Your Name

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Assignment

**Orwell and Huxley**

The two dystopian futures are compared in this book “Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business” by Neil Postman. One of the dystopian futures is the future imagined by George Orwell in his book 1948 depicting the failure of the government in maintaining its control by keeping the people under constant surveillance. The other future is imagined by Aldous Huxley in the book “Brave New World” in which the people are kept happy enough so that they never put up any fights. Orwell gives a warning that an externally imposed oppression will overcome the people, while Huxley believed that no Big Brother is necessary to make people deprived of their history, autonomy, and maturity. Orwell feared those people who would ban the books, but Huxley feared that there would be no one to read the books, so there would be no reason to ban any book. Orwell had a fear that the truth will be concealed from us while Huxley feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared our becoming a captive culture and Huxley feared our becoming a trivial culture. I short, Huxley had a fear that the things or people we love will ruin us while Orwell feared that the people or things we hate would ruin us. The ideas are relevant to this book because there is a possibility that Huxley was right. His worries that truth will become irrelevant due to the distractions is somehow true in today’s real world.

**"The Medium is the Metaphor"**

Neil Postman has presented the idea of media as a metaphor. It suggests that media can be viewed as something very important and essential to society. Marshall McLuhan's theory of the "medium is the message" influenced Postman, and he applied this theory to his own research and tried to develop an argument against the Television and its impacts. According to him, the messages of ideas that we receive are controlled by media. A daily routine example of this can be the persuasion of Television using manipulative strategies and techniques to make people buy certain products that may be unnecessary. Postman tries to encourage people to learn and get to know about several techniques used by the Television to trick, persuade and convince people. He considers media as a metaphor by stating that American culture is highly influenced and changed by the media. He calls the McLuhan’s theory limited as it suggests that the medium is a “message” and suggests himself that medium is basically the “metaphor” for culture. A clear statement is reflected in a message, while the metaphors are powerful implications for enforcing reality. Postman tries to reveal the effects of media-metaphor of the Television on our minds.

**Typographic America**

Description is the kind of public discourse that is used by the author for Typographic America. He describes the 17th century colonial America by saying that it is nostalgic and idealistic. He remains selective about his history strategically and avoids discussing the percentage of the American population that was not predominantly literate. Postman contrasts his specific vision of the colonial past to our present. He illustrates that the tastes of people are changed like our heroes; for example, the words of Charles Dickens are replaced by the words of Michael Jackson. Then Postman presents his argument that the speech patterns of people were different during the print culture time. During that time, people were not only good writers and readers but also better thinkers. Further, he emphasizes that the understanding of past is important to understand the present. According to him, the forms of media are also the history and culture of human beings.

**Lincoln Douglas’ Debate**

Postman considers the famous debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas while competing for the Illinois Senate Seat. The thing that intrigues Postman is not the nature of those debates but that the debates were so famous and popular. He presents that the audience was not somber and respectful, but it was enlivened. Some of the excerpts from the speeches are analyzed by Postman and he indicates that the audience must have had a better understanding of the issues and they were willing to explore those issues at length. He further provides examples of how the discourse was influenced by reasoning in Typographic America. Postman suggests that Douglas spoke for three hours and then Lincoln for three hours which was a total of seven hours political discourse attended by the people who belonged to all walks of life. These were the people with a “typographic mind.” Postman suggests that he finds a serious and meaningful discourse in politics.

**Development of the telegraph**

The development of telegraph affected the public discourse as telegraphy had the capacity to move the information rather than collecting, explaining, or analyzing it. The development of telegraph introduced a fragmented, sensational and impersonal language of headlines. It was a discontinuous language having no connection of one message to another and the “headline” had to stand on its own. There was no time for the historical perspectives or qualitative in telegraphic communication.

**Now...This Phrase**

Postman uses this phrase and performs its close reading for trying to prove that culture has been pervaded by the complete disregard for context. He instantiates that the television culture is different from the print culture not only in fundamental ways but is also unequivocally worse. According to him, the content of entertainment culture is “disinformation” because it misleads and does not contribute to the intelligence and knowledge of the people.

**The Huxleyan Warning**

Neil Postman reminds the readers about the two models of culture, which suggest that culture either becomes a prison or becomes a burlesque. Postman believes that the Huxleyan reality that has overtaken our culture. Television is a source of entertainment and is fun, but Postman suggests that many cultural problems appear that are not noticed sometimes. He then says that it not realistic to ask the Americans to prevent, reject, or avoid new technologies.