

# Poetry Comprehension: Television Poem

## TELEVISION

The most important thing we've learned,  
So far as children are concerned,  
Is never, NEVER, NEVER let  
Them near your television set --  
Or better still, just don't install  
The idiotic thing at all.  
In almost every house we've been,  
We've watched them gaping at the screen.  
They loll and slop and lounge about,  
And stare until their eyes pop out.  
(Last week in someone's place we saw  
A dozen eyeballs on the floor.)  
They sit and stare and stare and sit  
Until they're hypnotised by it,  
Until they're absolutely drunk  
With all that shocking ghastly junk.  
Oh yes, we know it keeps them still,  
They don't climb out the window sill,  
They never fight or kick or punch,  
They leave you free to cook the lunch  
And wash the dishes in the sink --  
But did you ever stop to think,  
To wonder just exactly what  
This does to your beloved tot?  
IT ROTTS THE SENSE IN THE HEAD!  
IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!  
IT CLOGS AND CLUTTERS UP THE  
MIND!  
IT MAKES A CHILD SO DULL AND  
BLIND  
HE CAN NO LONGER UNDERSTAND  
A FANTASY, A FAIRYLAND!  
HIS BRAIN BECOMES AS SOFT AS  
CHEESE!  
HIS POWERS OF THINKING RUST AND  
FREEZE!  
HE CANNOT THINK -- HE ONLY SEES!  
'All right!' you'll cry, 'All right!' you'll say,  
'But if we take the set away,  
What shall we do to entertain  
Our darling children? Please explain!  
We'll answer this by asking you,  
'What used the darling ones to do?  
'How used they keep themselves  
contented  
Before this monster was invented?'  
Have you forgotten? Don't you know?  
We'll say it very loud and slow:  
THEY ... USED ... TO ... READ! They'd  
READ and READ,  
AND READ and READ, and then  
proceed  
To READ some more. Great Scott!  
Gadzooks!  
One half their lives was reading books!

The nursery shelves held books galore!  
Books cluttered up the nursery floor!  
And in the bedroom, by the bed,  
More books were waiting to be read!  
Such wondrous, fine, fantastic tales  
Of dragons, gypsies, queens, and  
whales  
And treasure isles, and distant shores  
Where smugglers rowed with muffled  
oars,  
And pirates wearing purple pants,  
And sailing ships and elephants,  
And cannibals crouching 'round the  
pot,  
Stirring away at something hot.  
(It smells so good, what can it be?  
Good gracious, it's Penelope.)  
The younger ones had Beatrix Potter  
With Mr. Tod, the dirty rotter,  
And Squirrel Nutkin, Pigling Bland,  
And Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and-  
Just How The Camel Got His Hump,  
And How the Monkey Lost His Rump,  
And Mr. Toad, and bless my soul,  
There's Mr. Rat and Mr. Mole-  
Oh, books, what books they used to  
know,  
Those children living long ago!  
So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,  
Go throw your TV set away,  
And in its place you can install  
A lovely bookshelf on the wall.  
Then fill the shelves with lots of books,  
Ignoring all the dirty looks,  
The screams and yells, the bites and  
kicks,  
And children hitting you with sticks-  
Fear not, because we promise you  
That, in about a week or two  
Of having nothing else to do,  
They'll now begin to feel the need  
Of having something to read.  
And once they start -- oh boy, oh boy!  
You watch the slowly growing joy  
That fills their hearts. They'll grow so  
keen  
They'll wonder what they'd ever seen  
In that ridiculous machine,  
That nauseating, foul, unclean,  
Repulsive television screen!  
And later, each and every kid  
Will love you more for what you did.

WRITTEN BY  
ROALD DAHL



1. What is the primary concern of the speaker regarding children watching television?
  - A) They become lazy and inactive.
  - B) They lose the ability to think and imagine.
  - C) They become too independent from their parents.
  - D) They become obsessed with cartoons.
  
2. Why does the speaker suggest that parents should remove the television set?
  - A) To make room for other activities like sports.
  - B) To encourage children to spend more time with their parents.
  - C) To replace it with books that foster imagination and creativity.
  - D) To save money on electricity bills.
  
3. What rhetorical strategy does the speaker use when they repeatedly say "NEVER, NEVER, NEVER"?
  - A) To exaggerate the dangers of television.
  - B) To emphasise the importance of keeping children away from the TV.
  - C) To criticise parents who allow television in their homes.
  - D) To make a sarcastic comment about television's influence.
  
4. What does the speaker imply about children who are constantly exposed to television?
  - A) They will become physically unhealthy.
  - B) They will lose interest in reading and learning.
  - C) They will have no social skills.
  - D) They will develop aggressive behaviour.
  
5. According to the speaker, how did children entertain themselves before the invention of television?
  - A) By playing outdoor games.
  - B) By engaging in family activities.
  - C) By reading books.
  - D) By attending school more regularly.
  
6. What is the speaker's tone when describing the television?
  - A) Nostalgic
  - B) Sarcastic
  - C) Condemnatory
  - D) Humorous

7. What does the speaker believe will happen if children start reading instead of watching television?
- A) They will become more imaginative and creative.
  - B) They will miss the excitement of television.
  - C) They will become more rebellious.
  - D) They will spend less time with their parents.
8. Why does the speaker refer to television as a "monster"?
- A) Because it is large and takes up space in the house.
  - B) Because it harms children's minds and imagination.
  - C) Because it can scare young children.
  - D) Because it requires constant attention.
9. What does the speaker suggest will be the children's reaction after a period without television?
- A) They will be angry and frustrated.
  - B) They will turn to other forms of entertainment.
  - C) They will develop a love for reading.
  - D) They will miss television more than ever.
10. What is the speaker's ultimate goal in advising parents to replace the television with books?
- A) To make children more independent.
  - B) To ensure children grow up with a love for reading and imagination.
  - C) To improve children's behaviour towards their parents.
  - D) To reduce the noise and chaos in the household.
11. What does the word "loll" in the line "They loll and slop and lounge about" most likely mean?
- A) To sit or lie in a relaxed way.
  - B) To jump and play energetically.
  - C) To speak loudly and quickly.
  - D) To stand up straight and tall.
12. In the context of the poem, what does the word "ghastly" in the phrase "all that shocking ghastly junk" most likely mean?
- A) Exciting and fun.
  - B) Extremely unpleasant or horrifying.
  - C) Confusing and difficult to understand.
  - D) Expensive and valuable.

13. What does the phrase "clogs and clutters up the mind" suggest about television's effect on children?

- A) It fills the mind with useful information.
- B) It blocks and disorganises the mind's ability to think.
- C) It teaches children how to multitask.
- D) It helps clear the mind of distractions.

14. Which of the following sentences from the poem contains a subordinate clause?

- A) "They sit and stare and stare and sit."
- B) "But did you ever stop to think, to wonder just exactly what this does to your beloved tot?"
- C) "They never fight or kick or punch."
- D) "His brain becomes as soft as cheese!"

15. Identify the correct grammatical function of the word "hypnotised" in the line "Until they're hypnotised by it":

- A) Adjective describing the children.
- B) Verb indicating the action done by the television.
- C) Noun indicating the subject of the sentence.
- D) Adverb modifying how the children stare.

Answers only

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. C
7. A
8. B
9. C
10. B
11. A
12. B
13. B
14. B
15. A

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