

**Essay Type: Argument**

**Question:** "The TV effect is a myth". To what extent do you agree or disagree with this claim?

Structure of argument	The Myth of the TV Effect
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Since its advent as a means of mass media communication, television has become an important – even irreplaceable – part of the daily life of ordinary people. As a medium, television is neither intrinsically good or bad. Like any other resource, it may be used or abused. Those who have condemned the television set as a "mechanical rival", prescribing to do away with it altogether, have failed to weigh its strengths and weaknesses. They have ignored the possibilities of television as a means of extending children's interests and knowledge. These critics have also created an unnecessarily adversarial distinction between what has traditionally been defined as "entertainment" and what is classified as "education" – a relationship, which, in fact, may be more complementary than conflicting.</p>
<b>Body: 1<sup>st</sup> argument</b>	<p>It is true that by design, television is not an instrument of teaching. Yet the medium may have much to offer in educational value. For example, television is a remarkable disseminator of information. It has undoubtedly contributed to the public's knowledge and understanding of current social and political events (Comstock, 1987). Similarly, television is a primary medium in which many children today are introduced to a wide variety of stories and genres. These opportunities could be used fruitfully to help children see the important connections between their traditional school subjects and the different facets of their culture.</p>
<b>Body: 2<sup>nd</sup> argument</b>	<p>Too often many adults, particularly those in the educational community, have chosen to ignore television or even worse, have virulently attacked all uses of the medium. Articulating this perception in a public address, Jankowski (1988) reported that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">It is a source of constant amazement to [him] that the television set, an inert, immobile appliance that does not eat, drink or smoke, buy or sell anything, can't vote, doesn't have a job, can't think, can't turn itself on or off, and is used only at our option, can be seen as the cause of so much of society's ills by so many people in education. (p.52)</p> <p>Indeed, as Jankowski argues, the assumption that media draw children's attention away from learning has fostered a rather narrowly defined view of how literacy develops and how learning is thought to occur. Reading graded materials, such as basal readers, has been viewed as the sine qua non in schools, sometimes at the cost of equally important hands-on experiences or activities involving other forms of symbolic representation. However, if children's ability to acquire literacy is said to be based on their prior knowledge, their conceptual understanding of language, and their uses of a variety of strategies, then there might be many paths to that goal, some of which may actually lie outside the printed page. For example,</p>

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	<p>background knowledge derived from television, radio, and other sources surely contributes to an individual's understanding and critical thinking when reading about similar events in newspapers and texts. In this respect, rather than compete, media may serve complementary functions. Indeed, children's interests in stories are often enhanced by their presentation in more than one medium. Cooper (1984), for example, found that after watching a televised version of a popular children's story, even the youngest children wanted to discuss its meaning, to explore the fiction further, to mull it over, and to go back to the book. It is necessary to appreciate the special qualities inherent in each medium, to expose children to multiple genres and media presentations, and to build important connections between them.</p>
<b>Body: 3<sup>rd</sup> argument</b>	<p>It is a fact that many children today are watching a great deal of televised fare that is inappropriate for their age and sophistication level. This concern raises two possible courses of action. If one takes the position of technology determinist Neil Portman that "it is pointless to spend time or energy deploring television or even making proposals to improve it", then the only response is to lock the television set up, or do whatever is necessary to keep it away from the innocent eyes of children. But if one believes that television can offer the potential to complement and enliven children's literary experiences, it is imperative that greater efforts be made to improve the quality of programming, and children's viewing habits. These efforts need to involve not just parents, but all those concerned with children in our society. As Schramm, Lye and Parker found (1961):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We have a resource in children and a resource in television. We are concerned that television should strengthen, not debilitate, the human resource. This end can be accomplished most easily not by unilateral activity on the part of the TV industry, or by parents or schools, but rather by mobilising all the chief forces in society, which bear on the television-child relationship. It must be a shared effort to meet a shared responsibility. (p.180).</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>There is no doubt that television has the potential to extend learning and literacy well beyond the classroom walls. It can enhance learning by stimulating children's interests, and augmenting their knowledge related to school subjects. Such accessibility to information is empowering. As a unique mass medium, television is capable of transferring information and experiences, widely, quickly, vividly with a realism and immediacy hardly matched by other mass media. Whether television actually realises its potential depends on the cooperative efforts and sense of public responsibility of broadcasts, the guidance and supervision of parents, and the skills and vision of educators building linkages between home and learning. The TV effect and whether one benefits or suffers from it is ultimately up to the individual viewer.</p>

(908 words)

Modified from: Rosen, L.J. (1995). *Discovery and commitment: A guide for college writers*. Mass: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 450-451.

Commented [AB11]: Evidence/support

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Commented [AB13]: Refutation

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**Questions:**

1. What is the writer's claim or position?
2. Which sentence gives the writer's argumentative thesis?
3. What are the central ideas on which the writer will build the argument to support the claim?
4. For each key argument in the body of the essay, identify the writer's reasoning by answering these questions:
  - a. How does the writer begin the argument (refutation followed by concession, concession followed by refutation)?
  - b. How does the writer develop the paragraph?
    - What facts and examples are used?
    - Whose opinions are used as support evidence: Appeal to authorities? Study? Expert opinion?
    - Has the writer made any appeals to emotion? What language expressions are used to show this?
5. Which organisational pattern is used in this essay?