

Tema di: LINGUA STRANIERA

TESTO LETTERARIO - LINGUA INGLESE

(comprensione e produzione in lingua straniera)

Margie even wrote about it that night in her diary. On the page headed 1 May 17, 2155, 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,² 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 when they read it the first time.

"Gee," said Tommy, "what a waste. When you're through³ 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 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 her 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 how⁴ 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. [...] The inspector had smiled after he was finished and patted her head. [...] 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,⁵ 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." [...] She wanted to read about those funny schools.

They weren't even half finished when Margie's mother called, "Margie! School!" [...] Margie went into the schoolroom. It was right next to her bedroom, and the mechanical teacher was on and waiting for her. [...] 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 neighbourhood 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$..."

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

(I. Asimov, from Earth Is Room Enough, Doubleday & Co., 1955)

1. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1.1 How old are the protagonists and what do they do?

1.2 What does the writer mean by .a real book. and what is strange about it?

1.3 How can you understand, at the beginning of the story, that real books had been used long before?

1.4 What are the disadvantages of having real books according to Tommy?

1.5 Why does Margie sound .scornful. when Tommy tells her that the book is about .school.? (line 15)

1.6 Why has Margie.s mother sent for the County Inspector? Why does the Inspector take .the teacher apart.? (line 19)

1.7 Look at the language used by Asimov! How can you understand that :

- the Inspector is fat
- Margie does not like her teacher
- Tommy knows more than Margie
- Margie would like to talk to her teacher

1.8 The words .book., .teacher. and .school. take different meanings in the passage according to what they 6 «[I bet you] I am sure» refer to. Find out the different meanings and, from the language used, say what the writer.s feelings are about them.

1.9 Why did Margie think old schools were better? Explain her feelings.

2. SUMMARIZE the content of the passage

3. COMPOSITION: In 2155 school might be completely different from what it is now. Using your experience and your own knowledge say how it might be and how you would like it to be. Alternatively, read Asimov's words: «The dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 made science fiction respectable. Once the horror at Hiroshima took place, anyone could see that science fiction writers were not merely dreamers and crack-pots [persons with foolish ideas] after all, and that many of the motifs of that class of literature were now permanently part of the newspaper headlines.. Until the 1950s Science Fiction was regarded as the

Cinderella of literature and generally confined to the pages of mass circulation magazines. Do you agree with Asimov? What made Science Fiction respectable?

Oxford poets break with tradition

A group of people sit anxiously around a tutor's sitting room in Oxford University, fiddling with their hands or flicking nervously through their note-books.

The English Literature students have been asked to do something very unusual at Oxford - write some poetry of their own and read it out.

Jenny reads her 14 lines, breathes a sigh of relief and sits down.

The tension is broken and attention moves to the next person - only this time it's a student.

Jenny is Jenny Lewis - poet, author and creative writing tutor, kicking off an innovative project in Oxford. Tutors and students at St Edmund Hall have been working together on creative writing aimed at boosting both their own creativity and their understanding of key aspects of English literature.

With English don Lucy Newlyn, Jenny Lewis is challenging the idea that English at Oxford has to be taught as a purely academic subject.

An increasing number of universities in the UK offer creative writing at undergraduate and graduate levels, but in Oxford, English literature has generally been seen as something to be studied rather than created. "Creative writing has had a bit of a bad name.

"Resistance to it stems from the idea that you can't teach people to be poets," says Jenny Lewis.

"In America, creative writing is seen as a development of people's communication skills."

Stepping down

Despite her background, Jenny was nervous about putting herself on the line with students. "I was stepping down from a position which was quite protective to produce work and be judged, but I realised that this was what the students were being asked to do too, to take a risk, and it's good to take risks." Those involved believe the experiment has paid off.

For Ben Burton, who is now doing research on creativity in the curriculum as well as writing a novel, the poetry workshops broke down the barriers between students and tutors and also sparked an interest in theoretical areas of English literature he thought he would find dull.

"By discussing these matters in the context of my own creative writing, I was attracted to elements of my English degree that might otherwise have seemed dry and abstract," he said.

He would like to see more creative writing in the school curriculum.

"As you go up secondary school there are fewer and fewer opportunities for creative writing," he said. The poetry workshop - which is known as Synergies - began after Easter in 2001 at St. Edmund Hall. It was not a compulsory part of the English course and students were not examined on the work involved, indeed some had to be cajoled into taking part.

In the future, Dr Newlyn hopes to offer a course bringing together creative writing and critical analysis as an option in Oxford's English degree.

Structured work

Caroline Boon, who is now studying law, was a reluctant participant at first, but now writes poetry for pleasure. "I had never written anything before then. The most important thing for me was the idea that I can just write poetry by myself and for myself," she said.

In the workshops, students and tutors worked in a structured way.

First they had to each come up with a pool of words on a theme, such as the sea.

They each wrote a sonnet using the pool of words and these were then analysed and discussed by the group, in the way English students usually study literature.

In the next stage, students re-worked or edited other people's sonnets, in effect creating new collective works. The finished results, together with the methods used, have been published in a book, which was funded through a grant from the Oxford-based Institute for the Advancement of University Learning.

The institute, which works to support Oxford teachers and the development of teaching, was interested in the idea that the group's approach might change the traditional relationship between tutor and student. Paul Ashwin, from the institute, said: "What's most interesting to me is that it is a joint production, that teaching and learning are not separate tasks.

"Instead of teaching and learning being separated between the roles of tutor and student, students and tutors learnt together through their engagement in a single task."

For Oxford don Lucy Newlyn, the workshops proved to be a turning point in terms of her own creativity. After about two decades of researching and teaching English literature, she has published poems of her own and has had a collection of poetry accepted for publication next year.[...]

Her collaborator Jenny Lewis also believes taking part in the workshops fired her own creativity and believes everyone could benefit from creative writing.

"I think using your creativity makes you happier," she said.

(Angela Harrison, BBC News Online, 26 February, 2004)

1. ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1.1 Read the introductory lines and say what is happening in a tutor's sitting room at Oxford University.

1.2 Why are Jenny Lewis and Lucy Newlyn challenging tradition?

1.3 Why are the students so tense?

1.4 Did the students take the course willingly? Were they examined at the end of it?

1.5 What's the general attitude in the passage towards tutors and students working together? Refer to the text.

1.6 ...Jenny was nervous about putting herself on the line with students. (line 15) Explain and say why.

1.7 Support with examples from the text the journalist's statement. Those involved believe the experiment has paid off.. (line 18)

1.8 What does Dr Newlyn hope to offer students in the future?

1.9 Why, in your opinion, was the poetry workshop called 'Synergies'?

2. SUMMARIZE the content of the passage

3. COMPOSITION: Consider the following sentences: ...literature has generally been seen as something to be studied rather than created.. "Resistance to it stems from the idea that you can't teach people to be poets," (lines 11, 13) Discuss Alternatively, using your own experience as a student and your knowledge, say if a similar project would be feasible in our schools and universities, either within the study of language and literature or as a development of people's communicative skills. like in America . Alternatively, would the relationship between students and teachers improve if they could learn together .through their engagement in a single task.?