Impact Of Television Essay, Research Paper

“I believe that television is going to be the test of the modern world,

and in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our own

vision, we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of

the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky. (Qtd. In Murray 7)

This quotation, by E.B. White, was written at the dawn of the television. White was right, it would either be beneficial or detrimental to society. Ever since the first television station was licensed in 1941, our lives have been affected by the presence of television. However, this effect is not negative. Despite the selection of shows that appeal to us negatively, it is used as a simple means of entertainment that appeals to the ethical in us as well as an invaluable source of cultural enrichment. Television is also an excellent aid in preparing children for school and assisting in educating children after they have begun school.

Every day millions of people turn to their televisions as a form of escape from the pressures and stress of day-to-day life. The television, to them, serves the purpose of entertaining them for a half hour or an hour at a time. What people don t realize is that some shows also deal with ethical issues. Some sitcoms, such as the popular NBC produced show Friends and CBS Everybody Loves Raymond, are meant solely for entertainment but deal with everyday ethical dilemmas. Humor is not the only approach used in television entertainment. Shows, such as ABC s NYPD Blue, use thick plot lines and heavy drama to draw the viewer in entangling them in an intricate web of law and order. Even though some shows are meant only for entertainment, some shows make it a point to dive into major ethical based plot lines, an example of this can be found in CBS s Touched by an Angel. All of these shows, no matter the target audience, somehow delve into the difficult world of ethics and whether we know it or not, they subconsciously promote us to make decisions that can be right for all.

Television is able to show different roles in society and therefore people are able to better understand others experiences making it not only entertaining but also culturally beneficial. Documentary shows are very informative on one particular chosen subject. These shows help society better understand the world around them giving them not only knowledge but also cultural awareness. We can take Kennith Burns as an example. His nine-part documentary on the Civil War aired on PBS. It considered the consequences and meaning of the war that transformed the country from a collection of states to a nation. (Civil War) When a documentary is shown two stories are told; the verbal information presented and the progression of pictures. An emotion can be portrayed very effectively by means of pictures. The viewer now is not only told that the children in the middle east are left without food and shelter, he/she is able to see the children suffering. This aspect of television makes it an invaluable asset to today’s society, and especially beneficial to children.

Studies estimate that before the age of 18, children have watched fifteen to twenty thousand hours of television. What kind of impact does this have on a child’s ability to learn? In a survey of seven hundred fifty 10-16 year olds it was revealed that 82% of them confirmed that television can teach young children the difference between right and wrong. United States congress concluded that television has the capacity to effect society in a positive way by educating and informing children. “Studies show that television can effectively teach children special skills, assisting in preparing for formal schooling, as well complement skills taught in classroom. For example, programs such as Sesame Street and Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood have been shown to enhance attentiveness and perceptual abilities.” (Background Information ) For younger children, viewing educational programs or cartoons can actually increase academic performance. Research from The National Center of the Gifted and Talented shows that young gifted children spend significantly more hours in front of the television than their same-aged peers. (Mc Alister) As little as a half and hour per day can improve test scores on a variety of subjects. Although it has been argued that television tends to a reduction in reading and verbal skills, shows such as Sesame Street are addressing the issue by showing words to improve reading and encourage viewers to read along with the characters. It has been shown that there is actually a demand for more educational and informative programs for children.

Society has been affected and will continue to be affected, not only by television, but also by media in general. Television is a constant form of entertainment and excellent source of information that is assessable by millions of people. The educational content in children s television is beneficial to preschoolers and students alike. However, television has been the blame for many of societies faults because it is easy to contribute it to violence and a social lack of initiative. Television is such a small part of a much larger picture and its benefits far outweigh its faults. The idea of television as an informative and education media must be embraced in the future to receive its full benefits. Even the thought of a society without television is incomprehensible to many. The Benefits of television are numerous and so are the drawbacks. E.B. White put it best when he said

We shall stand or fall by television, of that I am sure.

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