

POEM 5. Television (Roald Dahl)

EXTRACT I

Q: What is the most important thing that the poet has learnt?

(i) The most important thing that the poet has learnt is that children should never be allowed to watch television as it fills their mind with junk. He has learnt that a better solution to the problem would be not to install a television set in their homes in the first place. .

Q: What is referred to as 'idiotic thing' in the extract? Why do you think that poet advises not to install it?

ii) Television set is referred to as an 'idiotic thing'. The poet advises not to install it because it hypnotises and produces dullness in the minds of those who watch it.

Q: Describe what the poet sees at every house with television. Why is he upset with what he has seen?

iii) In almost every house with television, children were seen lazing about all day and staring 'at the television screen without doing any productive work. It upsets him because he considers television as a monster that kills children's imagination.

Q: Explain the figure of speech used in the lines: Last week in someone's place we saw A dozen eyeballs on the floor.

(iv) The figure of speech used here is hyperbole, which uses exaggeration for emphasis or effect. To put emphasis on their hypnotic effects of television, the poet says that previous week at someone's place he had seen a dozen eyeballs rolling about on the floor.

Q: What purpose do the repetitions serve in the extract? (a) Give two examples of repetition in the extract.

(b) What type of rhyming scheme is followed in the extract?

(v) Repetitions are used in the above extract to emphasize that children should never be allowed to watch television as they just sit and stare at it without doing anything productive.

(a) . Is never, NEVER, NEVER, let

Them near your television set

- They sit and stare and stare and sit

(b) The rhyming scheme followed throughout is aa,bb,cc,dd and so on.

EXTRACT II.

Q: The poet says "it keeps them still". What keeps the children still? How?

i) The television set keeps the children still as it hypnotises them with all the junk that it telecasts.

Q: How does television prove to be useful and convenient for the parents?

ii) Television proves to be useful for the parents because it keeps their children still and occupied. The children then do not indulge in unnecessary fights and let their parents do their household chores peacefully.

Q: According to the poet, what ill effects does TV have on children?

iii) • It produces dullness in their minds, It kills their imagination and thinking ability. It hypnotises them and fills them with junk.

Q: How does TV kill the children's imagination? Name and explain the figure of speech used here.

(iv) iv) Watching too much television destroys the children's ability to create or understand Worlds of fantasy ,their mind gets clogged and cluttered, they became dull and their thinking power rusts and freezes. The ability to think of new ideas diminishes when a child passively engage in watching television. The use of capital letters and words such as ROTS,KILLS,CLOGS,CLUTTERS put stress on what television does to one's imagination.

The figure of speech used here is personification. Here, not only he gives television the human ability to kill something, but also gives imagination the ability to die at its hands.

Q: Do you think Dahl is critical of television in the lines above? Give reasons for your answer.

v) Yes, Dahl seems to be critical of television because he seems to highlight only the negative effects of television on children, such as: It rots their senses,- kills their imagination,-clogs their mind,—makes them dull,—makes them incapable of understanding worlds of fantasy,— freezes their thinking power.

EXTRACT III

Q: Whose and what question is the poet answering in the above extract? What i does he say in his answer?

(i) The poet here answers the parents query that if they take the television set away, what type of entertainment they would give to their children to keep them occupied.

The poet replies by asking parents to recall how children had kept themselves entertained by reading books before television was invented.

Q: What monster is the poet referring to in the above extract? How was the situation different before its invention?

(ii) The poet refers to television set as a monster that kills children's imagination. Before television was invented, children would actively engage themselves only in reading. Books could be found everywhere — on the nursery shelves, on nursery floor, in the bedroom or by the children's bed.

Q: THEY...USED ...TO READ They'd READ and READ,

AND READ and READ, and proceed

To READ some more. Great Scott! Gadzooks!

One half their lives was reading books!

What do these lines indicate about the style of the poem?

iii) The following lines use repetition to create a smooth flow and to put emphasis on the fact that children used to only read books before monstrous television was invented. Moreover the use of capital letters stresses on the word READ implying importance of reading books.

Q: Why are some words printed in capital letters, while others printed in small letters?

iv) This is done to catch the reader's attention and emphasize that instead of watching television, children should engage themselves in reading as they used to do before television was invented.

(Note: Use of capital letters is equivalent to shouting).

Q: Comment on the use of visual imagery in the last four lines of the extract.

v) Once children start reading they get so involved in reading that there would be books everywhere. The last four lines describe such a scenario. There would be books every where. The nursery shelves would be filed with books. Books would scattered on the floor and by the children's bed.

