The Jordans never spoke of the exam, not until their son, Dickie, was twelve years old. It was on his birthday that Mrs. Jordan first mentioned the subject in his presence, and the anxious manner of her speech caused her husband to answer sharply.

‘Forget about it,’ he said. ‘He’ll do all right.

‘They were at breakfast table, and the boy looked up from his plate curiously. He was an alert-eyed youngster with flat blond hair and a quick, nervous manner. He didn’t understand what the sudden tension was about, but he did know that today was his birthday, and he wanted harmony above all. Somewhere in the little apartment there were wrapped, beribboned packages waiting to be opened, and in the tiny wall-kitchen something warm and sweet was being prepared in the automatic stove. He wanted the day to be happy, and the moistness of his mother’s eyes, the scowl on his father’s face, spoiled the mood of fluttering expectation with which he had greeted the morning.

‘What exam?’ he asked.

His mother looked at the tablecloth. ‘It’s just a sort of Government Intelligence test they give children at the age of twelve. You’ll be taking it next week. It’s nothing to worry about.

‘You mean a test like in school?’

‘Something like that,’ his father said, getting up from the table. ‘Go and read your comics, Dickie.’ The boy rose and wandered towards that part of the living room which had been ‘his’ corner since infancy. He fingered the topmost comic of the stack, but seemed uninterested in the colorful squares of fast-paced action. He wandered towards the window, and peered gloomily at the veil of mist that shrouded the glass.

‘Why did it have to rain today?’ he said. ‘Why couldn’t it rain tomorrow?’

His father, now slumped into an armchair with the Government newspaper rattled the sheets in vexation. ‘Because it just did, that’s all. Rain makes the grass grow.’

‘Why, Dad?’

‘Because it does, that’s all.’

Dickie puckered his brow. ‘What makes it green, though? The grass?’

‘Nobody knows,’ his father snapped, then immediately regretted his abruptness. Later in the day, it was birthday time again. His mother beamed as she handed over the gaily-colored packages, and even his father managed a grin and a rumple-of-the-hair. He kissed his mother and shook hands gravely with his father. Then the birthday cake was brought forth, and the ceremonies concluded.

An hour later, seated by the window, he watched the sun force its way between the clouds.

‘Dad,’ he said, ‘how far away is the sun?’

‘Five thousand miles,’ his father said.
Dickie sat at the breakfast table and again saw moisture in his mother’s eyes. He didn’t connect her tears with the exam until his father suddenly brought the subject to light again.

‘Well, Dickie,’ he said, with a manly frown, ‘you’ve got an appointment today.’

‘I know Dad. I hope –

‘Now, it’s nothing to worry about. Thousands of children take this test every day. The Government wants to know how smart you are, Dickie. That’s all there is to it.’

‘I get good marks in school,’ he said hesitantly.

‘This is different. This is a -special kind of test. They give you this stuff to drink, you see, and then you go into a room where there’s a sort of machine –

‘What stuff to drink?’ Dickie said

‘It’s nothing. It tastes like peppermint. It’s just to make sure you answer the questions truthfully. Not that the Government thinks you won’t tell the truth, but it makes sure.’Dickie’s face showed puzzlement, and a touch of fright. He looked at his mother, and she composed her face into a misty smile.

‘Everything will be all right,’ she said.

‘Of course it will,’ his father agreed. ‘You’re a good boy, Dickie; you’ll make out fine.

Then we’ll come home and celebrate. All right?’

‘Yes sir,’ Dickie said.

They entered the Government Educational Building fifteen minutes before the appointed hour. They crossed the marble floors of the great pillared lobby, passed beneath an archway and entered an automatic lift that brought them to the fourth floor. There was a young man wearing an insignia-less tunic, seated at a polished desk in front of Room 404. He held a clipboard in his hand, and he checked the list down to the Js and permitted the Jordans to enter.

