

talk  
to  
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

# Beehive

## 1: The Fun They Had

by

### Isaac Asimov

#### 1. Summary

This is a short story written by the famous American science fiction writer, Isaac Asimov (1920-1992). The story is set in the future, in 2157, and is about two children - Margie, a girl aged 11 years and Tommy, a boy aged 13 years. They 'attend' school at home. The teaching is computer based, by mechanical teachers, which don't work properly sometimes and have to be repaired by the County Inspector. The two children discover an old book printed on paper. This is so different from their books, which are made up of moving words on a computer screen. The old book tells them about schools in the olden days, (i.e. in our times) hundreds of years ago. They learn about classrooms, human teachers and children attending school together. Margie, who hates her school, thinks that the children in the olden days had much more fun in school – learning and playing together.

#### 2. Something Interesting

##### Robots in Education

Did you know that schools all over the world have already started to test the use of robots in the classroom?

Within the **next ten years, robots will be regularly used in classrooms around the world.** However, they work as a team with the teacher, not alone. This is because **robot teachers do not have feelings. They cannot help students with their emotional growth. A robot therefore must work with a human teacher and never alone.**

Robots that look like humans are already teaching students at a school in Bangalore. Robots impart lessons in five subjects to about 300 students in Classes VII to IX. The 5 foot 7 inch robots, dressed in formal female attire, do not replace real teachers. They help them by teaching lessons and replying to FAQs (frequently asked questions) from students. In Finland, schools have started testing a robot called Elias. Having fun is an important part of effective learning and so Elias has been programmed to dance and to encourage students to sing

and dance as well. Elias can also **speak and understand 23 different languages**.

This is what Elias looks like.



Click on the link below to see Elias in action.

<https://youtu.be/O1qTVtFUxjw>

### 3. Vocabulary

1. **Crinkly** – with many folds or lines.  
The dress that she was wearing was made up of **crinkly** material.
2. **Pointed** – to show position or direction of something usually using your hand or fingers.  
The boy **pointed** towards the house and said that he lived there.
3. **Attic** – a space in a house just below the roof, used mainly for storing things.  
He found some old photo albums in a box in the **attic**.
4. **Scornful** – showing strong feeling of disrespect for someone or something that you think is stupid or has no value.  
Priya was **scornful** about the painting done by her younger brother.
5. **Mechanical** – operated by machines or connected to machines or their parts.  
This company makes **mechanical** parts for bicycles.

6. **Sorrowfully** – in a very sad way.  
She shook her head **sorrowfully** when she heard that her son had failed his exams.
7. **Dials** – usually round parts of machines that show some measurement such as time, speed, etc.  
The man checked the **dials** of the machines to see if they were working alright.
8. **Slot** – a given space, time or position.  
Sunil was given a time **slot** in the afternoon for his interview.
9. **Calculated** – to find out the number or amount of something by adding, taking away, multiplying or dividing.  
His father quickly **calculated** how much money was required for the bus journey.
10. **Geared (to)** – adjusted for a particular standard or level.  
The lessons were **geared** towards helping the students learn English.
11. **Overall** – including all people or things, in general and not something specific.  
The **overall** progress of the group of students was very good.
12. **Pattern** – a particular way in which something is done, is organised or happens.  
The **pattern** of living has been changing over the past years.
13. **Satisfactory** – good or good enough for a particular need or purpose.  
The children found a **satisfactory** answer to the question that was troubling them.
14. **Disappointed** – unhappy because something or someone was not as good as you expected, or because something didn't happen.  
His parents were very **disappointed** with his results.
15. **Altogether** – in total, completely.  
They should remove that part of the story from the book **altogether**.
16. **Sector** – part of an area of activity.  
Sunita lived in **Sector 7** of the township.  
The government is giving generous grants in the sports **sector**.

