

Robots in Films and TV Programmes

1 Robots have been characters in films for over 75 years. In the early days, the robots were just people in robot costumes.

3 Computer robots

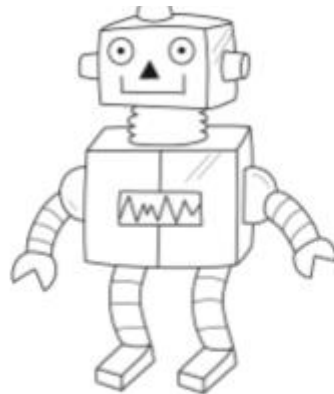
50 years ago, computers were the size of wardrobes and so modern that most people had never seen one except in films. People were very excited about computers, so robots had flashing orange and red lights to make people think they were controlled by computers. Since they were still people in costume, however, most film robots still looked like people.

9 Puppet robots

That was changed by the BBC TV series *Doctor Who*. In 1963, the Daleks arrived. Daleks – which had people inside them – looked like enormous salt-shakers on wheels. They introduced the idea that robots didn't have to look like people, and could even be played by 'puppets'. The most famous film robots ever made are probably R2D2 and C-3PO from the film *Star Wars*. The first of the *Star Wars* films was made in 1977. C-3PO looks like a human. R2D2 looks a bit like a dustbin. He is short, with flashing lights and beeping sounds. In some scenes, R2D2 had a man crouched inside him, but in most he was a radio-controlled puppet.

18 CGI

Today, most robots in films are made using computer-generated imagery (CGI). Since the early 2000s, CGI has been the main type of special effect in films. Robots have become part of those 'special effects': they are no longer people in suits, or even radio-controlled puppets. Today, they are drawings that are made to move using CGI. But since they're only drawings, the size and shape of CGI robots can be anything you can imagine.



1. Why did robots in early films look like humans?

2b

1 mark

2. "computers were the size of wardrobes" (paragraph 2).

Suggest a different word or phrase to replace "the size of wardrobes".

2a

1 mark

3. Why did film robots 50 years ago have flashing lights?

2b

1 mark

4. Why are Daleks so important in the history of screen robots?

2b

1 mark

5. "R2D2 looks a bit like a dustbin." Why does the writer give the reader this information?

2g

1 mark

6. Write an alternative heading for the last paragraph.

2c

1 mark

7. Film-makers today probably wouldn't hire an actor to play a robot. Why not?

2d

1 mark

8. Number these types of robots in the order in which they were used in films.

Robots that look like anything you can imagine.

Robots that look like computers.

Robots that look like people in suits.

Robots that are puppets.

2c

2 marks

9. What do you think a robot would look like in a film that was made in 1990?

a person in a costume

a puppet

CGI

Explain your answer.

2d

2 marks

Question	Answer
1. Why did robots in early films look like humans?	Because they were just people in costumes.
2. "computers were the size of wardrobes" (paragraph 2) Suggest a different word or phrase to replace "the size of wardrobes".	Words should imply very big/huge/massive.
3. Why did film robots 50 years ago have flashing lights?	To make people think they were controlled by computers.
4. Why are Daleks so important in the history of screen robots?	They were the first screen robots that didn't look like people.
5. "R2D2 looks a bit like a dustbin." Why does the writer give the reader this information?	So the reader can imagine what R2D2 looks like.
6. Write an alternative heading for the last paragraph.	Accept reasonable ideas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGI robots • Imaginative robots • Robots of the future • 21st-century robots • Special effect robots.

Question	Answer
7. Film-makers today probably wouldn't hire an actor to play a robot. Why not?	Because now robots are just drawings/CGI robots can be used/special effects are available.
8. Number these types of robots in the order in which they were used in films. <input type="checkbox"/> Robots that look like anything you can imagine. <input type="checkbox"/> Robots that look like computers. <input type="checkbox"/> Robots that look like people in suits. <input type="checkbox"/> Robots that are puppets.	4 Robots that look like anything you can imagine. 2 Robots that look like computers. 1 Robots that look like people in suits. 3 Robots that are puppets.
9. What do you think a robot would look like in a film that was made in 1990? <input type="checkbox"/> a person in a costume <input type="checkbox"/> a puppet <input type="checkbox"/> CGI Explain your answer.	A puppet. 1990 is before 2000, so it won't be CGI. It's after the 1960s and 1970s so it probably wouldn't just be a person in a suit.