

Text Book : Beehive

Lesson 1 - Prose “ The Fun They Had ” by Isaac Asimov

**New words:**

Nonchalantly

Sigh

Attic

Scream

Plenty

**Word meanings**

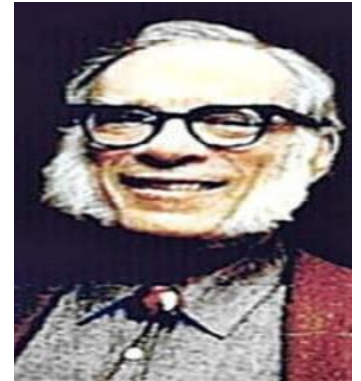
Crinkly = With many folds

Scornful = Hateful

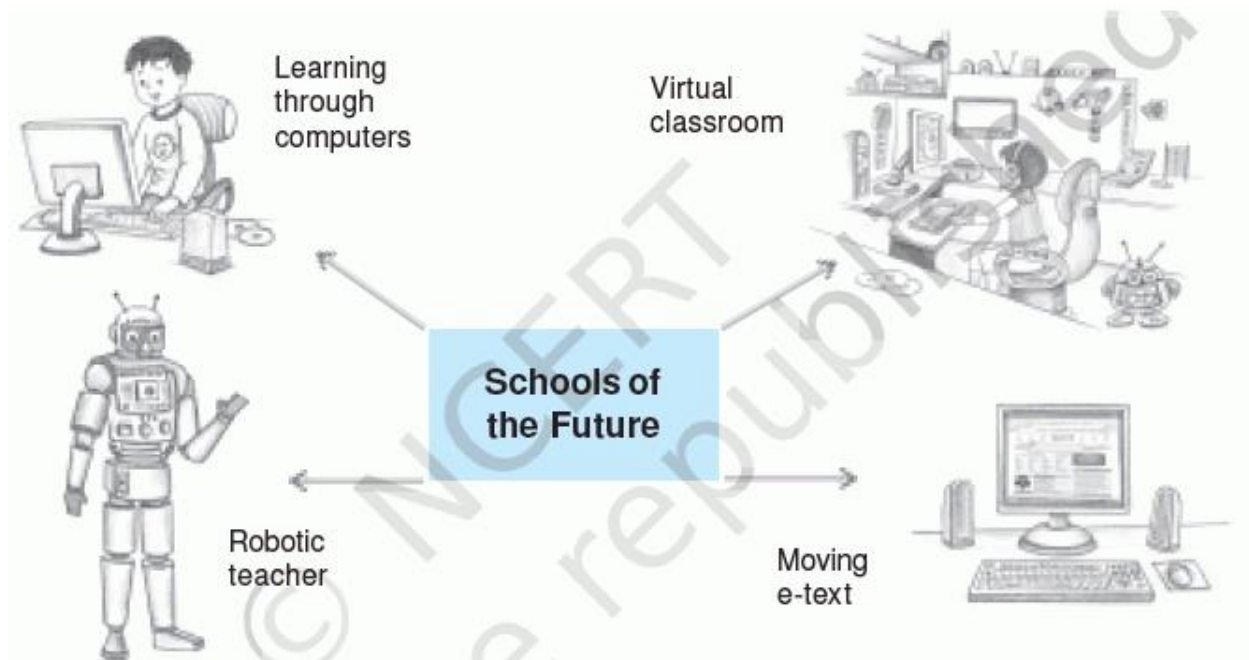
Slot = A given space

Mechanical = Connected with machines

Dispute = To argue



**Lesson Explanation**



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!"

*Margie is the main character of the story. She is a girl of 11 years of age. She writes a diary on the night of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2157. (Right now, we are living in 2018. As told earlier, the story is set in the future and it is set in the year 2157, so almost one and a half century that is 140 years from now). At that time, Margie writes an entry in her diary and she writes that 'Tommy found a real book' and she is feeling so strange because in her times, real books do not exist. They only have e-books, the virtual books. So, books in the format of print on paper are extinct and so, Margie is astonished to see 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.

*Margie is reminded of her grandfather. He told her that his grandfather studied all the books that were printed on paper. So, this kind of a book is historical or ancient for them. Something which they cannot believe, they can't imagine.*



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.

**crinkly:** with many folds or lines, something that is crushed.

*Margie is talking about the book that Tommy had found. She says that the pages of the book had turned yellow, and they had been crushed as it was very old. The children found it very funny to read the words which stood still. (Now what does it mean by that words that stood still? As the words were printed on the pages, they did not move). On the other hand, the books that Margie and Tommy read were online (e-books). So, in the e-books how it happens, the text keeps on moving as your screen moves but it was different in the books printed on paper.*

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.

