

Reading Guide for *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Read this book over the summer and answer the following questions. You will be turning them in for a grade and writing an essay when you come back to school.

This book discusses 2 views of the future presented in novels—George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Don't worry if you don't understand everything Postman is saying. The reading guide will help you pick out the important stuff. 😊

Intro

The intro includes comments of several college students who read this book for a class. Which comments stood out to you?

Forward

What did George Orwell fear?

What did Aldous Huxley fear?

Ch. 1

1. What was Plato's argument about human conversation?
2. How has television affected human conversation?
3. What did the inventions of clocks have to do with man's turning away from God?

Ch. 2

4. How is truth expressed in an oral culture?
5. “ “ “ “ “ “ a print-based culture?

Ch. 3

6. What was the literacy rate in colonial America?
7. How did that contribute to the idea that all men are equal?

Ch. 4

8. How do the Lincoln-Douglas debates illustrate the typographic mind?
9. What does reading encourage? How does it help the mind?
10. How does the history of advertising illustrate Postman's thesis about the typographic mind?

Ch. 5

What was the impact of the new idea that transportation and communication could be disengaged from each other? Give both positive and negative impact.

Ch. 6

11. What is good television?
12. What is the purpose of music on TV programs?
13. Why must television suppress the content of ideas?
14. How has television become the metaphor for all discourse off the screen as well as on?
15. How have political debates changed in the Age of Television?

Ch. 7

16. Why are programs structured in short segments that may stand as complete events in themselves?
17. What is the “new” definition of truth provided by television?
18. How does “now...this” damage the worldviews of young viewers?

19. What could opinions be more accurately called today and why?
20. What is more serious than being deprived of authentic information?
21. What has TV taught magazines?
22. What has *People* magazine taught TV?

Ch. 8

23. What conclusions can be drawn from religious TV programming?
24. How does TV trivialize the message of Christianity?

Ch.9

25. What is capitalism based on?
26. How has the TV commercial changed the way political ideas are represented (p.129 & 131)?
27. According to Carl Schorske, why has the modern mind grown indifferent to history?
28. Why does TV render us unfit to remember?
29. What does Postman mean by saying the corporate state, through TV, controls the flow of public discourse in America?

Ch. 10

30. How does *Sesame Street* undermine traditional schooling?
31. What does *Sesame Street* encourage children to love?
32. What is the primary educational issue in America today?
33. What is television's principal contribution to educational philosophy?
34. What are the 3 commandments that form the television philosophy of education?

Ch. 11

35. Why does Postman say we would be better off if TV got worse?
36. What questions need to be asked by Americans?
37. What is Postman's answer to the dangers of television?
38. What was Huxley trying to tell us?