The room was as cold and official as a courtroom, with long benches flanking metal tables. There were several fathers and sons already there, and a thin-lipped woman with cropped black hair was passing out sheets of paper.

Mr Jordan filled out the form, and returned it to the clerk. Then he told Dickie: ‘It won’t be long now. When they call your name, you just go through the doorway at the end of the room.’ He indicated the portal with his finger.

A concealed loudspeaker crackled and called off the first name. Dickie saw a boy leave his father’s side reluctantly and walk slowly towards the door.

At five minutes to eleven, they called the name of Jordan.

‘Good luck, son,’ his father said, without looking at him. ‘I’ll call for you when the test is over.’
Dickie walked to the door and turned the knob. The room inside was dim, and he could barely make out the features of the grey-tunicked attendant who greeted him.

‘Sit down,’ the man said softly. He indicated a high stool beside his desk. ‘Your name’s Richard Jordan?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Your classification number is 600-115. Drink this, Richard.’

He lifted a plastic cup from the desk and handed it to the boy. The liquid inside had the consistency of buttermilk, tasted only vaguely of the promised peppermint. Dickie downed it, and handed the man the empty cup.

He sat in silence, feeling drowsy, while the man wrote busily on a sheet of paper. Then the attendant looked at his watch, and rose to stand only inches from Dickie’s face. He unclipped a penlike object from the pocket of his tunic, and flashed a tiny light into the boy’s eyes.

‘All right,’ he said. ‘Come with me, Richard.’

He led Dickie to the end of the room, where a single wooden armchair faced a multi-dialed computing machine. There was a microphone on the left arm of the chair, and when the boy sat down, he found its pinpoint head conveniently at his mouth.

‘Now just relax, Richard. You’ll be asked some questions, and you think them over carefully. Then give your answers into the microphone. The machine will take care of the rest.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I’ll leave you alone now. Whenever you want to start, just say “ready” into the microphone.’

‘Yes, sir.’

The man squeezed his shoulder, and left.

Dickie said, ‘Ready.’

Lights appeared on the machine, and a mechanism whirred. A voice said: ‘Complete this sequence. One, four, seven, ten…

Mr and Mrs Jordan were in the living room, not speaking, not even speculating.

It was almost four o’clock when the telephone rang. The woman tried to reach it first, but her husband was quicker.

‘Mr Jordan?’

The voice was clipped: a brisk, official voice.

‘Yes, speaking.’
‘This is the Government Educational Service. Your son, Richard M Jordan, Classification 600-115 has completed the Government examination. We regret to inform you that his intelligence quotient is above the Government regulation, according to Rule 84 Section 5 of the New Code.’

Across the room, the woman cried out, knowing nothing except the emotion she read on her husband’s face.

‘You may specify by telephone,’ the voice droned on, ‘whether you wish his body interred by the Government, or would you prefer a private burial place? The fee for Government burial is ten dollars.’

1. Which of the following describes the mood of Mr. and Mrs. Jordan at the opening of the story?
   a. Happy
   b. Sad
   c. Enraged
   d. Sullen
   e. Bored
   f. short-tempered

2. What is the meaning of the word rattled as it is used in this sentence: “His father, now slumped into an armchair with the Government newspaper rattled the sheets in vexation.”?
   a. Make short knocking sounds
   b. Moved
   c. played with a rattler toy
   d. Disconnect someone

3. Why were Dickie’s mother’s eyes covered with moisture?
   a. She was happy that it was Dickie’s birthday
   b. She was sad that it was Dickie’s birthday
   c. She was sad that Dickie’s father yelled at her
   d. She was sad about the exam coming up

4. What poetic device is used in the following sentence: “The room was as cold and official as a courtroom?”
   a. Simile
   b. Metaphor
   c. Hyperbole
   d. Personification

5. Why did Dickie fail the test?
   a. He was way too average to exist in their high functioning society
   b. He was way too dumb to exist in their society
   c. He was way too smart to exist in their society
   d. He didn’t tell the truth during his examination
"WE'RE going through!" The Commander's voice was like thin ice breaking. He wore his full dress uniform, with the heavily braided white cap pulled down rakishly over one cold gray eye. "We can't make it, sir. It's spoiling for a hurricane, if you ask me." "I'm not asking you, Lieutenant Berg," said the Commander. "Throw on the power lights! Rev her up to 8500! We're going through!" The pounding of the cylinders increased: ta-pocketa- pocketa-pocketa-pocketa.