*This was a very strange experience for these children. When you have a book, which is printed on paper, whenever you flip the pages, you to get to see the same thing written on the pages. On the other hand, in an e-book, the text keeps on changing on the screen. The screen is same. You have the same screen in front of you, but the text keeps on changing. So, whenever you go back the text is different.*

“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.”

*Tommy disliked the printed book.He said that it was a waste because he felt that whenever you complete reading a book, you have to throw it away. You cannot have some different story written on the same book. On the contrary, he felt that the Computer screen was very good, because the same screen had shown him many books and still he could read many more on it.He would not have to throw that screen away when once he had read a particular story.*

“Same with mine,” said Margie. She was eleven and hadn’t seen as many telebooks as Tommy had.He was thirteen.

*Margie agreed with Tommy opinion. Margie was 11 years of age and she has not read as many books as Tommy had because Tommy was older to Margie, he was thirteen years of age.*

She said, “Where did you find it?”

*Margie asked Tommy that where had he found the printed book.*

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

attic: a space just below the roof, used as a storeroom

*Tommy replied to Margie that he found the printer book in the storeroom of his house. He was so busy reading the book that he did not remove his glance from the book.*

“What’s it about?”

*Margie asked that what the book was about.*

“School”

*Tommy replied that the book was about school. About going to school, about the life at school.*

Margie was scornful.

“School? What’s there to write about school? I hate school.”

scornful: contemptuous; showing you think something is worthless, show your dislike for something

*Margie hated the word ‘school’ and so, she said that what was there to write about it that an entire book had been written about 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.

*What is Margie’s school? Margie’s school is a mechanical teacher. (A mechanical Teacher that means the machine which teaches you and not that school where we all go).*

*Now why did Margie hate school? Margie’s school was a virtual classroom. It was not a real school like we have today. So, in the future we are thinking that the schools will be virtual classrooms. There will be machines that will be teaching the children. Margie hated this machine because it was giving her so many tests in geography which were very difficult for her and she was performing very bad. Finally, her mother thought that there was something wrong with the machine and so, she had called the County Inspector to check it.*

He was a round little man with a red face and a whole box of tools with dials and wires.

*The County Inspector came to check the mechanical teacher. He was a round little man and he had a red face. He was carrying a big box full of tools with dials and wires.*

He smiled at Margie and gave her an apple, then took the teacher apart.

*So, this man opened the machine. He was there to repair the computer.*

Margie had hoped he wouldn't know how to put it together again, but he knew how allright, 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.

*Once he had opened the computer, Margie wished that he would be unable to close it back because she did not like the computer, she did not like to study from this teacher. But the man was an expert and within an hour he had repaired the computer and had closed it and made it ready to teach Margie once again.*

*Margie gives a description of the computer. She feels that it is very huge, it is black in colour and she dislikes its appearance. It has a big screen and all the lessons appear on the screen and many questions are asked on the same screen which are difficult for Margie.*

That wasn't so bad. The part Margie hated most was the slot where she had to put homework and test papers.

slot: a given space, time or position

*Margie hated this mechanical teacher the most because she had to submit her homework and test papers to it.*

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 calculate the marks in no time.

*Margie had to write her homework and her test papers in a particular punch code that is a computing language. She had learned the language at the age of 6. The machine checked the papers and calculated her marks in a few seconds.*

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.

geared (to): adjusted to a particular standard or level

*So, the County inspector said that Margie was getting bad marks in Geography because the Machine was not working properly. It was geared to a higher level.*

Those things happen sometimes. I've slowed it up to an average ten-year level.

*He said that sometimes machines malfunctioned and that is what had happened. He had slowed it down and set it to the pace of a learner of ten-years of age.*

Actually, the overall pattern of her progress is quite satisfactory." And he patted Margie's head again.

*He said that Margie was learning at a good pace. He again patted Margie's head in order to cheer her up.*

Margie was disappointed. She had been hoping they would take the teacher away altogether.

*Margie was sad because she did not want to learn, she did want to study from this machine. And she wanted that the inspector should take it away.*

They had once taken Tommy's teacher away for nearly a month because the history sector had blanked out completely.

blanked out: it has been erased

*Margie is reminded of the time when Tommy's Mechanical teacher had been taken away for repair for almost one month and he was enjoying his time as he didn't have any teacher. It had been taken away because the History sector the portion of the machine that taught the History subject had been wiped out. So, the mechanical teacher did not have any memory of it and had to be taken away for repair.*

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

*Now we know the reason for Margie's dislike for school. So, she asked Tommy that 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.

