

**Question 1: What is the tone of Jerome Stern's monologue? Explain how he develops that tone.**

ANSWER TO FIRST PART OF QUESTION

Jerome Stern's monologue is a scathing criticism on the hypocritical nature of schools. He is subtle but sharply sarcastic and mocking, a tone which he achieves by alternately describing first what schools do in most cases but then describing how they do the opposite when moral issues are at stake but still expect successful results. A simple example is this one: "They want them [students] to learn how to think for themselves...But they don't want them to have books that confront them with real ideas...." In other words, the schools claim to want something for students, but their methods have exactly the opposite effect. How can someone learn to think for himself if he is never confronted with the controversial ideas that may be found in books? He can't, but it is precisely this logic that schools seem to labor under.

The monologue is divided into a series of stanzas, each addressing a particular

hypocrisy. For example, it opens with a statement about how modern schools teach students all there is to know about drugs in the interest of preventing students from using

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drugs; in other words, the more they know about drugs, the less likely they are to use them. Yet, in the next stanza he contrasts that with the fact that schools tell students nothing about sex because they seem to believe that if the students know about sex (in the same way they know about drugs), "they will be interested in sex."

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Pointing out the hypocrisy is one part of his method, but he continues sarcastically, "But if the schools don't tell them anything about sex, then they will have high morals, and no one will get pregnant, and everything will be all right."

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It is common knowledge that even in the most upright school districts and neighborhoods, some students will do drugs and others will get pregnant. The idea that schools can protect the morality of all students has

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proven impossible as long as schools have existed, and it is precisely this desire to control and protect that Stern seems to criticize. He seems to believe that students would be better able to handle the world's challenges and pitfalls if schools respected them enough

FURTHER DEVELOPS ANSWERS (ANALYSIS)

to give them the whole truth, but he enumerates the many ways that schools fail in this regard: They want students to know computers, but not "real science" because they might lose their faith; they want them to know history, but not the painful parts because then they might be critical of our country; they want them to be well read, but they don't want

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them to read certain authors like Shakespeare because it might corrupt them. Simply put, because of this hypocrisy, schools actually do the opposite of what they should do.

Instead of helping students become independent critical thinkers and responsible citizens, Stern claims, schools want to "hold them forever as children to their bosom," thus removing all independence and personal responsibility. The idea that a place of learning is a place where some ideas cannot be discussed or addressed in any way supports Stern's implicit claim that schools often do exactly the opposite of what they are supposed to do. His mocking tone is achieved not only by pointing out the many hypocrisies of the schools system, but also by presenting his argument in a sing-song (child-like) back-and-forth pattern and punctuating it with periodic bouts of sharp, mocking mimicry. The monologue is almost uncomfortable to read in places because the criticism is so sharp, but it's difficult not to agree with much of it because it is well supported with examples most of us recognize from our own experience in school.

*Conclusion Statement*

*Conclusion Paragraph:  
Summary  
of Answers  
and main  
points*

*PART 1*

**Question #2: What claim is Clarisse making about education? Explain how one of the other texts supports her claim.**

*PART 2*

*ANSWER TO PART 1*

Clarisse's claim about education is that schools seem to do the opposite of what is educational. Accused by the school system of being anti-social, she says, "Being with people is nice. But I don't think it is social to get a bunch of people together and then not let them talk, do you?" She continues, describing her school experience and echoing the

Matt Groening cartoon, "...we never ask questions, or at least most don't; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing, and us sitting there for four more hours of film teacher." In Clarisse's experience, the student plays little role in the educational process.

