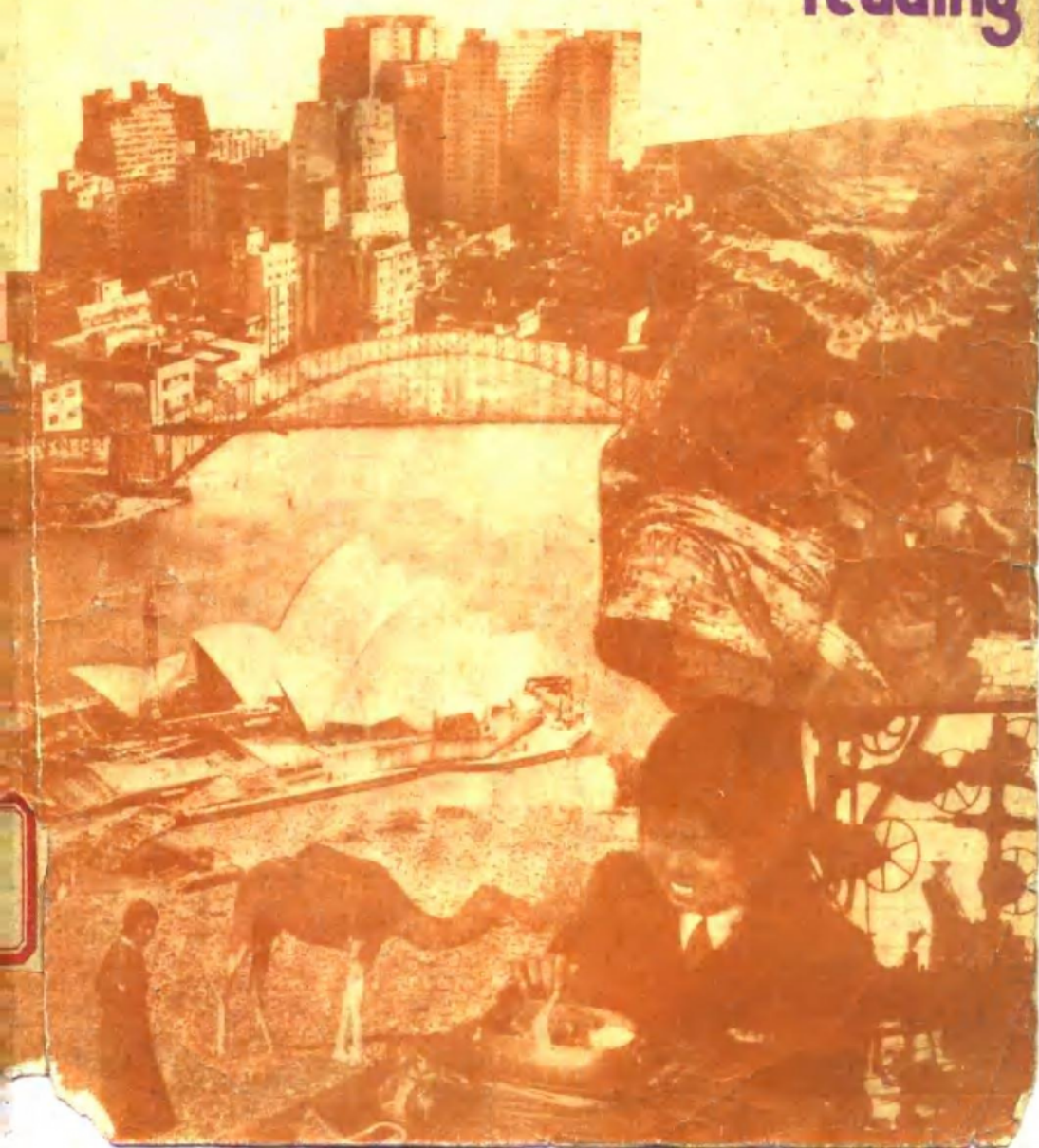


W.W.S. Bhasker
N.S. Prabhu

English through reading



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ENGLISH THROUGH READING

W. W. S. Bhasker

and

N. S. Prabhu

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Introduction

The twenty reading passages in this volume have been taken from modern English writings on a variety of topics—of scientific, literary and general interest. They are arranged in a graded series, the grading being based on an assessment of difficulty level in terms of vocabulary, syntax and thought-content. A quick comparison of the first passage with the last gives one an idea of the initial level assumed and the final level aimed at.