*Tommy was looking at Margie with superior eyes because he knew something that Margie was not aware of. He said that Margie was silly because she did not know that many years ago, the school was not the kind they had.*



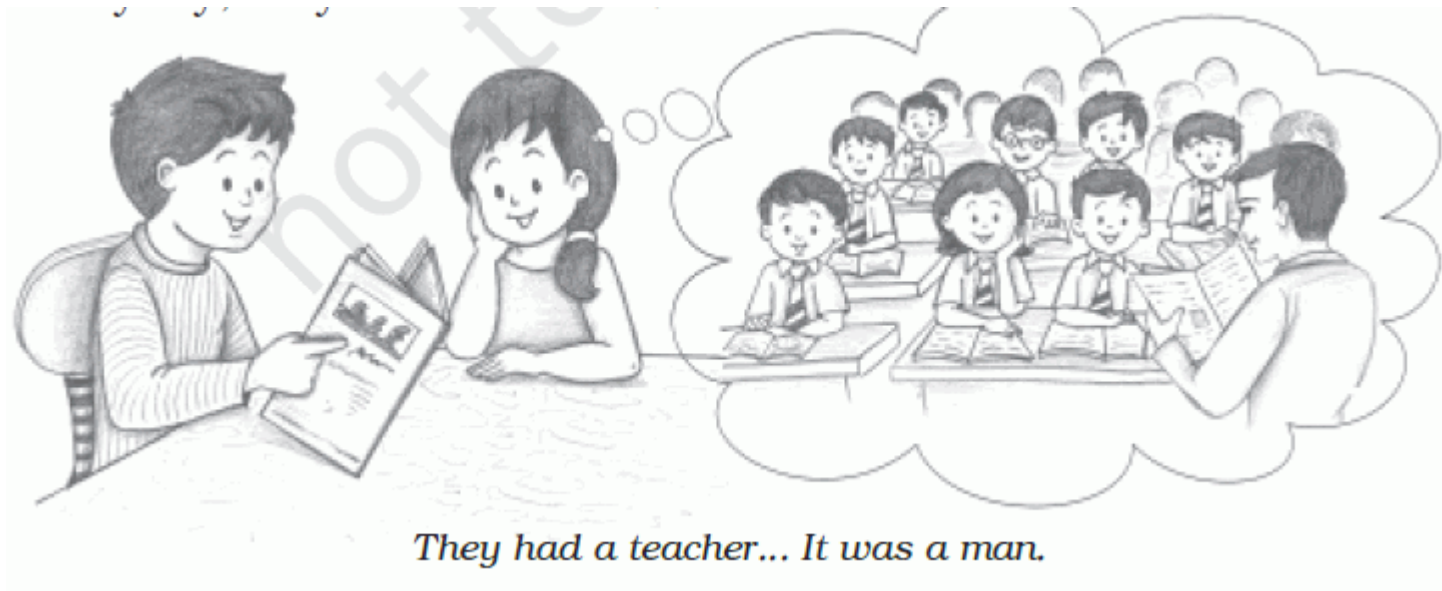
“He added loftily, pronouncing the word carefully, “Centuries ago.”

loftily: in a superior way

*Tommy wanted to stress on the time period and said that centuries ago, the school were not like the once they had.*

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.”

*Margie was hurt at Tommy’s behavior and she said that she did not know what kind of schools they had centuries ago. She was curious and imagined a group of children being taught by a human teacher. She looked over Tommy’s shoulder, trying to read the book and said that perhaps they had a teacher.*



“Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn’t a regular teacher. It was a man.”

regular: here, normal; of the usual kind

*(Tommy is referring to a machine teacher as a regular teacher because that is what they are used to. That is the teacher they had, a Machine). He said that it wasn’t the machine, it was a man (human being) who taught them.*

“A man? How could a man be a teacher?”

*Margie could not believe that a man was a teacher because she had always seen a machine doing that.*

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

*Tommy Tells that the man who taught the class discussed many things with the students,gave them homework and then asked them different questions based on it, just like their mechanical teacher did.*

“A man isn’t smart enough.”

*Margie said that a man teacher is not as smart (intelligent) as the machine teacher.*

“Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher.”

*Tommy asks Margie not to underestimate the human teacher. He said that he is as knowledgeable as the machine. He compares the machine to his father and says that his father knows as much as his machine teacher.*

“He knows almost as much, I betcha.”

*betcha(informal): (I) bet you (in fast speech): I'm sure*

*Tommy could bet on it that the human teacher knew as much as a mechanical teacher did.*

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

*dispute: disagree with when you are opposing something,*

*Margie did not want to discuss this further and added that she did not want a strange man, the human teacher to come to her house to teach her.*

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.”

