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TV Synthesis Essay AP English – Rochford Period 7

Perhaps the most integral obligation of a society is to adequately relay information. In the early 1900s, experimenting came to fruition with the first displays of working electric television models. These TVs marked the beginning of a new age of information; audio and video transmissions could be simultaneously disseminated across large distances for the first time. In today’s society, however, television’s widespread functions are customarily to incite consumerism, push manipulative agendas, encourage sedentary lifestyles, and sequester society from its reality—this mutation suggests that TV has become a detriment.

Television has frequently been used to influence society’s responses and decisions. This begins at an early age when young children begin watching cartoons and children’s TV shows. Network leaders like Nickelodeon and Disney Channel expose children to advertisements that target their impressionable young viewers. This begins the perpetual grooming that results in a society dictated by consumerism. The hit drama *24* broadcasts during an hour long block, but dedicates 16 minutes of that hour to commercials (Source 1). More than 25% of the viewing experience is spent trying to push products, services, and more on viewers. By the time an individual reaches his later years, it would be preposterous to think that none of the many commercials TV has shown him have impacted his judgment (Source 2). In addition, TV has been a haven for news and media outlets to manipulate information so as to cause speculation and hysteria among viewers. Mere minutes after the terrible tragedies of the September 11th Attacks began, every media outlet in the world took to the airwaves to impress their views, thoughts, and opinions upon those who would listen—essentially, the entire public. Granted the public deserves to know the truth in the wake of such atrocity, but the media often used TV to demand reform and response—for example, the TSA and calls for war against those responsible. News teams that showcase violence on TV aren’t doing so in the interest of freedom; they do so to drive global markets, and they selectively censor material to instill fear and submission (Source 5). Both these cases exhibit a tendency to manipulate the public, a task augmented by the television. Among other detrimental effects, television’s undue influence on societal perceptions may be considered unjust.

TV’s subliminal effects notwithstanding, its support of a disconnected, passive lifestyle presents adverse effects to and challenges society. As a result of increased time spent watching TV and playing video games, the nation has seen a decline in physical activity and experiences with the great outdoors; this culminates in the highest obesity rates in the nation’s history. During TV Turnoff Week, which tries to counteract these malevolent tendencies, participants are advised (quite coyly) to turn off the TV, walk to the window, and “observe an amazing interactive environment full of real experiences” (Source 4). Although TV may entertain and educate under the correct conditions, it frequently allows for a withdrawal from the realities of life. In other words, while TV may have beneficial aspects if one participates in the viewing actively, it inherently advocates for passivity (Source 2). Watching television seems to do little more than waste time: time that could be spent interacting with the tangible environment that surrounds us all. In a lifetime, the vast amount of time occupied by TV is likely squandered as time spent disconnected from reality; moreover, TV allows people to remain out of touch with their environments. As a case in point, Netflix’s Instant Video Service, which has expanded rapidly into today’s society and is arguably the future of television, sells subscriptions based on its ability to swiftly deliver television programs to viewers. The average Netflix subscriber spends close to eight hours a week viewing TV or movies; it is often so easy to get hooked on one of today’s many dramatic or exciting TV series, which results in such large amounts of time spent in front of a television screen. TV can entrance viewers and cause focus to be shifted away from actual issues, stresses, and problems in their lives. It is almost as if TV is used to surround oneself in a fictional environment where there are no obligations, there are no cares, and there are no urgencies—no matter is of great importance when captivated by the parallel universe of television. When we watch television, the images do nothing more than keep us indoors and preoccupied with an alternate reality, lulled into physical and mental inactivity (Source 2). Indeed this escape from actuality serves as a coping mechanism for life’s obstacles, yet the costs of such inactive physical and mental conduct surely outweigh the benefits. Television has ostensibly mutated into an instrument of societal isolation.

In a nation rife with materialism and lethargy, TV abets the decline of society. Whether due to its aptness for distorting, its propensity for calculated influence, or its advocation for inactivity, the television, though once innovative and extraordinary, no longer contributes beneficially to the public. We must all hope that this machine, so engrained in everyday life, is capable of being scaled back to play a lesser role.