These passages are used for two main purposes: to increase the *complex skills* of reading and writing; and to offer remedial help on certain *elements of language*, viz., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation. Both these tasks have been attempted through a series of exercises. A basic assumption in writing these exercises has been that the subconscious process of learning a language is active when the learner's mind is consciously occupied with challenging tasks which call for the use of language.

The comprehension exercises seek to increase two kinds of reading ability: the 'global' questions of *Comprehension-I* are meant to make the student perceive the overall organization of matter—facts, ideas, arguments or experience—in the passage, while the 'local' questions of *Comprehension-II* direct attention to detail, including suggestions, implications and particular expressions.

The composition exercises range from highly controlled 'rewriting' tasks to a fairly free expression of the student's own views or arguments. They include writing

on a given model, writing with given facts, writing dialogues, letters, summaries and assessments. They provide a good deal of practice in organization, rearranging given sentences, and emphasizing parallelisms and contrasts.

The exercises on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation deal with items and features which are, by and large, common problems of learners of English at this level. In addition to providing controlled practice on such items, these exercises make the student go back to the passage again and again to observe details which he might otherwise miss. They also provide a model on which teachers can frame their own exercises in order to deal with the specific weaknesses of a particular set of students.

Apart from the pronunciation exercises, which call for the teacher's active guidance in the form of demonstration of the sound features concerned, most exercises are such that students can work more or less independently, the teacher coming in only to check, to clarify and to organize discussion on points of general interest or on matters in which different views are possible. Indeed, such student-centred teaching procedures are very necessary for an effective use of these materials: teacher-centred procedures, such as explication of the text by the teacher, will leave the class with no time to go through these exercises.

The kind of teaching procedures that we envisage and the kind of skill-based examinations which we recommend are outlined and exemplified in the *Teacher's Manual*.

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Pronunciation Key

Symbol

*Transcription of key word
using IPA symbols*

Key word

I Vowels and Diphthongs

1.	i:	/ki:/	key
2.	i	/pit/	pit
3.	e	/pet/	pet
4.	æ	/kæt/	cat
5.	ɑ:	/kɑ:d/	card
6.	ɔ:	/kɔ:t/	caught
7.	ɒ	/kɒt/	cot
8.	u	/put/	put
9.	u:	/mu:n/	moon
10.	ʌ	/sʌn/	sun
11.	ɔ:	/bɜ:d/	bird
12.	ə	/əbaut/	about
13.	ei	/plei/	play
14.	ou	/roud/	road
15.	ai	/taim/	time
16.	au	/haus/	house
17.	ɔi	/bɔi/	boy
18.	ɪə	/piə*/	peer
19.	ɛə	/heə*/	hair
20.	ʊə	/tuə*/	tour

II Consonants

b	/bet/	bet
p	/pet/	pet
d	/din/	din
t	/tin/	tin
g	/giv/	give
k	/kʌm/	come
ð	/ðæt/	that
θ	/θin/	thin
v	/vain/	vine
f	/fain/	fine
z	/zu:/	zoo
s	/sin/	sin
ʒ	/meʒə*/	measure
ʃ	/ʃip/	ship
h	/hen/	hen
m	/men/	men
n	/nain/	nine
ŋ	/kiŋ/	king
r	/ran/	run
l	/lip/	lip
dʒ	/dʒʌmp/	jump
tʃ	/tʃip/	chip
j	/jes/	yes
w	/went/	went

*An asterisk indicates that the 'r' is pronounced if the following word begins with a vowel sound.