*Tommy found it very funny when Margie said that she did not want a strange man to come to her house to teach her. He said that teachers didn’t come to the*



*students' house to teach them. They had a special building; a school and the students went to the school to study.*

“And all the kids learned the same thing?”

*Margie was astonished and asked that did all the children learn the same thing.*

“Sure, if they were the same age.”

*Tommy said that all the children of the same age studied the same thing.*

“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.”

*Margie refers to a machine teacher. She says that her mother told her that the machine had to be tuned to the level of each boy or a girl who was studying from it. So, each child had to be taught separately depending on their level.*

“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.”

*Tommy replied that in the past they did not do it that way. He got irritated at Margie and said that she need not read the book.*

“I didn't say I didn't like it,” Margie said quickly.

*Margie is interested in the book. She is curious to know what kind of schools were there.*

She wanted to read about those funny schools.

*Margie was inquisitive. She wanted to know what kind of schools there in were the past as she felt that they were fun.*

They weren't even half finished when Margie's Mother called, “Margie! School!”

*Margie had read just half of the book when her mother called her as it was time for her to attend her virtual school.*

Margie looked up. “Not yet, Mamma”

*Margie's school was in the next room, next to her bedroom. She said to her mother that not yet, she did not want to go to school.*

“Now!” said Mrs Jones. “And it’s probably time for Tommy, too.”

*Margie’s mother said to Tommy that it was time for him to go to school too.*

Margie said to Tommy, “Can I read the book some more with you after school?”

*Margie was so interested in reading the book that she asked Tommy if she could read the book with him after school.*

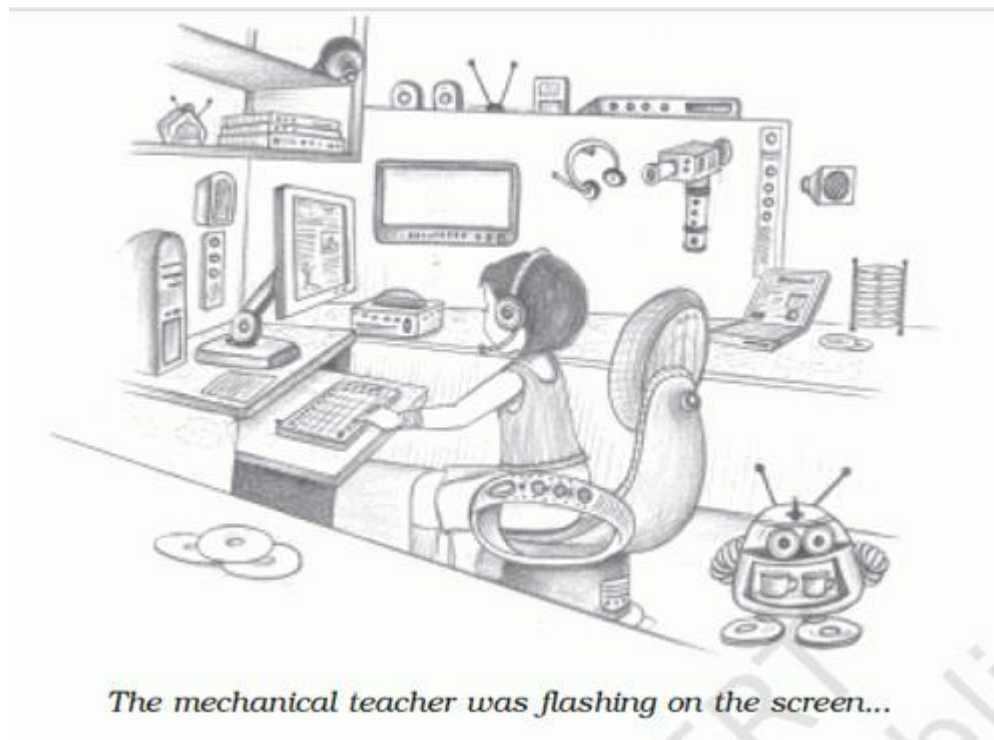
“May be,” he said nonchalantly.

nonchalantly: not showing much interest or enthusiasm; carelessly

*Tommy tried to ignore her and said that maybe she could read it.*

He walked away whistling, the dusty old book tucked beneath his arm.

*Tommy was feeling very great because Margie was interested in reading the book. He placed the book under his arm and he went off to his home.*



Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her.

