

Videots

Directions:

1. The following quotations are opinions expressed by Jerzy Koszinski, author of *The Painted Bird* and *Being There*, who feels as strongly as Bradbury that reading is an essential part of everyone's life. Koszinski expresses his opinions not only about the current lack of reading in the United States, but about what he feels is the detrimental effect of television as a replacement for reading. Read the following silently. As you read a quotation, if you agree, place a + in front of the number. If you disagree, place a - in front of the number. If you have a question, place a O in the margin.

As you read, if an example from your own experience occurs to you, jot down a note or two to record it. Try to find examples for at least two of the quotations.

2. Use these quotations as a basis for a paper in which you will agree or disagree with Koszinski's and Bradbury's assessment of the effect of television on its viewer.

- _____ 1. Children have always imitated adults, but "TV babies" mimic TV and behave with patterns they learned from TV and not their own moods or real role models.
- _____ 2. TV, unlike a novel, takes the initiative and says, be passive, I'll do the moving, talking and acting, you be a spectator to life.
- _____ 3. Unlike reading, TV isolates the viewer and gives no time for reflection.
- _____ 4. A novel becomes concrete through a reader's imagination and memory--his inner process; because it is totally free, it gives unexpected, unchanneled insights.
- _____ 5. Students in an experiment watched their teacher being attacked. At the same time, it was filmed on two TV screens clearly visible to students. Most students did not look at the incident, which they believe was real, but watched TV because they could "see it better." None came to the aid of the teacher.
- _____ 6. By filming a brutal physical struggle from a variety of viewpoints, the cameras transformed a human conflict into an aesthetic happening distancing the audience and allowing them an alternative to moral judgement and involvement.

- _____ 7. Go into any high school and see how limited students' perceptions of themselves are, how crippled their imaginations, how unable they are to tell a story, read or concentrate or even describe an event accurately a minute after it happens. See how easily they are bored, how quickly they take up "reclining position, how short their attention span is."
- _____ 8. TV shows make the socially unacceptable, acceptable.
- _____ 9. The average working American looks at 1,200 hours or more of TV and reads only 5 hours per year.
- _____ 10. For me, imagining groups of solitary individuals watching their private, remote-controlled TV sets is the ultimate future terror: a nation of videotots.
- _____ 11. Children who spend over five or six hours watching TV every day cannot interact in groups. They want to watch, not talk, be asked questions, or be singled out.
- _____ 12. On TV the world is exciting, fast-moving, single faceted, never complex; by comparison people's own lives are slow, bewildering, and "boring."
- _____ 13. TV has taught young people to use drugs because there is no need to suffer, be tense, or even uncomfortable.
- _____ 14. Teenagers are anxious to join an amorphous group like a rock band or a film audience which relieves them of all necessity to interact with one another; the noise prevents communication, the screen is their focus.
- _____ 15. Silence and the absence of entertainment are more than discomforts for a TV generation--they are threats--they cause anxiety.

- _____ 16. Because the real world is unpredictable and doesn't function according to the 30-minute solution and is full of ambiguities, children brought up as viewers, not participators, feel naturally persecuted.
- _____ 17. Watching conflict on TV cannot prepare anyone emotionally to confront and handle a situation in reality like experiencing directly can.

Source: "A Nation of Videots: David John Interviews Jerry Koszinski," *Media and Methods*, April 1975, 24.