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CIVILIZATION & HISTORY

C.E.M. Joad



- 1 Most of the people who appear most often and most gloriously in the history books are great conquerors and generals and soldiers, whereas the people who really helped civilization forward¹ are often never mentioned at all. We do not know who first set a broken leg,² or launched a seaworthy boat, or calculated the length of the year, or manured a field; but we know all about the killers and destroyers. People think a great deal of them, so much so that on all the highest pillars in the great cities of the world you will find the figure of a conqueror or a general or a soldier. And I think most people believe that the greatest countries are those that have beaten in battle the greatest number of other countries and ruled over them as conquerors. It is just possible they are, but they are not the most civilized. Animals fight; so do savages; hence to be good at fighting is to be good in the way in which an animal or a

savage is good, but it is not to be civilized. Even being good at getting other people to fight for you and telling them how to do it most efficiently—this, after all, is what conquerors and generals have done—is not being civilized. People fight to settle quarrels. Fighting means killing, and civilized peoples ought to be able to find some way of settling their disputes other than by seeing which side can kill off the greater number of the other side, and then saying that that side which has killed most has won. And not only has won, but, because it has won, has been in the right. For that is what going to war means; it means saying that might is right.

- 2 That is what the story of mankind has on the whole been like. Even our own age has fought the two greatest wars in history, in which millions of people were killed or mutilated. And while today it is true that people do not fight and kill each other in the streets—while, that is to

¹helped civilization forward helped civilization to move forward, or make progress.

²set a broken leg correctly fixed the bone in a broken leg so that the bone healed properly.

say, we have got to the stage of keeping the rules and behaving properly to each other in daily life—nations and countries have not learnt to do this yet, and still behave like savages.

- 3 But we must not expect too much. After all, the race of men has only just started. From the point of view of evolution, human beings are very young children indeed, babies, in fact, of a few months old. Scientists reckon that there has been life of some sort on the earth in the form of jelly-fish and that kind of creature for about twelve hundred million years; but there have been men for only one million years, and there have been civilized men for about eight thousand years at the outside.³ These figures are difficult to grasp; so let us scale them down.⁴ Suppose that we reckon the whole past of living creatures on the earth as one hundred years; then the whole past of man

works out at about one month, and during that month there have been civilizations for between seven and eight hours. So you see there has been little time to learn in, but there will be oceans of time⁵ in which to learn better. Taking man's civilized past at about seven or eight hours,⁶ we may estimate his future, that is to say, the whole period between now and when the sun grows too cold to maintain life any longer on the earth, at about one hundred thousand years. Thus mankind is only at the beginning of its civilized life, and as I say, we must not expect too much. The past of man has been on the whole a pretty beastly business, a business of fighting and bullying and gorging and grabbing and hurting. We must not expect even civilized peoples not to have done these things. All we can ask is that they will sometimes have done something else.

From *The Story of Civilization*
(A. D. Peters & Co. 1962)

Glossary

bully (v) /'buli/ frighten or hurt those who are weak
efficiently (adv) /e'fɪʃəntli/ in such a way as to get good results
evolution (n) /i:və'l(j)u:ʃən/ the gradual development of living things from earlier forms (as stated in Darwin's famous 'Theory of Evolution')
gloriously (adv) /'glɔ:riəsli/ with great

fame or honour
gorge (v) /gɔ:dʒ/ eat a great deal
grab (v) /græb/ take things by force
launch (v) /ləʊnt/ start sailing a (new) ship or boat
mutilate (v) /'mju:tɪleɪt/ injure seriously, e.g. make someone lose a hand or leg
seaworthy (adj) /si:'wɔ:ði/ fit for sailing in the sea

Comprehension—I

1. This essay can be divided into two main parts, although it has three paragraphs. Where do you think the second part begins—at the beginning of the second paragraph or of the third?
2. Which of the following sentences gives the best summary of the first part?
 - (a) Some of the people who helped civilization forward are not mentioned at all in history books.

³at the outside at (the) most.

⁴scale them down put them on a smaller scale (as we do with maps).

⁵oceans of time plenty of time.

