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Professor Frank

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**What I already know / What I want to Find Out:**

When I was in middle school, I remember I used to go to the library once a week and get a new book to read. When I started high school, I got my first job. The only free time I had available was to keep my grades in high school good enough to pass my last years in school. I was done spending time reading for fun. After that, I can easily say how many books I read until now. I watch people reading in the parks, subways, and buses. Libraries and cafe places. I think it’s beautiful. I wish I could be a reader like them.  I’ve tried so many times to get back the way I was before and read for pleasure. I have my favorite books around me. I start reading them, I enjoy it. But there is always something more interesting around to do. Since when did reading become my last option of entertainment?

I know reading is essential for a good education. I know reading helps people to improve their imagination, writing and creativity. It makes me upset to know that I do not love reading, and that I will feel like sleeping doing it. I know if I have a television and books in the same room, sadly, the books will be kept on the shelves.

I am primarily interested in finding a way to have reading as my first choice of entertainment rather than television. I would like to explore good techniques about reading: maintaining a good sequence, staying focused while reading, and adopting good places to read. The most important thing is how to enjoy it better. From all this doubt, I was able to form my research question: Why is television my first choice as entertainment instead of books?

**The Story of My Search:**

My search was a little bit tough for me. My first research question was how to become a good reader, so I began my research looking for articles in the library databases about reading techniques. Instead, I found many articles about reading related to kids and what the parents and teachers should do to help them to develop their reading.

After a conference with Professor Frank, I decided to reformulate my question because of my disappointing initial results. Our conversation made me realize that, if I want reading to be my first option as entertainment, I should get rid of something that takes most of my free time, the television. Subsequently, I started looking for articles with information about reading and television. I wanted to find a debate discussing the reasons books would be better than TV. I did not want to use any Google search engines if at all possible. Again, I was not happy with the results. Most of the articles were talking of how the stories in the books are turning into TV shows lately. So, I started to use more keywords to be more specific about it, and the results after searching for a while were mostly about the adults with a type of mental illness or any diseases dealing with reading or TV in their lives. I did find some articles with interesting information about reading that I thought could be useful, but it was definitely not enough for my paper.

After my frustrating attempts to find the articles debating the benefits of reading instead TV, I felt like I should try plan B - my best friend and enemy - Google. Google is helpful in so many ways, but it can also be tricky. It is hard to find reliable information there, but fortunately, there are many ways to find out if this information is true or not. The first thing I wrote on the Google search engine was simply: “tv or books”, and of course over two billion results appeared to me. The first result I could see was: “Reading books vs. watching TV – is one really better for us?”, which was exactly what I was looking for. The next step I took was checking if the article seemed reliable, and with the information I had I decided to use it on my paper.

When I felt like I had enough articles to work on my essay, I was ready to think about the interview I had to make as one of my sources. During the conference with Professor Frank, she suggested that I could go to the Learning Commons at school and talk with a librarian or ask someone about where to find a person in college in the reading field to work with. So, I went to the Learning Commons and they suggested that I should look for an English professor. And that’s when I had a great idea. My paper is all about reading mostly, and it would be perfect if I’d find someone passionate about it. When I had this thought I knew exactly what to do. I live with a 10-year-old kid, and she is the greatest reader I’ve ever seen in my life. I know it’s something natural for her. For what I could see, reading is her favorite thing in this world. I asked her if she could be my interviewee and she kindly agreed to do it. It was the best choice I could make.

**The Results of My Search**

Kristin Van Ogtrop stated her point of view about wasting her time with binge-watching television (TV) series. She, as a mom, does not fit in a world where most people binge-watch television shows because she would rather spend her time doing something else or simply being patient about watching TV without being compulsive. As a result, she proves with a scientific experiment that thanks to her control, she is superior to others. The experiment she mentions is to prove her superiority is the Stanford marshmallow experiment (1).

