

'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?'

TELEVISION - Roald Dahl

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In this stanza, the personal pronoun 'you' has been used for the parents of the children. 'He' is used for the speaker i.e., the poet himself and all those who like him feel that television has badly affected children.

→ In the first four lines of the stanza, the poet focuses on the dilemma of the parents by bringing out their possible response. As it shows, the parents understand that the televisions are not at all beneficiary for the growth and development of their children. However, the parents are somehow distracted and don't know how to entertain their children without using television.

→ The poet wants to stress the view that substitutes for televisions should be thought about. He further remarks that the substitute for television is quite easy to find out. For this the parents should remember those days when there was no television. He therefore asks the parents to recall the past when children were able to find better and far more productive ways to entertain themselves.

NOTE → "Great Scott!" - It can also be an interjection of surprise, amazement or dismay. It is distinctive by inoffensive exclamation, popular in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Godzooks - An exclamation of surprise or annoyance.

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!

POEM

classmate

Date _____

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TELEVISION - Roald Dahl

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- People addressed in the first line of the stanza are parents of children who, the poet thinks, have been by the ill-effects of watching television habitually. By placing a couple of questions in the beginning, the poet tries to stir their conscience reminding them of the good old times when children used to get entertained without TV sets.
- Gradually, the poet puts forth a suggestion that for children, reading books is the best alternative to the harmful practice of watching television. In the past reading books was an extremely useful, engaging and productive pastime. He further says that the parents must motivate their children to read real good books in order to entertain themselves.
- The poet has deliberately capitalised some words with a view for highlighting their importance in the context of the poem. 'READ' is obviously the most important of all words capitalised. By capitalising this word, he wants to reinforce his point that in the older days, when there were no trace of television sets in the households, children used to read books and that was no doubt far more enriching and beneficial activity.
- In L-46, the poet mentioned the name of Scott, the famous 18th-19th century novelist, poet, playwright and historian. Whom he referred to as 'the Great Scott' in the stanza. Scott is often regarded as 'The Father of Historical Novel'.