17. **Completely** – in every way possible, in every part, totally.  
I **completely** forgot about my homework.
18. **Superior** – better in quality or greater than somebody or something else.  
The other school's football team was far **superior** to ours.
19. **Loftily** - in a way that shows a belief that you are worth more than other people.  
The little girl looked at the dresses **loftily** and said that she didn't like any of them.
20. **Pronouncing** – saying something in a particular way. Also to announce something in a formal way.  
Sunil will be **pronouncing** the verdict on the debate soon.
21. **Centuries** – periods of 100 years.  
Emperor Ashoka ruled over a large part of India **centuries** ago.
22. **Regular** - following a pattern, especially with the same time or space in between each thing and the next.  
She took her **regular** route to school.
23. **Betcha** – a way of saying or writing 'I bet you' in an informal way, meaning I am sure (not to be used in formal speech or writing)  
I **betcha** you didn't know the answer to that question.
24. **Dispute** – to disagree.  
Sona did not want to dispute the answer given by the teacher.
25. **Screamed** – gave a loud shout because you were hurt, frightened, excited, etc.  
The children **screamed** with laughter when they saw the joker.
26. **Adjusted** - changed something slightly to make it more suitable for a new set of conditions or to make it work better.  
The nurse **adjusted** the pillows on the bed so that the patient could lie down comfortably.
27. **Probably** - something is likely to happen or to be true.  
The boys are working hard and will **probably** finish building the wall by this evening.

28. **Nonchalantly** – not showing much interest, in a calm and relaxed way, showing no sign of worry.  
He was leaning **nonchalantly** against the wall.
29. **Whistling** – making a high sound or a musical tune by forcing your breath out when your lips are almost closed.  
She was **whistling** to the dog to call it back.
30. **Tucked** – pushed, folded or turned the ends or edges of clothes, paper, etc. so that they are held in place or look neat.  
Her father **tucked** the sheets in neatly to make the bed.
31. **Beneath** - in or to a lower position than somebody or something; under somebody or something.  
They found the paper hidden **beneath** some books.
32. **Sigh** – the act of letting out a long deep breath that can be heard when disappointed, sad or tired.  
Sunita was very tired and she sat down with a **sigh**.
33. **Neighborhood** - a district or an area of a town.  
They thought they were staying in a safe **neighborhood**, but their house was robbed when they were away on a holiday.

#### 4. Activity

Calculate how many years and months ahead from now Margie's diary entry is.

#### 5. Questions

- I. Answer these questions in a few words or a couple of sentences each.
  1. How old are Margie and Tommy?
  2. What did Margie write in her diary?
  3. Had Margie ever seen a book before?
  4. What things about the book did she find strange?
  5. What do you think a telebook is?
  6. Where was Margie's school? Did she have any classmates?
  7. What subjects did Margie and Tommy learn?

- II. Answer the following with reference to the story.**
- 1. "I wouldn't throw it away."  
(i) Who says these words?  
(ii) What does 'it' refer to?  
(iii) What is it being compared with by the speaker?**
  - 2. "Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn't a regular teacher. It was a man."  
  
(i) Who does 'they' refer to?  
(ii) What does 'regular' mean here?  
(iii) What is it contrasted with?**
- III. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).**
- 1. What kind of teachers did Margie and Tommy have?**
  - 2. Why did Margie's mother send for the County Inspector?**
  - 3. What did he do?**
  - 4. Why was Margie doing badly in geography? What did the County Inspector do to help her?**
  - 5. What had once happened to Tommy's teacher?**
  - 6. Did Margie have regular days and hours for school? If so, why?**
  - 7. How does Tommy describe the old kind of school?**
  - 8. How does he describe the old kind of teachers?**
- IV. Answer each of these questions in two or three paragraphs (100 –150 words).**
- 1. What are the main features of the mechanical teachers and the schoolrooms that Margie and Tommy have in the story?**
  - 2. Why did Margie hate school? Why did she think the old kind of school must have been fun?**
  - 3. Do you agree with Margie that schools today are more fun than the school in the story? Give reasons for your answer.**

## 6. Grammar

### I. Adverbs

Read this sentence taken from the story:

They had once taken Tommy's teacher away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely. The word complete is an adjective. When you add -ly to it, it becomes an adverb.

