

POEM - TELEVISION

- ROALD DAHL

■ ABOUT THE POET

Ronald Dahl was a versatile Norwegian-British novelist, short story-writer, poet and screen-writer. Dahl served in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War, in which he became a flying ace and intelligence officer, and rose to the rank of acting wing commander.

- In 1953, he published the best selling story collection Someone Like You.
- It was followed by a couple best-selling children's books, James and the Giant Peach (1961) and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (1964).
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory has been filmed in 2005.
- Regarded as one of the greatest story-tellers for children during the 20th Century, he wrote 19 children's books.
- His awards for contributing to literature include the 1983 World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement and British Book Awards' Children's Author of the Year in 1990.
- In 2008, The Times placed Dahl 16th on its list of 'The 50 Greatest British Writers since 1945'.
- His books have sold more than 250 million copies worldwide.



ABOUT THE POEM

- The poem 'Television' by the British Poet Roald Dahl was written during 1960s and the poem is in the book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (1964)
- Although the poem is about children, it is addressed to their parents.
- The poem states that television is a hypnotizer which dulls the imagination of children by all the trash it telecasts.
- The Rhymed couplets provide the poem with a musical quality.
- Since its publication, the poem has received worldwide popularity attention for its simplicity and didactic tone and the message it delivers which remains relevant in this era of technological development in all walks of life.

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.)

READING THE POEM WITH EXPLANATION

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L-1-12 In this stanza the poet criticises the increasing craze for television among children. However, as the startling line puts it, he has learned about it primarily from other people or some other source and concerned. Thus he does not directly start criticising television for its bad impact on children, but traces the root of his opinion in how others perceive it. That is why he does not sound opinionated.

→ The adverb 'Never' has been used twice in capital letters to stress the avoidance of something that is not at all agreeable or acceptable. In this stanza, the poet wants to say that children should not be allowed by their parents to spend a lot of time sitting before the television set, because this is nothing but a harmful practice.

→ The phrase 'the idiotic thing' has been used to draw a sarcastic reference to a television set. In some way the phrase reinforces the poet's view that television is an extremely useless thing as far as children are concerned. This explains why he feels that children should be kept away from it. While watching television, children do not have any scope to give any creative input but to watch whatever is going on being telecasted thoughtlessly.

→ The presence of television in urban household is unavoidable these days, thus this idea may appear unrealistic, but if we look at the problem with a sensitive and empathetic approach, we may find that his view is not at all illogical or unacceptable as far as children and their future are concerned.

NOTE:-

The pair of lines bracketed at the end of the stanza is an example of literary device called PARENTHESIS, that is added to a sentence or word either to provide an explanation or to emphasize the point expressed by its precedent. Here the poet employs the device to exemplify the negative impact of children's obsession with television. Indulging in a bit of exaggeration, he says that sometimes the children stare so hard that their eyeballs drop, and he has seen a dozen such eyeballs rolling about on the floor in one house.