

Poem Comprehension 3

Grade 4

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 hypnotized 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!

by Roald Dahl

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the main message of the poem?

2. According to the poet, what happens to children who watch too much television? List any three effects.

3. Why do some parents allow their children to watch TV according to the poem?

4. What does the poet mean by "They loll and slop and lounge about"?

5. Explain the line "IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!"

Vocabulary and Language Skills

6. Find words from the poem that mean the following:

a) terrible or frightening

b) loved dearly

c) under a spell or mesmerized

7. Pick out two pairs of rhyming words from the third stanza. (2 marks)

8. What does the word 'tot' mean in the poem? (1 mark)

9. The line "IT ROTS THE SENSE IN THE HEAD!" is written in capital letters. Why do you think the poet has done this? (2 marks)

10. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the poem:

- a) The children stare until their eyes _____ out.
- b) Television makes a child so _____ and blind.

11. Make sentences of your own using these words from the poem:

a) gaping

b) imagination

c) install

Grammar Skills (15 marks)

12. Identify any two verbs from the first stanza. (2 marks)

13. In the line "They don't climb out the window sill," what is the negative form of the verb? Write its positive form. (2 marks)

14. What kind of sentence is "Oh yes, we know it keeps them still"? (1 mark)

- a) Exclamatory
 - b) Declarative
 - c) Interrogative
 - d) Imperative
-

15. Write the plural form of: (2 marks)

a) child

b) house

16. Change the following line into present continuous tense:

"They sit and stare and stare and sit"

17. Identify the pronouns used in the second stanza.

Creative Writing

18. Write a paragraph about your favorite way to spend free time instead of watching television.

Answer Key

Comprehension:

1. The poem warns against excessive television viewing and its negative effects on children's minds and imagination.
2. - They become hypnotized/mindless
 - Their imagination dies
 - They become dull and blind to fantasy
3. It keeps children quiet and allows parents to do their work without interruption.
4. The phrase describes children's lazy, inactive posture while watching TV.
5. The line emphasizes how television destroys children's ability to imagine and create their own stories/worlds.

Vocabulary:

6. a) ghastly b) beloved c) hypnotized
7. sit-it, drunk-junk
8. 'Tot' means a young child
9. Capital letters are used for emphasis and to show the poet's strong feelings about television's harmful effects
10. a) pop b) dull

Grammar:

12. learned, install
13. don't climb (negative), climb (positive)
14. b) Declarative
15. a) children b) houses
16. "They are sitting and staring and staring and sitting"
17. we, they, their