While attending a workshop with Ken Badley, Larry D. Burton decided to try his reading and writing technique (1). Burton’s scholarly reading activities and writing have been much better ever since. All he had to do was to choose an assignment he needed to finish and work for 45 minutes in his lunch time. The result of his work and other people who attended the workshop was very productive. He decided to apply that technique daily, which helped him to keep updated with reading and writing during the summer break.

Earl G. Graves Sr explains beautifully why reading books is more important than another electronics device. He writes:

[I]n life, you can't learn everything you need to know to set and achieve your goals from TV, the Internet, and social media updates. None of these stimulate the mind and fuel the imagination the way books do. Attending conferences and seminars is good, but not enough. All of these are great resources, but none are substitutes. It doesn't matter if you read them on bound paper or an electronic device, or even as an audio book. If you are committed to your own success, you need to read books. (1)

Graves also states that mostly successful people never stop reading books. For him, “no matter what the topic of the book […] the mind-expanding benefits are the same”. He explained how military history books helped him to be a better leader and strategist in his business (1).

Diana Wagman presents us with her experiences watching TV and reading books. The day she spent hours watching TV, she realized how much junk food she ate while watching it. In a different day she spent hours reading a book. She was too busy turning the pages that she couldn’t eat junk food, and also because she wanted to keep the book clean. Wagman points out that she feels like she is wasting her time when watching TV for hours, whereas she feels great spending time reading a book. She says that “Reading is active; watching TV is passive. The act of physically turning a page creates a momentary pause for understanding to sink in”. She also illustrates why reading a book is good for everyone: “It reduces stress, promotes comprehension and imagination, alleviates depression, helps you sleep and may contribute to preventing Alzheimer’s”.

The interviewee, ten-year-old Sonya Blum, describes the reasons she prefers reading a book instead of watching television. Blum says:

When I open a book, a whole new world is there for me to explore. As I'm reading, I can picture the scene in my mind, and when I look up, I can see and even hear the characters acting out the story. Those feelings make it impossible to not love to read. On the other hand, while television may be entertaining and a more important source of information to society, you just can't get the same sensation watching it as you can reading a book.

Blum explains that when she is really tired, she opts for watching TV since reading takes energy and brain power. She doesn’t really have a favorite place to read. It can be anywhere. I also asked her if she uses any techniques to read, and she explains: “If there is a word in a book that I do not know, I will first rack my brain to check if I know it. Then I will try to sound it out in different ways. If I still do not know it, I will skip it if I feel that it's unimportant, but if I feel the need to figure it out, I will look it up or ask my parents”. My last question for Sonya Blum was if she had to choose between a world without books or TV, which option would she choose and why. She answers: “Definitely TV. Books are incredible sources of information and entertainment. Without them, the world would be struggling to function. They are fun to read and make a lasting impression on anyone who dares to venture past the cover”, concluding the interview in a splendid way.

**What I Learned and Didn’t Learn**

This experience made me realize that watching too much TV is something easy to choose, because we do not have to put any effort into doing so. Reading, on the other hand, takes dedication and brain power, which explains why it is so easy to turn the TV on and let someone else do the job for me. I learned reading at least 45 minutes a day can help me to get used to it and also help to improve my academic results. I also realized that books are the key to success and help us in so many ways including comprehension and mental health. If there are words in a book I don’t understand, I can try to sound them out in different ways. For people who love reading, any place is good enough to read books; reading is something natural and opens a different world of possibilities and knowledge. I also learned that an interview can be much more meaningful than other sources.

I didn’t learn how to enjoy reading better. I know I have a lot of good details about it from great readers, but I think this is something I will learn as soon as I start practicing it every day through the information I learned in this process.

**What This Means to Me**

Everything I learned working on this paper is something I want to keep for life. It was a long process. I felt stressed, rushed, anxious, excited and happy about it. Every result brought me a great feeling about reading and it’s hard to admit, but it made me feel lazy, or maybe too busy to have reading as my first option of entertainment. I am so excited again to try to be a great reader after all of this. This process motivated me to get back the way I was when I was a kid and used to read books often. All the sources were essential information but listening to words from a kid was so far my favorite part. It has rekindled the feelings I once had about reading.

Works Cited

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