Click on the links below to understand what are adjectives and adverbs.

1. An adjective : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pt-cjNaErxl>
2. An adverb : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3RaBB7IDZc>

1. Find the sentences in the lesson which have the adverbs given in the box below.

awfully sorrowfully completely loftily  
carefully differently quickly nonchalantly

2. Now use these adverbs to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.
  - i. The report must be read \_\_\_\_\_ so that performance can be improved.
  - ii. At the interview, Sameer answered our questions \_\_\_\_\_, shrugging his shoulders.
  - iii. We all behave \_\_\_\_\_ when we are tired or hungry.
  - iv. The teacher shook her head \_\_\_\_\_ when Ravi lied to her.
  - v. I \_\_\_\_\_ forgot about it.
  - vi. When I complimented Revathi on her success, she just smiled \_\_\_\_\_ and turned away.
  - vii. The President of the Company is \_\_\_\_\_ busy and will not be able to meet you.
  - viii. I finished my work \_\_\_\_\_ so that I could go out to play.



**Remember:**

An adverb **describes action**. You can form adverbs by adding **-ly** to adjectives

**Spelling Note:** When an adjective ends in **-y**, the **y** changes to **i** when you add **-ly** to form an adverb.

*For example:* angr-**y** → angr-**i**-ly

Click on the following link for some more sentences to practice

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/adverbs-or-adjectives-exercise-1.html>

**3. Make adverbs from these adjectives.**

- i. angry
- ii. happy
- iii. merry
- iv. sleepy
- v. easy
- vi. noisy
- vii. tidy
- viii. gloomy

**II. If not and Unless**

- Imagine that Margie's mother told her, "You'll feel awful *if* you don't finish your history lesson."
- She could also say: "You'll feel awful *unless* you finish your history lesson."

***Unless* means *if not*. Sentences with *unless* or *if not* are negative conditional sentences. Notice that these sentences have two parts. The part that begins with *if not* or *unless* tells us the *condition*.**

**This part has a verb in the present tense (look at the verbs *don't finish*, *finish* in the sentences above).**

**The other part of the sentence tells us about a *possible result*. It tells us what *will happen* (if something else doesn't happen). The verb in this part of the sentence is in the future tense (*you'll feel/you will feel*). Notice these two tenses again in the following examples.**

***Future Tense******Present Tense***

- a. There won't be any books left unless we preserve them.  
b. You won't learn your lessons if you don't study regularly.  
c. Tommy will have an accident unless he drives more slowly.

Complete the following conditional sentences. Use the correct form of the verb.

1. If I don't go to Anu's party tonight, \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If you don't telephone the hotel to order food \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Unless you promise to write back, I \_\_\_\_\_.
4. If she doesn't play any games, \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Unless that little bird flies away quickly, the cat \_\_\_\_\_.

**7. Writing Exercise**

1. A new revised volume of Isaac Asimov's short stories has just been released. Order one set. Write a letter to the publisher, Mindfame Private Limited, 1632 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi, requesting that a set be sent to you by Value Payable Post (VPP), and giving your address. Your letter will have the following parts.
  - Addresses of the sender and receiver
  - The salutation
  - Body of the letter
  - The closing phrases and signature

Your letter might look like this:

Your address

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ (DD/MM/YY)

The addressee's address

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*Dear Sir/Madam,*

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*Yours sincerely,*

Your signature

Remember that the language of a formal letter is different from the colloquial style of personal letters. For example, contracted forms such as 'I've' or 'can't' are not used.

## 2. Practice

Imagine you are in charge of the Computer Department of XYZ School, Pushp Vihar New Delhi and you plan to set up a new Computer lab. Write a letter to the sales manager of Capital Electronics, Connaught Place, New Delhi-1 placing order for 8 more computers for the new lab.