EXTRACT IV.

Q: Which figure of speech is used in, "The younger ones had Beatrix Potter"? Give an example of the rhyming scheme in the extract.

(i)) Figure of speech used here is Synecodoche. Example of rhyming scheme: Potter, Rotter.

Q: Give the significance of the lines: Oh, books, what books they used to know, Those children living long ago!

ii) The poet remembers the time when children used to only read books. They used to read books filled with tales of treasure islands, voyages, smugglers, pirates, ships, elephants and cannibals. It was a time when young children travelled to an all new adventurous world of animals with Mr. Tod, Squirrel Nutkin, and Piling Bland.

Q: Why is the reference to "children living long ago" important in the above extract?

(iii) The reference is important because it transports the readers to a time before the television was invented when children used to read.

Q: According to the poet, what should be done to save children from hypnotism of television? State whether his suggestion is practical.

iv) The poet suggests that TV sets should be thrown out and should be replaced with bookshelves.

His suggestion does not seem to be practical as television is also a medium for education. Children can be guided to watch educational programs and newscasts.

Q: Give your views either for or against throwing away the TV sets from their houses.

(v) TV sets should not be thrown out of the houses. Dahl mentions only the negative aspects of television. Television has educational benefits as it is an audio-visual medium and can help children learn by watching. However, there is a need to maintain a balance between watching television and other activities.

EXTRACT V.

Q: The poet says, "Then fill the shelves with lots of books". Why does he give this advice to the parents?

(i) He gave this advice in continuation of his suggestion of throwing TV sets away. According to the poet replacing TV sets with bookshelves would be best as far as children are concerned.

Q: Who will give "dirty looks" and to whom? Why? What all other tantrums would follow this?

ii) Children will give dirty looks to their parents when their TV sets would be replaced with bookshelves filled with books. Children would then scream and yell and fight with their parents.

Q: Despite children screaming and yelling, the parents are advised to "fear not". Why?

iii) The parents are advised to "fear not" because their children's tantrums would be temporary; what would be permanent is their love for books which would soon follow.

Q: Is it important to instill in children the need to read books? Why?

(iv) Yes. Watching television for hours, makes the children dull and passive. It kills their imagination; on the other hand, reading books will help them to travel to new and exciting worlds of 'dragons, gypsies, queens and whales.' Dahl remembers his days, when television was not invented and children would spend their time reading; a time when nursery floor and the side of their beds were filled only with books; a time when young children travelled to an all adventurous world of animals with Tod, Squirrel Nutkin and Pigling Bland.

Q: The poet advises children to read books for entertainment. How far do you agree with his advice?

v) To develop a habit of reading books is an important advice that the poet gives. Reading transfers one to a beautiful world of imagination and fantasy. Reading fills one's heart with true joy and happiness. But the poet appears to advice reading for entertainment, which seems to be a limited approach. There are other artistic fields that a child can venture into like painting, theatre, games, dance, singing etc.

EXTRACT VI.

Q: What will "they start"? How does the poet feel about it? Which words tell you so?

(i) It refers to children's act of starting to read books once television is uninstalled from their houses. The poet feels very excited about it as he employs an easy, delightful and cheering tone while talking about books. His excitement is reflected through: "oh boy, oh boy"

Q: According to the poet, reading books would fill children's hearts with joy. Do you agree? Give a reason for your answer.

ii) (ii) Yes. Watching television for hours, makes the children dull and passive. It kills their imagination; on the other hand, reading books will help them to travel to new and exciting worlds of 'dragon, gypsies, queens and whales.'

However the medium of children's joy cannot be limited to one activity. Children should be able to experience other artistic

Q: Comment on the poet's different use of language for television and the books.

iii) He has a strong dislike for television and he describes it as nauseating, foul, unclean, monstrous and idiotic. However, he firmly believes that reading is a powerful tool for learning and considers bookshelf "lovely" and associates "joy and happiness" with reading books.

Q: How, according to the poet, can children benefit from reading books?

(iv) The poet suggests that TV sets should be thrown out and should be replaced with bookshelves.

His suggestion does not seem to be practical as television is also a medium for education. Children can be guided to watch educational programs and newscasts.

Q: Give the negative aspects of watching television as stated in the extract.

(v) The television is a "ridiculous machine"-a silly invention of modern science that does not have any positive effect. It is "nauseating" and disgusting to watch. It is "foul", morally bad and offensive. It is "unclean" as it telecasts only "junk". The television screen thus is repulsive'.