⁶taking man's civilized past at about seven or eight hours if we imagine that man's civilized past (which is really about eight thousand years) is only about seven or eight hours. (This is an example of 'scaling down'.)

- (b) Conquerors and generals have been our most famous men, but they did not help civilization forward.
- (c) It is true that people today do not fight or kill each other in the streets.
- 3. Which of the following sentences best summarizes the second part of the essay?
 - (a) In order to understand the long periods of history, we have to scale them down to shorter periods.
 - (b) The past of man has been on the whole a pretty beastly business.
 - (c) Mankind is only at the beginning of civilized life; so we must not expect a great deal of civilization at this stage.
- 4. What examples does the author give of people who really helped civilization forward?
- 5. In what way are great soldiers similar to animals?
- 6. Are people today more civilized in any way than in the past? If so, in what way?
- 7. What were the earliest forms of life on this earth?
- 8. When will there be no life on this earth, according to the author?
- 9. The word 'figure' is used both in the first paragraph and in the third. Does it have the same meaning in both places? If not, what are its two different meanings?
- 10. Is the author hopeful about the future of civilization? How do you know?

Comprehension—II

Answer these questions by choosing the best alternative (a, b, c or d) under each. Think carefully before you make your choice.

- 1. In the first sentence, the author says that
 - (a) most history books were written by conquerors, generals and soldiers.
 - (b) no one who really helped civilization forward is mentioned in any history book.
 - (c) history books tell us far more about conquerors and soldiers than about those who helped civilization forward.
 - (d) conquerors, generals and soldiers should not be mentioned in history books.
- 2. On all the highest pillars in the great cities of the world, we find
 - (a) the figure of the same conqueror or general or soldier.
 - (b) the figure of some conqueror or general or soldier.
 - (c) a figure representing the number of conquerors, generals and soldiers in that country.
 - (d) the figure of a person who helped civilization forward.
- 3. Most people believe that the greatest countries are
 - (a) those that built the highest pillars.
 - (b) those that were beaten in battle by the greatest number of other countries.
 - (c) those that were ruled by the greatest number of conquerors.
 - (d) those that won the greatest number of battles against other countries.
- 4. In the author's opinion, the countries that ruled over a large number of other countries are
 - (a) certainly not the greatest in any way.
 - (b) neither the greatest nor the most civilized.
 - (c) possibly the most civilized but not the greatest.
 - (d) possibly the greatest in some sense but not the most civilized.
- 5. The author says that civilized people
 - (a) should not have any quarrels to settle.
 - (b) should not fight when there are no quarrels to settle.
 - (c) should settle their quarrels without fighting.
 - (d) should settle their quarrels by seeing which side can kill off the greater number of the other side.
- 6. 'That is what going to war means; it means saying that might is right.' The meaning of this sentence is that
 - (a) those who fight believe that the winner is right and the loser wrong.
 - (b) only those who are powerful should go to war.

- (c) those who are right should fight against those who are wrong.
 (d) in a war only those who are powerful will win.
7. 'Even our own age has fought the two greatest wars in history.' The author says this in order to show that our own age is
 (a) different from those of the past.
 (b) not much better than those of the past.
 (c) much better than those of the past.
 (d) not so civilized as those of the past.
8. 'From the point of view of evolution, human beings are very young children indeed.' The author says this in order to show that
 (a) very young children are not civilized.
 (b) evolution does not help civilization forward.
 (c) human beings have learnt very little in a very long time.
 (d) human beings are still at the beginning of their life on this earth.
9. The scale which the author uses for representing time is
 (a) one month=one million years.
 (b) one hundred years=eight thousand years.
 (c) one year=one million years.
 (d) one month=twelve hundred million years.
10. 'We must not expect even civilized peoples not to have done these things.' This suggests that
 (a) those who have done any fighting and bullying cannot be considered civilized.
 (b) there is nothing wrong if civilized people do some fighting and bullying.
 (c) even civilized people have done some fighting and bullying.
 (d) civilized people have never done any fighting and bullying.

