Television: A New Medium for Communicating

In my opinion, people are better off with television than without. Television is a powerful medium which opens the door to new and exciting worlds, places, and people.

In the article, "Ma and Pa and John Boy in Mythic America: The Waltons," Anne Roiphe states, "...despite the laughability of the American romance, it's not such a bad thing to keep dreaming," a statement I wholeheartedly agree with. The fact that television's story lines are often improbably or impossible doesn't mean T.V. is worthless. The argument can be made that much of what we consider great literature are works of wildly imaginative fiction. Beowulf, the odyssey, and even the Mother Goose tales are impossible, yet enduring classics. In "A Nation of Videots," Jerzy Kosinsky asks, "Does it [T.V.] encourage adventure?" My answer is yes. How many explorers were inspired by Homer I could not say, but my guess is it would be a great many. Now a generation raised upon the exploits of Captain Kirk and the Star Trek crew reach for the heavens. One of the space shuttles was named Enterprise, which suggests an inspiration from T.V. Kosinsky also asks, "Does it arm...against pains inflicted by society, by other humans,...?" Again I say yes. Watching James Dean on television armed me against fear of being lonely, rejected. Shows covering topics such as war, racial injustice, and crime have forced me to become aware of these problems, and to face them. I believe our society has benefited from seeing films of police riot squads beating hippies. We have learned that there must be room for diverse opinions, and that violence is not the answer.

In an article in the Atlantic, "Understanding Television," David Marc states that "...programs are viewed as worthless or destructive because they divert consciousness from 'reality' to fantasy." In The Plug-In Drug, Marie Win cites a study in which "heavy" television viewers were found to have a distorted view of reality. these are serious problems, but they are the result of a distorted viewer, not the medium itself. In enjoying any form of entertainment, it is important that one realizes what is fantasy and what is real. This is true whether one is speaking of books, records, movies, or any other media. The responsibility for a balanced view rests upon the reader or viewer, not the author, work of art, or the movie.

In television there is room for both fact and fiction, fantasy and reality. it can be neither good nor bad, only neutral. The viewer makes it "good" or "bad" for himself, as with any other form of communication. Therefore, I believe T.V. is a worthy form of communication, and yet another medium for ideas and expression, which is a plus for society.

Commentary

- The writer's main idea is clearly stated at the beginning: "In my opinion, people are better off with television than without it."
- The writer organizes his argument carefully, devoting one paragraph to the supporting point that fiction on TV is not necessarily "worthless," and another paragraph to the point that the problem is not with television but with the viewer.
- The writer supports his ideas in excellent detail. To support the idea that fiction on TV is not worthless, the writer supplies specific examples from his won knowledge and experience.
- The writer concludes by broadening the scope of his discussion, suggesting that TV is not only good for him, personally, but for society as a whole.
- The writer succeeds in incorporating references to all four excerpts, quoting three. He even knows how to use ellipsis dots. But most significant, in incorporating the source material he has made it serve his own purposes rather than being bound by it to merely repeating the words of others.
- He even uses the plural "media" and the singular "medium" correctly. The writing is correct, and the tone appropriately engaged.
- The essay does have flaws. The writer might be accused of quoting David Marc out of context. The writer should leave no doubt in the reader's mind that Marc is only stating the issue, not voicing the opinion that "programs are...worthless or destructive because they divert consciousness from reality to fantasy."
One other thing: While admitting that problems can arise from viewers watching too much TV, the writer claims that these problems “are the result of a distorted viewer, not the medium itself.” He does not support this claim but merely restates it: “The responsibility for a balanced view rests upon the reader or viewer, not the author, the work of art, or the movie.” Moreover, if he had followed the directions, the writer would not have used this argument in defense of his position.