The Commander stared at the ice forming on the pilot window. He walked over and twisted a row of complicated dials. "Switch on No. 8 auxiliary!" he shouted. "Switch on No. 8 auxiliary!" repeated Lieutenant Berg. "Full strength in No. 3 turret!" shouted the Commander. "Full strength in No. 3 turret!" The crew, bending to their various tasks in the huge, hurtling eight-engined Navy hydroplane, looked at each other and grinned. "The Old Man'll get us through," they said to one another. "The Old Man ain't afraid of hell!" . . .

"Not so fast! You're driving too fast!" said Mrs. Mitty. "What are you driving so fast for?" "Hmm?" said Walter Mitty. He looked at his wife, in the seat beside him, with shocked astonishment. She seemed grossly unfamiliar, like a strange woman who had yelled at him in a crowd. "You were up to fifty-five," she said. "You know I don't like to go more than forty. You were up to fifty-five." Walter Mitty drove on toward Waterbury in silence, the roaring of the SN202 through the worst storm in twenty years of Navy flying fading in the remote, intimate airways of his mind. "You're tensed up again," said Mrs. Mitty. "It's one of your days. I wish you'd let Dr. Renshaw look you over."

Walter Mitty stopped the car in front of the building where his wife went to have her hair done. "Remember to get those overshoes while I'm having my hair done," she said. "I don't need overshoes," said Mitty. She put her mirror back into her bag. "We've been all through that," she said, getting out of the car. "You're not a young man any longer." He raced the engine a little. "Why don't you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?" Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again. "Pick it up, brother!" snapped a cop as the light changed, and Mitty hastily pulled on his gloves and lurched ahead. He drove around the streets aimlessly for a time, and then he drove past the hospital on his way to the parking lot.

. . . "It's the millionaire banker, Wellington McMillan," said the pretty nurse. "Yes?" said Walter Mitty, removing his gloves slowly. "Who has the case?" "Dr. Renshaw and Dr. Benbow, but there are two specialists here, Dr. Remington from New York and Dr. Pritchard-Mitford from London. He flew over." A door opened down a long, cool corridor and Dr. Renshaw came out. He looked distraught and haggard. "Hello, Mitty," he said. "We're having the devil's own time with McMillan, the millionaire banker and close personal friend of Roosevelt. Obstreosis of the ductal tract. Tertiary. Wish you'd take a look at him." "Glad to," said Mitty.
In the operating room there were whispered introductions: "Dr. Remington, Dr. Mitty. Dr. Pritchard-Mitford, Dr. Mitty." "I've read your book on streptothricosis," said Pritchard-Mitford, shaking hands. "A brilliant performance, sir." "Thank you," said Walter Mitty. "Didn't know you were in the States, Mitty," grumbled Remington. "Coals to Newcastle, bringing Mitford and me up here for a tertiary." "You are very kind," said Mitty. A huge, complicated machine, connected to the operating table, with many tubes and wires, began at this moment to go pocketa-pocketa-pocketa. "The new anesthetizer is giving away!" shouted an intern. "There is no one in the East who knows how to fix it!" "Quiet, man!" said Mitty, in a low, cool voice. He sprang to the machine, which was now going pocketa-pocketa-queep-pocketa-queep.

