and is especially known for his stories about robots and futuristic worlds. His writing often explores the relationship between humans and technology, making complex ideas easy to understand. He remains one of the most influential science fiction authors of all time.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
attic	the space or room just below the roof of a house
betcha	informal way of saying "I bet you" (used to show certainty)
fractions	numbers that represent parts of a whole like $1/2$, $3/4$
insert	to put something into something else
loftily	in a proud or superior manner
nonchalantly	in a calm and unconcerned way, without showing much interest
printed	produced or written on paper using ink
sector	a part or section of something
shaken	past form of "shake," meaning moved suddenly or disturbed
ugly	unpleasant to look at
waste	something used carelessly or without value



Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. What did Margie write in her diary on May 17, 2155?
2. Where did Tommy find the real book?
3. Why did Margie and Tommy find the book strange and funny?
4. What was the book about, and how did Margie react to it?
5. Why did Margie dislike her mechanical teacher?
6. What did the County Inspector do to Margie's teacher?
7. How were old schools different from Margie's school?
8. What did Margie imagine about the children and schools of the past?

B. Choose the correct option.

1. What did Tommy find?
a) a robot b) a real book c) a computer d) a diary
2. Where was the book found?
a) in the classroom b) in the basement
c) in the attic d) in the library
3. What was the book about?
a) science b) space c) school d) machines
4. Who repaired Margie's mechanical teacher?
a) her father b) Tommy c) the county inspector d) her mother
5. What did Margie dislike most about her school?
a) the subjects b) the teacher's voice
c) the homework slot d) the classroom



Vocabulary and Grammar

Using appropriate words and phrases means selecting the correct and suitable vocabulary according to the situation so that ideas in reading, writing, speaking, and listening are clear, meaningful, and effective.

Example: Instead of saying "*the teacher was strange*," the story uses the phrase "mechanical teacher", which clearly explains that the teacher is a machine, not a human.

A. How do the words and phrases used in "The Fun They Had" help you understand the difference between Margie's school and present-day schools? Give examples from the text.



Oral Communication Skills

Speaking confidently and fluently means expressing ideas clearly, smoothly, and without unnecessary pauses, while maintaining proper tone, pronunciation, and eye contact. It shows that the speaker understands the topic and can communicate effectively.

Example: A student confidently says: *"Margie disliked her mechanical teacher because it gave her too many tests and was not as friendly as human teachers."*

A. Speak a few sentences about whether you would prefer a mechanical teacher or a human teacher, using clear and fluent sentences.



Writing Skills

Writing informative/explanatory texts means presenting facts, ideas, or information clearly to explain a topic. It focuses on giving details, descriptions, and examples so that the reader can easily understand the subject.

Example: *Margie's school was different from today's schools. She studied at home with a mechanical teacher that was adjusted to her level. The lessons were displayed on a screen, and she had to put her homework into a slot. Unlike modern schools, she did not have classmates to study and play with.*

A. Write a short paragraph of 5 to 6 sentences explaining how Margie's school is different from schools of today. Use clear and informative language.

For the
Teacher:



- Help the students choose the right words that clearly match their idea so others can easily understand them.
- Help the students speak clearly and smoothly without too many pauses, showing that they understand what they are saying.
- Help the students write in a clear way to explain facts or ideas so the reader can easily learn and understand the topic.