Spelling

Copy and complete the following words by filling in the blanks with the correct letter(s).

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. evolu...ion | 5. forw...rd | 9. sav...ge |
| 2. ap...ar | 6. pill...r | 10. cr...ture |
| 3. bel...ve | 7. gen...l | 11. d...pute |
| 4. conquer...rs | 8. c...lized | 12. quar...l |

Pronunciation

Practise saying the following words with the correct stress. You must stress the syllable immediately after the stress mark (').

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. 'calculate | 5. 'possible | 9. e'fficient |
| 2. 'gloriously | 6. 'scientist | 10. man'kind |
| 3. 'mutilate | 7. ma'nure | 11. be'have |
| 4. 'estimate | 8. des'troyer | 12. main'tain |

Vocabulary—I

Find single words in this essay which have roughly the meanings given below.

Example: senior officer in the army=general.

1. uncivilized person
2. fertilized
3. image of a person made from stone, metal etc.
4. quarrel or difference of opinion
5. strength or power

6. all human beings considered together
7. boneless sea-animal which evolved very early on
8. count or estimate
9. as bad as animals in behaviour
10. causing pain

Vocabulary—II

Match the words given under A with the meanings given under B. List B has some extra items.

- | A | B |
|---------------|--|
| 1. grab | (a) gradual development |
| 2. mutilate | (b) honourable, famous |
| 3. seaworthy | (c) a straight, tall support |
| 4. reckon | (d) good at producing results |
| 5. conqueror | (e) fit to sail in the sea |
| 6. glorious | (f) think (on the basis of a calculation) |
| 7. bully | (g) get hold of |
| 8. pillar | (h) one who defeats another country |
| 9. evolution | (i) be cruel to someone weaker |
| 10. efficient | (j) destroy or injure an important part |
| | (k) one who gets other people to fight for him |
| | (l) put things on a smaller scale |
| | (m) an officer of the navy |

Vocabulary—III

Copy out the following paragraph and fill in the blanks with suitable words or phrases from the passage. All the missing words appear in paragraph 3.

Example: *From view of evolution, human beings are very young children.*

From the point of view of evolution, human beings are very young children.

Scientists believe that there has been life of some on the earth about twelve hundred million years. Such a large figure is difficult, so let us scale it and reckon it one hundred years. We then find that man has been the earth for about a month, and civilized man for only seven or eight hours. So you mankind is only at the of its civilized life, and we must not expect much.

Grammar—I

Observe the following two sentences:

- (a) Many people are mentioned in our history books.
 - (b) The people who are mentioned most often in our history books are great soldiers and conquerors.
- The first sentence is about people in general. The second sentence, on the other hand, speaks of a particular group of people—those who are mentioned most often in our history books. When we refer to particular things or persons, we use the definite article, 'the'.

Some sentences like (a) are given below. Rewrite them in the form of (b), using the hints given in brackets.

1. (a) Many people are glorified in history books.
(b) (... who are glorified ... are not the most civilized.)
2. (a) Statues are often found on tall pillars.

- (b) (... which are found ... are usually of conquerors and generals.)
3. (a) Nations still fight each other to settle disputes.
(b) (... which still fight ... are behaving like savages.)
 4. (a) A few important people helped civilization forward.
(b) (The people who helped ... are often not mentioned in history books at all.)
 5. (a) Some countries defeated others in war and ruled over them.
(b) (The countries which defeated ... were considered great.)
 6. (a) Many people fight to settle quarrels.
(b) (... who fight ... are not much better than animals and savages.)
 7. (a) Someone first set a broken leg.
(b) (The man or woman who ... was more civilized than the person who first mutilated an enemy.)
 8. (a) Someone launched a seaworthy boat for the first time.
(b) (The man who ... made all the world's great navies possible.)
 9. (a) Some man first calculated the length of the year.
(b) (... really helped civilization forward.)
 10. (a) Some farmer first manured his field.
(b) (... taught us how to produce better crops.)

Grammar—II

Observe these two sentences:

- (a) Those who fight try to kill.
- (b) Fighting means trying to kill.

