Chapter 26: The Book That Saved the Earth

CONTENTS 3 exercises · 7 questions

26.1	Read and Find Out 1 (Page 56)	2 Q
26.2	Read and Find Out 2 (Page 58)	1 Q
26.3	Think about it (Page 66)	4 Q

Exercise 26.1 — Read and Find Out 1 (Page 56)

Q1 Why was the twentieth century called the 'Era of the Book'?

SOLUTION

According to the Historian, the twentieth century was called the 'Era of the Book' because books were at the centre of all human knowledge and activity during that period.

She explains: "In those days, there were books about everything, from ant eaters to Zulus. Books taught people how to, and when to, and where to, and why to. They illustrated, educated, punctuated, and even decorated."

Books covered every subject imaginable and served multiple purposes — they were a source of instruction, information and decoration — making them absolutely central to life in the twentieth century.

Answer: The twentieth century was called the 'Era of the Book' because books existed on every subject and served every purpose — teaching, illustrating, educating, punctuating and even decorating.

Q2 Who tried to invade the earth in the twenty-first century?

SOLUTION

The Martians tried to invade the Earth in the twenty-first century. Specifically, the invasion was planned for the year 2040.

The invasion was ordered by the Great and Mighty Think-Tank, the Commander-in-Chief of Mars Space Control and self-declared "Ruler of Mars and her two moons". He described Earth as "that ridiculous little planet" and intended to put it under "our generous rulership".

Think-Tank sent a manned space probe — consisting of Captain Omega, Lieutenant Iota and Sergeant Oop — to Earth as a first step before the main invasion fleet arrived.

Answer: The Martians, led by the Great and Mighty Think-Tank, tried to invade the Earth in the twenty-first century, specifically in the year 2040.

Exercise 26.2 — Read and Find Out 2 (Page 58)

Q1 What guesses are made by Think–Tank about the books found on earth?

SOLUTION

When the space crew enters the Centerville Public Library and finds books, Think-Tank makes a series of completely wrong guesses about what these objects are.

His first guess is that the library is "a crude refreshment stand" and the books are "sandwiches" — the main food of Earth creatures. He declares: "There are two slices of what is called bread, and between them is some sort of filling." He even orders the crew to eat one, and Sergeant Oop bites into a book.

When Noodle hints the Earthlings did not eat the books but used them as a communication device, Think-Tank revises his guess: books are "communication sandwiches" to be listened to. He orders the crew to hold them to their ears.

Finally, after Noodle again gently corrects him, Think-Tank decides the books are for "eye communication" and orders the crew to decipher the "code" by taking intelligence vitamins.

Answer: Think-Tank guesses that books are first sandwiches (food), then communication devices to be listened to, and finally objects for eye communication containing a secret code.

Exercise 26.3 — Think about it (Page 66)

Q1 Noodle avoids offending Think-Tank but at the same time he corrects his mistakes. How does he manage to do that?

SOLUTION

Noodle uses a clever strategy of extreme deference and humility to correct Think-Tank without wounding his enormous ego. He never says Think-Tank is wrong; instead, he presents each correction as a dim, uncertain memory that requires Think-Tank himself to clarify and improve upon.

When Think-Tank declares books are sandwiches to be eaten, Noodle says: "I beg your pardon, but an insignificant bit of data floated into my mind about those sandwiches." He then adds: "It can't be worth much" — as if pre-apologising for contradicting his master. He notes the Earthlings "did not eat them" but "used them as some sort of communication device", leaving Think-Tank to claim credit: "Naturally. That was my next point."

Similarly, when Think-Tank orders the crew to listen to the books, Noodle frames his correction as a "cloudy piece of information... twirling around in my head", inviting Think-Tank to "clarify" it. Think-Tank again takes ownership: "Yes, that is quite correct, I will clarify that for you."

In this way, Noodle supplies the right answer while allowing Think-Tank to believe he thought of it himself. This protects Noodle from punishment while also ensuring the crew follows the correct course of action.

Answer: Noodle corrects Think-Tank by humbly presenting each correction as a vague, uncertain thought of his own and then letting Think-Tank claim it as his own idea, so Think-Tank's ego is never hurt.

Q2 If you were in Noodle's place, how would you handle Think-Tank's mistakes?

SOLUTION

If I were in Noodle's place, I would handle Think-Tank's mistakes in much the same careful and tactful way that Noodle does, because open contradiction would only provoke anger and make the situation worse.

I would frame each correction not as a challenge but as a helpful addition — something like: "Your Brilliance has identified the main point perfectly; I merely recall a small detail that might refine it further." By making Think-Tank feel his original idea was largely correct, I could guide him to the right conclusion without triggering his pride.

At the same time, I would make sure the correction was clear and unambiguous so the crew actually received the right instructions. Noodle's method works because it balances political wisdom with practical effectiveness — it is better to let the leader take credit than to see the whole mission go wrong because of his uncorrected errors.

Answer: I would gently frame each correction as a small addition to Think-Tank's own idea, letting him take credit, so his pride is protected while the crew still receives the right guidance.

Q3 Do you think books are being replaced by the electronic media? Can we do away with books altogether?

SOLUTION

It is true that electronic media — smartphones, tablets, e-readers, the internet — have changed the way people access information and stories. Many tasks that once required a physical book can now be done digitally, and this has certainly reduced the dominance of the printed book.

However, books cannot be done away with altogether. A physical book requires no battery, no network connection and no screen. It can be read anywhere, annotated freely and passed on for generations. Many readers also find that the act of reading a printed page aids concentration and retention in ways that a glowing screen does not.

More importantly, the value of a book lies not in its physical form but in the knowledge, imagination and human experience it contains. Whether that content is printed on paper or displayed on a screen, what matters is the reader's engagement with ideas. As this very play suggests, a single book of nursery rhymes was powerful enough to stop a Martian invasion — a reminder that books, in whatever form, carry extraordinary power.

Answer: Electronic media have reduced our dependence on printed books but cannot replace them entirely, since books represent accumulated human knowledge and imagination whose value is independent of their physical form.

Q4 Why are books referred to as a man's best companion? Which is your favourite book and why? Write a paragraph about that book.

SOLUTION

Books are called a person's best companion because, like a true friend, they are always available, never judge, and give generously without asking anything in return. A good book shares its knowledge, sparks imagination and offers comfort in loneliness. As the Historian in this play notes, books in the twentieth century "taught people how to, and when to, and where to, and why to" — in short, they guided every aspect of human life.

Unlike other companions, a book never tires of being read, never argues back, and adjusts to the reader's mood and pace. A reader can return to a favourite book years later and discover new meaning in the same lines. Books also survive across centuries, carrying the thoughts of people long dead into the present — making them companions that transcend time.

One widely loved book is 'The Diary of a Young Girl' by Anne Frank. It is the real diary of a Jewish teenager who hid from the Nazis in Amsterdam during the Second World War. Written with remarkable honesty, courage and even humour, it shows how a young girl held onto hope and her love of life in the most terrifying circumstances. Reading it, one feels a deep admiration

for Anne's spirit and a powerful reminder that human dignity must always be defended. It is a book that, once read, is never forgotten.

Answer: Books are called a person's best companion because they are always available, endlessly patient and generous with knowledge and imagination — qualities of an ideal friend.