He began fingering delicately a row of glistening dials. "Give me a fountain pen!" he snapped. Someone handed him a fountain pen. He pulled a faulty piston out of the machine and inserted the pen in its place. "That will hold for ten minutes," he said. "Get on with the operation. A nurse hurried over and whispered to Renshaw, and Mitty saw the man turn pale. "Coreopsis has set in," said Renshaw nervously. "If you would take over, Mitty?" Mitty looked at him and at the craven figure of Benbow, who drank, and at the grave, uncertain faces of the two great specialists. "If you wish," he said. They slipped a white gown on him, he adjusted a mask and drew on thin gloves; nurses handed him shining . . .

"Back it up, Mac!! Look out for that Buick!" Walter Mitty jammed on the brakes. "Wrong lane, Mac," said the parking-lot attendant, looking at Mitty closely. "Gee. Yeh," muttered Mitty. He began cautiously to back out of the lane marked "Exit Only." "Leave her sit there," said the attendant. "I'll put her away." Mitty got out of the car. "Hey, better leave the key." "Oh," said Mitty, handing the man the ignition key. The attendant vaulted into the car, backed it up with insolent skill, and put it where it belonged. They're so damn cocky, thought Walter Mitty, walking along Main Street; they think they know everything. Once he had tried to take his chains off, outside New Milford, and he had got them wound around the axles. A man had had to come out in a wrecking car and unwind them, a young, grinning garageman. Since then Mrs. Mitty always made him drive to a garage to have the chains taken off. The next time, he thought, I'll wear my right arm in a sling; they won't grin at me then. I'll have my right arm in a sling and they'll see I couldn't possibly take the chains off myself. He kicked at the slush on the sidewalk. "Overshoes," he said to himself, and he began looking for a shoe store.

When he came out into the street again, with the overshoes in a box under his arm, Walter Mitty began to wonder what the other thing was his wife had told him to get. She had told him, twice before they set out from their house for Waterbury. In a way he hated these weekly trips to town--he was always getting something wrong. Kleenex, he thought, Squibb's, razor blades? No. Tooth paste, toothbrush, bicarbonate, Carborundum, initiative and referendum? He gave it up. But she would remember it. "Where's the what's-its-name?" she would ask. "Don't tell me you forgot the what's-its-name." A newsboy went by shouting something about the Waterbury trial. . . .

"Perhaps this will refresh your memory." The District Attorney suddenly thrust a heavy automatic at the
quiet figure on the witness stand. "Have you ever seen this before?" Walter Mitty took the gun and examined it expertly. "This is my Webley-Vickers 50.80," he said calmly. An excited buzz ran around the courtroom. The Judge rapped for order. "You are a crack shot with any sort of firearms, I believe?" said the District Attorney, insinuatingly. "Objection!" shouted Mitty's attorney. "We have shown that the defendant could not have fired the shot. We have shown that he wore his right arm in a sling on the night of the fourteenth of July." Walter Mitty raised his hand briefly and the bickering attorneys were stilled. "With any known make of gun," he said evenly, "I could have killed Gregory Fitzhurst at three hundred feet with my left hand." Pandemonium broke loose in the courtroom. A woman's scream rose above the bedlam and suddenly a lovely, dark-haired girl was in Walter Mitty's arms. The District Attorney struck at her savagely. Without rising from his chair, Mitty let the man have it on the point of the chin. "You miserable cur!" . . .

"Puppy biscuit," said Walter Mitty. He stopped walking and the buildings of Waterbury rose up out of the misty courtroom and surrounded him again. A woman who was passing laughed. "He said 'Puppy biscuit,'" she said to her companion. "That man said 'Puppy biscuit' to himself." Walter Mitty hurried on. He went into an A. & P., not the first one he came to but a smaller one farther up the street. "I want some biscuit for small, young dogs," he said to the clerk. "Any special brand, sir?" The greatest pistol shot in the world thought a moment. "It says 'Puppies Bark for It' on the box," said Walter Mitty. His wife would be through at the hairdresser's in fifteen minutes' Mitty saw in looking at his watch, unless they had trouble drying it; sometimes they had trouble drying it. She didn't like to get to the hotel first, she would want him to be there waiting for her as usual. He found a big leather chair in the lobby, facing a window, and he put the overshoes and the puppy biscuit on the floor beside it. He picked up an old copy of Liberty and sank down into the chair. "Can Germany Conquer the World Through the Air?" Walter Mitty looked at the pictures of bombing planes and of ruined streets. . . .

