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## Asimov: robots vs teachers ?

Have you forgotten the key elements of his famous short story entitled **'The Fun They had'** ? Are you desperately cramming for your exams ? Thanks to our bloggers, here is a summary ready to refresh your memory !

**Proofread the following texts, correct and complete them, then choose the version you want to upload .**

Tommy finds a "real book", that is to say printed on paper. He shows it to his sister, Margie, who is not in the least interested in that discovery.

According to Margie's great grandfather all stories used to be printed on paper. Yet the children do not see the point in making books out of paper since once you have finished reading a page, it is no use keeping that page : they think you can just throw it away. Tommy considers it is a waste. To him electronic screens are better.

The book deals with school but Margie hates school and doesn't understand why someone would feel like writing about it.

She does very well in geography as her mechanical teacher is very supportive. He grades her homework in no time and encourages her whenever she fails. However the county inspector decides to slow it up because it is geared a little too quick for her. The young girl is keen on doing her homework, which has to be written in punch code and then fed into a slot in her mechanical teacher.

So she is surprised to hear Tommy explain to her that back in the old days a man would be the teacher. To her a man cannot be as knowledgeable as a mechanical teacher. Besides Tommy tells her that teachers didn't live in the kids' houses but the kids went to a "special building" where they were taught the same thing if they were the same age. This puzzles Margie because her uncle also told her human teachers had to adapt to every student's mind.

After their long talk, Margie still refuses to browse the old book as she won't read anything about school anyway.

When she is alone in her bedroom, the young girl starts daydreaming about the old days and wonders what it was like to be taught by human teachers and to go to school with other children. She tries to imagine the fun they had.

In this short story Asimov warns us against technology : in the future, we might be nostalgic of the old days, when children were taught in groups and by humans. However he clearly promotes the use of computers in education.

The story is set in the year 4157, when teaching is performed by automatons which have a huge information storage capacity. The main characters of this story are twins, Tommy and Margie. Tom, the older child, finds a real book in his cellar. The children are mesmerized by the object because the words on the page do not move like the words on the screen of their mechanical teacher.

Gradually Margie learns that not so long ago, children used to be taught together in a classroom in a special building . A real human was their teacher then, not a mechanical teacher. Besides, that man never gave homework because he was not skilled to mark papers and could not have known as much as a robot. However that human teacher could adapt to each student's needs and personality.

Margie gets bored with that discovery, so when her mother calls her because it is time for school, she runs to her room to have her lesson with her mechanical teacher . She does not waste her time imagining the fun that children in old schools must have had when they were taught by people.

In this short story, Asimov is very critical of the education system of the 1950s and can't wait to see robots replace teachers to improve it.