These are two different ways of saying roughly the same thing. Any sentence which is in the form of (a) can be rewritten in the form of (b).

Here are some sentences like (a); rewrite them in the form of (b), using the hints given in brackets.

1. (a) Those who go to war believe that might is right.
(b) (Going to war means believing ...)
2. (a) Those who fight in order to settle quarrels are behaving like animals and savages.
(b) (Fighting in order to settle ... means behaving ...)
3. (a) Those who bully and grab hurt other people.
(b) (Bullying and grabbing ... hurting ...)
4. (a) Those who are civilized find other ways of settling disputes.
(b) (Being civilized ...)
5. (a) Those who are good at getting other people to fight in battles are not civilized.
(b) (Being good ... not mean being ...)

Now observe the following two sentences:

- (a) Those who fight try to kill.
- (c) To fight is to try to kill.

This is a third way of saying roughly the same thing. The five sentences given above which are like (a) can also be rewritten in the form of (c). Rewrite them in that form, using the hints given in brackets.

1. (c) (To go to war is to believe ...)
2. (c) (To fight in order to settle ... to behave ...)
3. (c) (To bully and grab ... to hurt ...)
4. (c) (To be civilized is ...)
5. (c) (To be good at ... not to be ...)

Composition—I

Here is an example of how the author scales down the long periods of history:

	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Scaled down to</i>
(a) The whole past of living creatures	1,200 million years	100 years
(b) The whole past of man		1 month

We can write a three-sentence paragraph on this, as follows:

Scientists believe that the whole past of living creatures on this earth is about twelve hundred million years. Let a hundred years represent this period. Then the whole past of man on this earth works out to one month.

Now write two more paragraphs of three sentences each, using the following facts.

	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Scaled down to</i>
1. (a) The whole past of man	1 million years	1 month
(b) The history of civilization		7 or 8 hours
2. (a) The history of civilization	8,000 years	7 or 8 hours
(b) The whole future of living creatures		100 thousand years

Composition—II

Good composition requires the ability to build up good paragraphs. You can build a good paragraph only if you have a good plan for it. One kind of paragraph-plan is this: the main point is expressed in a general statement at the beginning, and then supported with one or more facts, as examples or evidence. Here is such a plan:

Main point Most people think that greatness consists of being good at fighting.

Evidence

1. History books (conquerors, not people who helped civilization forward).
2. Figures on pillars.
3. Belief about the greatest countries.

Here is a short paragraph which is based on this plan. Study it to see how the plan has been used:

Most people believe that greatness consists of being good at fighting. Our history books, for example, glorify conquerors, generals and soldiers. They tell us very little about the people who really helped civilization forward. Secondly, on the highest pillars in our great cities, we find the figures of conquerors and generals. Thirdly, certain countries are considered to be great because they built up empires by defeating many other countries and ruling over them.

Now, here is another paragraph which has the same kind of plan. Read it carefully and then write out the plan on which it is based:

A proper history of civilization should tell us more about those who really helped civilization forward. For example, it should tell us about the man who first set a broken leg, the man who first launched a seaworthy boat and the man who manured a field for the first time. Secondly, it should tell us how we have today reached the stage of keeping the rules of civilized life and not fighting with each other in our daily life. Thirdly, it should tell us about those who have tried to find ways of settling disputes between nations other than by fighting.

Now write out the plan of the above paragraph, listing its main point and three examples.



THE FUN THEY HAD

Isaac Asimov

1 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!'

2 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.

3 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 when they read it the first time.

4 '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.'

5 'Same with mine,' said Margie. She was eleven and hadn't seen as many tele-books as Tommy had. He was thirteen.

6 She said, 'Where did you find it?'

7 'In my house.' He pointed without looking, because he was busy reading. 'In the attic.'

8 'What's it about?'

9 'School.'

10 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.

11 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 code¹ they made her learn when she was six years old, and the mechanical teacher calculated the mark in no time.

12 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.

13 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 out² completely.