"The cannonading has got the wind up in young Raleigh, sir," said the sergeant. Captain Mitty looked up at him through tousled hair. "Get him to bed," he said wearily, "with the others. I'll fly alone." "But you can't, sir," said the sergeant anxiously. "It takes two men to handle that bomber and the Archies are pounding hell out of the air. Von Richtman's circus is between here and Saulier." "Somebody's got to get that ammunition dump," said Mitty. "I'm going over. Spot of brandy?" He poured a drink for the sergeant and one for himself. War thundered and whined around the dugout and battered at the door. There was a rending of wood and splinters flew through the room. "A bit of a near thing," said Captain Mitty carelessly. "The box barrage is closing in," said the sergeant. "We only live once, Sergeant," said Mitty, with his faint, fleeting smile. "Or do we?" He poured another brandy and tossed it off. "I never see a man could hold his brandy like you, sir," said the sergeant. "Begging your pardon, sir." Captain Mitty stood up and strapped on his huge Webley-Vickers automatic. "It's forty kilometers through hell, sir," said the sergeant. Mitty finished one last brandy. "After all," he said softly, "what isn't?" The pounding of the cannon increased; there was the rat-tat-tatting of machine guns, and from somewhere came the menacing pocketa-pocketa-pocketa of the new flame-throwers. Walter Mitty walked to the door of the dugout humming "Aupres de Ma Blonde." He turned and waved to the sergeant. "Cheerio!" he said. . . .
Something struck his shoulder. "I've been looking all over this hotel for you," said Mrs. Mitty. "Why do you have to hide in this old chair? How did you expect me to find you?" "Things close in," said Walter Mitty vaguely. "What?" Mrs. Mitty said. "Did you get the what's-its-name? The puppy biscuit? What's in that box?" "Overshoes," said Mitty. "Couldn't you have put them on in the store?" 'I was thinking," said Walter Mitty. "Does it ever occur to you that I am sometimes thinking?" She looked at him. "I'm going to take your temperature when I get you home," she said.

They went out through the revolving doors that made a faintly derisive whistling sound when you pushed them. It was two blocks to the parking lot. At the drugstore on the corner she said, "Wait here for me. I forgot something. I won't be a minute." She was more than a minute. Walter Mitty lighted a cigarette. It began to rain, rain with sleet in it. He stood up against the wall of the drugstore, smoking. . . He put his shoulders back and his heels together. "To hell with the handkerchief," said Waker Mitty scornfully. He took one last drag on his cigarette and snapped it away. Then, with that faint, fleeting smile playing about his lips, he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last.

1. Which poetic elements are used in the first paragraph?
   a. Simile  c. Metaphor  e. Onomatopoeia
   b. Metaphor  d. Personification  f. Consonance

2. What speed limit did Mitty get to that caused his wife to get upset?
   a. 8500  b. 8  c. 202  d. 55

3. What do you think 'overshoes' are?
   a. A shoe that is over-the-top protection
   b. A shoe that helps you kick snow and ice
   c. A protective shoe that goes over your regular shoe
   d. A plastic shoe that makes you look goofy

4. In daydream #3, why does Mitty’s attorney say that he could not have fired the shot?
   a. He only had 1 hand on that day
   b. Mitty was left handed and couldn’t hit anything
   c. Mitty couldn’t have killed Gregory Fitzhurst at 300 feet
   d. He wore his right arm in a sling on the night of July 14

5. How many daydreams does Walter Mitty have in this story?
   a. 2  b. 3  c. 4  d. 5
Alan Austen, as nervous as a kitten, went up certain dark and creaky stairs in the neighborhood of Pell Street, and peered about for a long time on the dime landing before he found the name he wanted written obscurely on one of the doors.