*TEXTUAL EVIDENCE*

In the cartoon, Bongo, like Clarisse, has all kinds of provocative questions running

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through his head: ""Why do we have such bland textbooks? How come so much emphasis is placed on rote memorization? Why do we have to answer such trivial questions on tests?" All of these could lead to interesting discussion and conversation in

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the right classroom, but Bongo doesn't give voice to any of them. The question he ultimately asks is one of procedure: "May I have permission to sharpen my pencil?" This question is not one of learning or genuine inquiry, but rather one that illustrates he has

learned the rules well. In a classroom dedicated to learning, sharpened pencils would be assumed and little time would be devoted to such details, but in Bongo's class, the rules

are paramount. He is afraid to ask a meaningful question. Just as Clarisse is not allowed

to ask questions, neither is Bongo. In both cases, long-standing fear of a (tyrannical)

school authority prevents them doing so, thus the system of education is not doing what it

should do: create thinkers and problem solvers, not just rule followers. In Clarisse's case,

we see the effects of such an education in the society around her: Social, thoughtful,

curious people are considered crazy, thus indicating that this kind of "education" doesn't

actually work. In both cases, the students have learned the "lessons" so well that the strict

boundaries of authority are no longer necessary. The students police themselves,

unaware that there may be a more engaging way to be educated, and thus they feed the

system that is destroying them.

*ANSWER  
TO  
PART 2*

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EVIDENCE*

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*RESTATE  
ANSWER  
(THESIS)*

*CONCLUSION  
STATEMENT*

*PART 1*      *PART 2*  
**Question #3: What claim is the cartoon making? How does it achieve this? Offer a reasonable counterclaim that the cartoon does not address. - PART 3**

The implicit claim of the cartoon is that school is a soul-crushing place in which students are not encouraged to think for themselves or ask questions but rather are expected to follow trivial rules, remain "in line," and bow to those who run the system.

Bongo (the student) is clearly a curious and thoughtful kid, full of provocative questions:

"Why do we have such bland textbooks? How come so much emphasis is placed on rote memorization? Why do we have to answer such trivial questions on tests?" While some of his questions may seem snarky, they would be excellent ways to engage students. They are essentially reasonable, and a discussion of real world answers would be educational for students in some class settings. Sadly, Bongo does not voice any of his questions because he has been stifled by an authority who will not hear them. The only acceptable question is one of procedure: "May I have permission to sharpen my pencil?" The fact that the teacher's response is flatly, "No" indicates that it is more important to maintain control than it is to teach the students something worthwhile.

There are reasonable counterclaims to Bongo's questions that the cartoon does not address. For example, regarding the boring textbooks, it is not hard to see why that might be the case: money. Textbooks are expensive, and you get what you pay for. Since public schools are especially underfunded, it seems obvious that exciting, colorful textbooks would be far beyond their means. And when Bongo asks, "Why do I have to raise my hand to speak?" it seems pretty clear that this rule is in place to prevent chaos: If everyone is speaking at one time, no message, educational or not, will be heard. Chaos is not conducive to education, so Bongo's questioning of this particular rule seems a little snarky. In fact, there are reasonable answers to most of the questions Bongo asks, but his point is well taken: We've gone too far enforcing trivial rules for their own sake. To me, the greater fear is not a classroom with everyone speaking, but a classroom where no one does...which is exactly what Clarisse described.

*TEXTUAL EVIDENCE*

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*ANSWER TO PART 3*

*ANSWER TO PART 1 OF QUESTION*

*ANSWER TO PART 2*

*TEXTUAL EVIDENCE*

*WARRANT*

*EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT TOPIC SENTENCE*

*CONCLUSION*

**Question #4: Compare two of the texts. Use textual evidence from both to support your claim.**

In the passage from Fahrenheit 451, Clarisse describes her school as an anti-social environment where obedience and passive acceptance of force-fed “knowledge” is the way of things. She says, “Being with people is nice. But I don’t think it is social to get a bunch of people together and then not let them talk, do you? An hour of TV class...another hour of transcription history...but do you know, we never ask questions or at least most don’t; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing, and us sitting there for four more hours of film teacher.” This description of a dystopian school is shared by Jerome Stern’s description of our modern schools, in which he points out how schools are more concerned with maintaining control than with educating students, and how ultimately they don’t do either. This is illustrated in the monologue by all the things the schools DON’T want students to learn or know: “...sex...real science...the tragedy and pain in [America’s] real history...books that confront them with real ideas...some of the amendments....” In other words, schools in both passages don’t want students to make their own decisions about anything. The students are viewed as vessels to be filled by whatever method of “teaching” the school decides upon, not as active learners and problem solvers who will benefit from being confronted with challenging ideas, books, and facts.

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ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS

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