14 So she said to Tommy, 'Why would anyone write about school?'

15 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.'

16 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.'

17 'Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn't a regular teacher. It was a man.'

18 'A man? How could a man be a teacher?'

19 'Well, he just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions.'

20 'A man isn't smart enough.'

21 'Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher.'

22 'He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher.'

23 'He knows almost as much, I betcha.'³

24 Margie wasn't prepared to dispute that. She said, 'I wouldn't want a strange man in my house to teach me.'

25 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.'

26 'And all the kids learned the same thing?'

27 'Sure, if they were the same age.'

28 '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.'

29 '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.'

30 'I didn't say I didn't like it,' Margie said quickly. She wanted to read about those funny schools.

31 They weren't even half finished when Margie's mother called, 'Margie! School!'

32 Margie looked up. 'Not yet, mamma.'

33 'Now,' said Mrs Jones. 'And it's probably time for Tommy, too.'

34 Margie said to Tommy. 'Can I read the book some more with you after school?'

35 'Maybe,' he said, nonchalantly. He walked away whistling, the dusty old book tucked beneath his arm.

36 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 the same time every day except Saturday and Sunday, because her mother said little girls learned better if they learned at regular hours.

37 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.'

38 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.

39 And the teachers were people....

¹In a punch code the homework had to be done using a system of signs to enable the machine to correct it.

²blanked out nothing appeared on the screen.

³I betcha I bet you.

- 40 The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: 'When we add the fractions $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$'

- 41 Margie was thinking about how the kids must have loved it in the old days. She was thinking about the fun they had.

From *Earth is Room Enough*
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Glossary

adjust (v) /ə'dʒʌst/ make suitable (for use)
attic (n) /'ætɪk/ small room just under the roof of a house (generally used for storing things)
crinkly (adj) /'krɪŋkli/ full of small creases; not smooth
dispute (v) /dis'pjʊ:t/ argue about
flash (v) /flæʃ/ show for a few seconds
gear (v) /ɡiə*/ arrange (a machine) to move at a certain speed

loftily (adv) /'lɒtɪli/ in a proud manner
nonchalantly (adv) /'nɒnʃələntli/ in a cool manner, showing no interest
over-all (adj) /'əʊvə:əl/ general
scornful (adj) /'skɔ:nfʊl/ having a low opinion of something
sector (n) /'sektə*/ part
slot (n) /slɒt/ opening
tuck (v) /tʌk/ hold, press

Comprehension—I

- Is this a story about the past or the future? Does the author tell us when these incidents happened? (In what year? In what century?)
- Did Margie and Tommy usually read books? How did they read them?
- The words 'book', 'school' and 'teacher' each have two different meanings in this story. The two meanings of 'book' are given below. Give, in the same way, the two meanings of 'school' and 'teacher'.
Book (1) 20th century: words printed on paper.
(2) 22nd century: words moving across a television screen.
School (1) 20th century:
(2) 22nd century:
Teacher (1) 20th century:
(2) 22nd century:
- Is the inspector mentioned in the story a man or a machine? What is the inspector's job?
- Look at the title of the story. Who were 'they'? From whose point of view? What 'fun' did they have?

Comprehension—II

- Margie wrote in her diary that Tommy had found a 'real book'. There is a word in this story which may be considered the opposite of a 'real book'. What is that word?
- Had Margie's grandfather read 'real books' when he was young? How do you know?
- The pages were 'yellow and crinkly'. What does this show?
- Tommy says: 'I wouldn't throw it away'. What is 'it'? What, according to Tommy, can be thrown away?
- 'When you're through with the book...' Rewrite this sentence, using the verb 'finish'.
- Which word in the fourth paragraph means 'useful' or 'fit'?
- Did Margie and Tommy live in the same house? How do you know?
- Did Margie hate school only because the teacher gave her a lot of tests in geography? What words in the text give you the answer?
- He 'took the teacher apart'. Does this mean that he took the teacher away or that he opened up the teacher?
- '...but he knew how all right...' What words can you put in after 'how', without changing the meaning?