He pushed open this door, as he had been told to do, and found himself in a tiny room, which contained no furniture but a plain kitchen table, a rocking-chair, and an ordinary chair. On one of the dirty buff-coloured walls were a couple of shelves, containing in all perhaps a dozen bottles and jars. An old man sat in the rocking-chair, reading a newspaper. Alan, without a word, handed him the card he had been given.

"Sit down, Mr. Austen," said the old man very politely.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance."

"Is it true," asked Alan, "that you have a certain mixture that has-er-quite extraordinary effects?"

"My dear sir," replied the old man, "my stock in trade is not very large-I don't deal in laxatives and teething mixtures-but such as it is, it is varied. I think nothing I sell has effects which could be precisely described as ordinary."

"Well, the fact is. . ." began Alan.

"Here, for example," interrupted the old man, reaching for a bottle from the shelf. "Here is a liquid as colourless as water, almost tasteless, quite imperceptible in coffee, wine, or any other beverage. It is also quite imperceptible to any known method of autopsy."

"Do you mean it is a poison?" cried Alan, very much horrified.

"Call it a glove-cleaner if you like," said the old man indifferently. "Maybe it will clean gloves. I have never tried. One might call it a life-cleaner. Lives need cleaning sometimes."

"I want nothing of that sort," said Alan.

"Probably it is just as well," said the old man. "Do you know the price of this? For one teaspoonful, which is sufficient, I ask five thousand dollars. Never less. Not a penny less."

"I hope all your mixtures are not as expensive," said Alan apprehensively.

"Oh dear, no," said the old man. "It would be no good charging that sort of price for a love potion, for example. Young people who need a love potion very seldom have five thousand dollars. Otherwise they would not need a love potion."

"I am glad to hear that," said Alan.

"I look at it like this," said the old man. "Please a customer with one article, and he will come back when he needs another. Even if it is more costly. He will save up for it, if necessary."

"So," said Alan, "you really do sell love potions?"
"If I did not sell love potions," said the old man, reaching for another bottle, "I should not have mentioned
the other matter to you. It is only when one is in a position to oblige that one can afford to be so
confidential."

"And these potions," said Alan. "They are not just-just-er-"

"Oh, no," said the old man. "Their effects are permanent, and extend far beyond the mere casual impulse.
But they include it. Oh, yes they include it. Bountifully, insistently. Everlastingly."

"Dear me!" said Alan, attempting a look of scientific detachment. "How very interesting!"

"But consider the spiritual side," said the old man.

"I do, indeed," said Alan.

"For indifference," said the old man, they substitute devotion. For scorn, adoration. Give one tiny measure
of this to the young lady-its flavour is imperceptible in orange juice, soup, or cocktails-and however gay
and giddy she is, she will change altogether. She will want nothing but solitude and you."

"I can hardly believe it," said Alan. "She is so fond of parties."

"She will not like them any more," said the old man. "She will be afraid of the pretty girls you may meet."

"She will actually be jealous?" cried Alan in a rapture. "Of me?"

"Yes, she will want to be everything to you."

"She is, already. Only she doesn't care about it."

"She will, when she has taken this. She will care intensely. You will be her sole interest in life."

"Wonderful!" cried Alan.

"She will want to know all you do," said the old man. "All that has happened to you during the day. Every
word of it. She will want to know what you are thinking about, why you smile suddenly, why you are
looking sad."

"That is love!" cried Alan.

"Yes," said the old man. "How carefully she will look after you! She will never allow you to be tired, to sit
in a draught, to neglect your food. If you are an hour late, she will be terrified. She will think you are killed,
or that some siren has caught you."

"I can hardly imagine Diana like that!" cried Alan, overwhelmed with joy.

