Alan Turing would have to be a perfect example of a Computer Scientist impacting society for the better. Personally, I would say this is the case for very different reasons than most. Yes, he was one of the founding fathers of AI and Theoretical Computing, and yes, he did play a major roll in the code-breaking efforts of England during World War 2. But I would argue that these individual achievements only affect society to a limited extent. As Marshall Mcluhan once said, “The medium IS the message.” It doesn’t matter what individual things are said over the telephone when you compare it to the overall effects the telephone had on society. Similarly, I believe Alan Turing’s strivings to push the envelope of how we see computers and ourselves had a much greater effect on society than any one event or achievement. I believe this striving for achievement is best summed up in the Turing Test.

Turing devised the Turing Test to answer the question “when would we define a computer as intelligent?” Like much of Turing’s work, the Turing Test pushes the envelope of what is possible with technology (even now 60 years later). On top of this, the Turing Test makes us question our place in the world and how we relate to technology on a deeper level. These are the two elements I consider essential for a Computer Scientist to impact society for the better.

Long before the invention of working computers, Turing was programming theoretical machines that could play chess. In the Turing Test, he challenges us to create a computer that can simulate human conversation well enough to fool a panel of judges into thinking it is a human. By setting a standard of excellence and then pushing people to achieve it in multiple fields, Alan Turing has changed the field of Computer Science and society for the better.

Furthermore, the Turing Test makes us question what the definition of intelligent life is and what it means to be human. As discussed in the novel *The Most Human Human* by Brian Christian, this test brings to light the very nature of our humanity. Like much of Turing’s work , defining the border between humans and computers, this test challenges us to validate our place in the world. It asks us to glorify and hold sacred all things that truly make us unique and different from our computational creations. These thought-provoking questions cause people to reassess their values and defines the directions the field of Computer Science will grow as the future unfolds.

Allan Turing is a perfect example of a Computer Scientist changing society for the better. By challenging society to live up to certain standards of what technology is capable of, and by causing us to question what standards we should hold ourselves to, Alan Turing has created a lasting impact on society.