*Margie reached her school. It was a room, next to her bedroom. It was a virtual classroom. There was a machine teacher for Margie. It was on and it was waiting for her to begin teaching her.*

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

*Margie studied all the days except Saturdays and Sundays, at the same time from this mechanical teacher. Margie's mother was very particular. She had told Margie that she would learn better if she would study everyday at the same time.*

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 sat in front of the machine similar to a computer and the machine was turned on. It said that the lesson of the day was in Arithmetic and the topic was addition of proper fractions. Further, it instructed her to insert the homework of the previous day in the slot for inserting the homework.*

Margie did so with a sigh.

*Margie's life is also very mechanical just like a machine. There is no fun in her classroom. It is very dull and boring just like a machine.*

She was thinking about the old schools they had when her grandfather's grandfather was a little boy.

*Margie is thinking of the story told to her by her grandfather. Her Grandfather told her that his grandfather used to go to school when he was a little boy. As Margie is bored with this machine, she is reminded of that life.*

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 is the life that you all are living at present, but for the future kids it will be just a memory of the past. For them it will be history because their life will be very different. They will study from machines.)*

*When Margie comes to know that in the past, children used to go to school, they sat together, laughed and shouted in the school, she gets curious about it and wants to go to school. (The writer wants us to realize the importance of schools in our life. Children sometimes get bored and fed up of going to school, but if you*

*don't have a school you won't get to meet friends. Your life will be very dull and boring).*

They learned the same things, so they could help one another with the homework and talk about it.

*Margie feels that school is so much fun, children get together, they study in a fun way, they get the same homework, and they can discuss it, take help and talk about it also. So, all the students become friends and study in a fun way.*

And the teachers were people...

*She found it very strange that the teachers were not machines, but they were human beings.*

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

*As Margie had inserted her homework, the machine started with the lesson. There was no pause, no time for fun, no time for chatting, and no time for interacting with friends.*

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

*The author ends the story with the title of the chapter 'The Fun They Had'. (The fun the students had when they went to real schools). Margie is just thinking about the kids of the past who went to school and enjoyed studies.*

Summary

The story opens with Margie writing in her diary about an old book that Tommy had found. Margie was reminded of her grandfather who had once talked about his grandfather who went to an actual school where the students were taught by human teachers.

However, Margie and Tommy lived in the future world, in the year 2157 where education was completely computerized. They did not go to schools. Instead, they had a special study room where a computer taught them. The computer teacher was programmed and adjusted according to the needs of each child. Now and then the computer teacher developed faults which were fixed by a County Inspector.

Both Tommy and Margie wondered at the book found by Tommy in his attic. They wondered at it as they read books on the screen of their computer teacher. Margie felt that the computer teacher was boring; she disliked the mechanical teaching and learning. She also wondered how much fun it would be studying in a school. Studying in a fun way, with other children and that too from a human teacher.

**Q I Answer the following questions in 30 to 40 words:**

**a) What kind of book that did Tommy show to Margie?**

**Ans :** The book that Tommy showed to Margie was an old, real book which belonged to his grandfather's grandfather. It had crinkly yellow pages, where all the pages, where all the stories were printed on paper and the words stood still.

**b) Why did Margie find the book strange?**

Ans: The book had yellow and crinkly pages and the words were standing still unlike moving on a screen. When they turned back to the pages read before, there were the same words on it when they read it for the first time. All these things were strange for Margie.

**c) Why did Margie's mother send for the County Inspector? What did he do?**

Ans: Margie was not performing well in her geography tests. The county Inspector took the teacher apart and put it together again as its geography sector was geared a little too quick.

**II Answer the following question in 100 – 150 words :**

**a) How was Margie's school different from the schools that existed hundreds of years ago?**

**Ans:** Margie's school was at home. She had a mechanical teacher telebooks, no other students were there in the class and work was fed in by the mechanical teacher by punch codes. Whereas the old schools had proper buildings ,many students, human teachers who gave homework and asked questions .Every one learned the same things and the books were written on paper. So it is clearly visible that Margie's school was totally different from the schools that existed hundreds of years ago.

**b) In spite of all comforts and luxuries in today's world , our grandparents stills cherish their own time when life was quite tough. Give your own views regarding this in 80 – 100 words.**

**Ans :** Our grandparents lived during the years of 1950s to 1970s. At that time life was very simple yet tough. They had time to explore the surroundings and the world .They had parks to play with less pollution around them.. Mechanical gadgets were there, but were used only for necessary activities. There were rivers where they could go for picnics and treks, without the fear of getting allergy. The school was more of a place for fun where they met their friends.

They studied but were not competing with each other.. a For them togetherness was important rather than competition. In today's world we are with our friends . We have all the facilities of life but we do not have time for our family and friends. We like to play but on computers and play stations rather than with our siblings and friends.

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