"You will not have to use your imagination," said the old man. "And, by the way, since there are always
sirens, if by any chance you should, later on, slip a little, you need not worry. She will forgive you, in the
end. She will be terribly hurt, of course, but she will forgive you-in the end."

"That will not happen," said Alan fervently.
"Of course not," said the old man. "But, if it did, you need not worry. She would never divorce you. Oh, no! And, of course, she will never give you the least, the very least, grounds for-uneasiness."

"And how much," said Alan, "is this wonderful mixture?"

"It is not as dear," said the old man, "as the glove-cleaner, or life-cleaner, as I sometimes call it. No. That is five thousand dollars, never a penny less. One has to be older than you are, to indulge in that sort of thing. One has to save up for it."

"But the love potion?" said Alan.

"Oh, that," said the old man, opening the drawer in the kitchen table, and taking out a tiny, rather dirty-looking phial. "That is just a dollar."

"I can't tell you how grateful I am," said Alan, watching him fill it.

"I like to oblige," said the old man. "Then customers come back, later in life, when they are better off, and want more expensive things. Here you are. You will find it very effective."

"Thank you again," said Alan. "Good-bye."

"Au revoir," said the man.

1. What is the first potion that the old man describes?
   a. Love potion
   b. Poison
   c. Life-cleaner
   d. Permanent potion

2-3. For answer blanks 2 – 3, write what the love potion will do to Diana.

4. How much does the love potion cost?
   a. $1
   b. $5000
   c. Everything
   d. Diana’s free will

5. What can you infer the old man is saying at the end of the story?
   a. Alan will be back to buy more love potion for a different girl he falls for
   b. Alan will go to the old man and buy a different potion for himself
   c. Alan will become friends with the old man and they will hang out together
   d. Alan will get tired of Diana and want to take care of her with the life-cleaner
Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed May 17, 2157, she wrote, "Today, Tommy found 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.

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 had when they read it the first time.

"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."

"Same with mine," said Margie. She was eleven and hadn't seen as many telebooks as Tommy had. He was thirteen. She said, "Where did you find it?"

"In my house." He pointed without looking, because he was busy reading. "In the attic." "What's it about?" "School."

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.

He was a round little man with a red face and a whole box of tools with dials and wires. He smiled at Margie 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 Margie hated most was the slot where she had to put homework and test papers. 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 calculated the mark in no time.

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. 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.

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 out completely.
So she said to Tommy, "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." He added loftily, pronouncing the word carefully, "Centuries ago."

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."

"Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn't a regular teacher. It was a man." "A man? How could a man be a teacher?" "Well, he just told the boys and girls things and gave them homework and asked them questions." "A man isn't smart enough." "Sure he is. My father knows as much as my teacher." "He can't. A man can't know as much as a teacher." "He knows almost as much, I betcha."

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

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." "And all the kids learned the same thing?" "Sure, if they were the same age."

"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."

"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."

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

They weren't even half-finished when Margie's mother called, "Margie! School!" Margie looked up. "Not yet, Mamma."

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

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

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

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

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 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 neighborhood 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.

And the teachers were people...

The mechanical teacher was flashing on the screen: "When we add the fractions 1/2 and 1/4..."

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

1. Where was Margie’s school?
   a. Down the road and in her neighborhood
   b. In her basement
   c. At Tommy’s house
   d. Next to the bedroom in her house

2. In the story, the teacher is described as...
   a. An animal
   b. A mean-spirited human
   c. Mechanical

3. What did Margie write in her diary?
   a. That she hated school so much
   b. That her robotic teacher messed up today
   c. That Tommy found a real book
   d. That her grandfather found a real book

4. What does ‘it’ refer to in the following sentence: “I wouldn’t throw it away.”
   a. Diary
   b. School house
   c. Pages
   d. Book

5. Who does ‘they’ refer to in the following sentence: “Sure they had a teacher, but it wasn’t a regular
teacher. It was a man.”