

A Cautionary Tale from the Comfort of the Couch Answer Key

Reflection Question Guide

1. What are three moments in the story that show people have given up their own judgment or choice? Possible answers include the AI choosing breakfast, automatically scheduling calls, or managing creativity at work. Students should recognize the pattern of small conveniences adding up to total dependency.

Teacher insight: Encourage discussion about how small decisions (like using autocorrect or recommendations) can slowly shift our comfort with letting technology "think" for us.

2. What benefits do the characters get from relying on AI? What costs come with that convenience?

Possible responses: Benefits: efficiency, comfort, safety, fewer mistakes, predictable days. Costs: boredom, loss of creativity, lack of emotion or human connection, overdependence, reduced critical thinking.

Teacher insight: Guide students toward understanding that technological convenience often trades complexity for control - and that not all "ease" equals progress.

3. Which moment in the story made you feel most uncomfortable or concerned - and why?

Possible responses: The "DreamAI" editing her subconscious feels invasive. The "MoodAI" controlling the office atmosphere removes authentic emotion. The "SmartHomeAI" impersonating relationships feels dehumanizing.

Teacher insight: Discuss the emotional boundary between "helpful" and "creepy." What makes certain technologies cross the line?

4. If you lived in NeoComfort, which AI system would you keep, and which would you turn off? Explain your reasoning.

Possible responses: Keep: transportation AI for safety or efficiency. Turn off: DreamAI or SmartHomeAI for privacy and emotional authenticity.

Teacher insight: There are no "correct" answers here - focus on reasoning. Ask students to consider how they might redesign these AIs to include human oversight.

5. What does this story suggest about the importance of balance between human decision-making and AI assistance?

Possible responses: The story warns that too much reliance leads to apathy and emotional detachment. Balance means using AI as a tool, not a replacement for thought or connection. Humans must remain decision-makers, especially in moral, creative, and emotional areas.

Teacher insight: Encourage students to define *balance* in their own words. Discuss what "healthy dependence" on technology might look like in real life - for instance, using reminders or safety tools without letting them erase choice or reflection.