

## Story Review 2B

### The Fun They Had by Isaac Asimov Reviewed by William Shek

#### Introduction:

What is the title?  
Who is the author?  
What kind of story is it and what do you think about it?

*The Fun They Had* by Isaac Asimov is a fantastic story about life in the future written by one of the greatest masters of science fiction. Imagine a world where going to school means sitting in a room by yourself and learning from a mechanical teacher that is adjusted to fit your mind. Pretty scary! That is the vision of the future that the author imagines.

#### Summary:

What is the story about?

The story is set in the Year 2155. The main character is an eleven year old girl named Margie, who hates attending school with her mechanical teacher. Margie's world changes when her friend Tommy, who is a couple of years older, shows her an old book that he found in his attic. It is not a 'telebook' with moving words on the screen, but a real book with paper pages and words that stand still. The book is about what schools were like hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Margie learns from Tommy's book that teachers were real people and that children learned the same things together with other children their own age.

#### Personal reflection:

What do you like/dislike about this story? Why?

Considering that this story was written in 1951 before personal computers were around, I think it is amazing how well the author predicts the future. We are not living in 2155 yet, but it is already possible for us to read digital books on handheld devices. Perhaps in the future, children really will be taught by mechanical teachers! I particularly like the part of the story where the County Inspector takes apart Margie's mechanical teacher to fix a technical problem. Margie hopes the Inspector will not know how to fix the problem so the teacher will have to be taken away. I think that's quite funny. I also like the character of Tommy. I like the way he shows off how much he knows when talking to Margie about the book. I bet he has a crush on her!

#### Critical analysis:

What is the author's purpose? What is story's theme, message?

I think the author wrote this story to warn us about the use of technology in education. If we rely too heavily on technology, learning will become impersonal and may focus too much on memorisation of facts. We should remember that students need opportunities to interact with their teachers and classmates when they are learning and exploring new ideas.

#### Conclusion:

Would you recommend this story to others?

I think every teacher and student in Hong Kong would benefit from reading this story. It is both a great science fiction story and an important reminder to us that too much reliance on technology is not necessarily a good thing.