Name

Class

Date

The Benefits of Television (Title)

“TV will never be a serious competitor for radio because people must sit and keep their eyes glued on a screen; the average American family hasn't time for it.” The New York Times published this line in 1939, believing that that television would be unpopular. In fact, their prediction turned out to be completely wrong. According to Nielsen Media Research, the average American watches approximately five hours of TV a day. Although I think that this amount is problematic, it also shows how much people like TV. Clearly, people need to be careful not to watch too much TV. However, I believe that TV can benefit people by entertaining them and educating them, and by providing a common topic for conversation.

First of all, many people find television to be entertaining. When people watch TV dramas, they can take their attention away from their troubles and put themselves in a more positive mood. Although movies can provide this kind of escape as well, TV shows are more effective because they have regular episodes and are a reliable way to change one’s mood. For instance, when my friend, Marie, was going through a bad breakup, she often turned to the science fiction show, “Star Trek,” to escape and feel better. That program was very hopeful about the future and also had very interesting characters that Marie cared about. When she watched the show, she stopped focusing on her old boyfriend and thought about the ways in which the characters in the show cooperated and overcame their problems. To sum up, TV shows can help people change their feelings and take their attention away from problems.

Another advantage of TV is that many programs have educational value for both children and adults. Nowadays, many shows allow children to learn about interesting topics such as animals, friends, art, and space. For example, when my son, Luca, was four, he loved watching a show called “Blue’s Clues” that taught about a different topic every time. The host of the show actually talked to the viewers and to my amazement, Luca answered him. In one episode about art, he learned about yellow and blue can be mixed to make green. While he was watching, he answered questions and was really thinking. In addition to children’s programs, TV offers adults the chance to learn about people and issues around the world. One of my favorite shows is “60 Minutes,” a news program that explains important current issues. For example, they recently had a story about using DNA evidence to free people who have been wrongly put in jail. The reporters do not just tell us what is happening, but also show us pictures and let us hear the voices of people involved. As a result, they helped me understand this important topic in a very real and memorable way. In short, TV is a medium that can be a powerful learning tool to help children and adults learn about many different subjects.

Finally, the characters and stories from TV shows are great topics for conversations. When people talk about school or work, the topics can be boring or hard to understand. However, friends and even strangers can have good conversations about shows they have both seen. For example, my friends and I often talked about what might happen next “24” or which characters we liked the best. We did not have to struggle to find good topics to keep our conversation going because we already had something in common to discuss. TV shows can also provide a safe way to talk about important issues that are otherwise hard to bring up. For instance, when I was teaching in Japan, many of my students loved to watch a show called “Beverly Hills 90210.” In many ways, it was a silly show with overly dramatic teenage problems, but it also dealt with issues such as teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and drug abuse. The show opened these topics in a way that made them easier to discuss so that my students could think and form their own beliefs. In this way, TV shows can provide people with a common ground, so they can communicate.

If people watch too much TV, it can be a problem. They may spend less time with friends and become inactive. However, the truth is that people love watching it, and it is a powerful medium. It can entertain people while also providing an escape from the problems of everyday life. Good programming can be a powerful educational tool, and TV shows can make it easier to have fun or important conversations. Instead of trying to pretend television does not exist, I believe that we should encourage people to watch TV in a responsible way and to support programs that help us think.