

Television's Child by Glen Kirkland

Read the poem "Television's Child" by Glen Kirkland. Answer questions 1–5 in your Questions booklet.

#1 1 The moment he slipped
from the womb,
#4 his parents plugged
his umbilical cord*
5 into a living room outlet
#1 and sat him in a corner,
where his eyes
#3 grew large with cathode* glow,
his mind throbbed with shifting colours,
#1 10 and his ears
echoed with voices
speaking always to #5
#1 someone else.

15 He was fed
and clothed,
it's true,
but no one ever spoke to him
#5 and expected a response.
His parents told him things like,
20 "Go to bed,"
"Eat your vegetables,"
and "Turn that down,"
and he always did.

25 His mom and dad thought him
good-natured, obedient,
and quiet.
#4 They didn't worry,
for in their hectic days,
they needed their child to be
30 the way he was.

When the boy was 6
and still spoke no more
than a few words,
his parents decided
35 to unplug his cord

and see if their boy
would talk to them
and seek out friends.
#4 From the first minute of silence,
40 the boy missed television;
for he was empty of language
and colours and movement.
The world around him
lay passive,
45 awaiting his touch.

His parents stood by watching
as he blinked
and tried to find within himself
some understanding of
50 pattern, forward movement,
possibilities.
Nothing was there
that made sense, however.
His mind was a scrapbook
55 of images that did not connect,
his present was simply
where he was now, and
his future was
empty of possibilities.

60 "Oh, plug him in again!"
cried his mother.
"I can't stand to see him
look so alone."
And so, he glowed again
#3 65 with cathode eyes
and stray thoughts of selfhood
went running back
into a forest of
shifting colours,
70 wondrous sounds, and
profound numbness.

* An umbilical cord connects a mother to her unborn child to support its development in the womb.

* Cathode – referring to electricity, and movement of negatively charged electrons.