

Grade	<u>12</u>
Fiction	<u> </u>
Poetry	<u> </u>
Nonfiction	<u>X</u>

Desensitizing Technology

Clancy Johnson is ten years old. He is the second youngest in a family of nine. Clancy enjoys sitting quietly, however, when he needs to he can cause quite the disturbance. Some of Clancy's hobbies are watching t.v. and DudePerfect videos on his computer. These hobbies are becoming the norm for the youth of this nation. As schools advance, they are increasing their technology usage. Homes use it as easy entertainment or containment. Children are overexposed to technology's mind-numbing effects, therefore, creating unprecedented behavioral problems in the future leaders of America.

At a very young age, Clancy fell in love with *Star Wars*. He was enraptured by the big machines and stormtroopers. The glowing, noisy lightsabers took over his tiny mind while the Jedi masters fought for their lives against the dark and terrifying Sith. At five years old, Clancy Madsen was addicted. Barbara Wilson tells us, "The humor in [television shows] impairs children's ability to learn about negative emotional issues." He lived for the rush of seeing a hand chopped off, fighter pilots shot out of the sky and bursting into flames and the constant, violent clashes between the Rebellion and the Empire. Despite the thrill, this five-year-old was haunted by Jabba the Hutt, Darth Vader and Emperor Palpatine. Scientific research has shown that "Kids who view violent acts on TV are more likely to... fear that the world is scary and that something bad will happen to them" (KidsHealth). This fear manifests itself differently in every child. Statistics state by a child's eighteenth birthday, he or she will witness at least 200,000 violent deaths on television. To narrow the number down, it was also said that the majority of these deaths are caused by the good guys, which creates confusion in the minds of the children who watch the shows (KidsHealth).

Acting out is seen as a natural part of growing up. Coming of age used to be when a boy gained the trust to be put in charge of the family farm, making him a man. Today, this growing

stage is highlighted by temper tantrums, broken toys and the possible anger management course. When did these behaviors become acceptable? The American Psychology Association says, “Early research on the effects of viewing violence on television — especially among children — found a desensitizing effect and the potential for aggression.” As a part of receiving his Master’s, a professor conducted a study on the media-to-violence ratio in homes, but he added a psychological side to it; “Meta-analytical studies have also shown that aggressive or antisocial behaviour is heightened in children and adolescents after watching violent television or films” (Browne). When Clancy starts to feel out of the loop, he will act out because it’s how his favorite characters act. And it always works out for them, so why would the youth not try those same things? The youth of this nation are only copying the actions of their favorite television characters.

On top of his science fiction movies, Clancy loves watching music videos. When he is folding clothes, his computer is directly in front of him with all kinds of YouTube videos playing. If he could be observed secretly, one would notice very quickly that this young boy loses interest in the task at hand and gets sucked into the videos he is watching. When looked at with a more intuitive lens, it is understood that “A detailed analysis of music videos raised concerns about its effects on adolescents’ normative expectations about conflict resolution, race and male-female relationships” (Paediatrics Child Health). How many music videos have you seen that portray a small problem blown out of proportion, and then a large, commercialized resolution comes gliding in with the bouncy chorus? How many times have you looked back at that music video and tried to use the same technique to solve a real-world problem? Did it ever really work out in your favor? Children aren’t just losing touch with the reality of real-life expectations, they are also losing brain power. It is as simple as this: “More recent and

well-controlled studies show that even 1 h to 2 h of daily unsupervised television viewing by school-aged children has a significant deleterious effect on academic performance, especially reading” (Paediatrics Child Health). A recent statistic says that the average child spends up to fourteen hours watching television per week: “By his/her high school graduation, the average teen will have spent more time watching television than in the classroom” (PMC). The expectations for the younger generations of the American nation have shifted from earning a reliable education to binge watching as much as is allowed.

Technology isn’t all bad, though. Where would the world be without airplanes and telephones? We would still be living in the Dark Ages where the religious leaders were the only ones who were learned. A group of scholars tackled the opposition and wrote on all the positives of technology and media. They say, “We suggest that it is possible to use technology to influence three specific features of our experience—affective quality, engagement/actualization, and connectedness” (Riva, et. al.). The media creates a sense of unity as people all over the earth can see the same things and enjoy it together as they share their experiences. The advancements of technology have gone from being a large, cumbersome and stationary box to small, shiny devices that can be carried in a pocket or a bag. It is no longer a hassle to use the internet. Anyone who wants answers can have them right at their fingertips in a matter of milliseconds. “The effect [of technology] depends on the content to which children are exposed” (Wilson). We must use technology in healthy, cautious ways.

The media nowadays can be compared to a two-edged sword. The good is just as shiny and pretty as the bad. Until a person gets stabbed and blood is rushing out of their body faster than a flash flood, they are unable to realize the worst part. Who is wielding that sword? Is it the wayward viewer who gets trapped by the enticing ways of the media? Or is it a higher power?

Children are being overexposed to technology's mind-numbing effects which are creating unprecedented behavioral problems that will have to be fixed if the integrity of this great nation is to stay whole.

Annotated Bibliography: Desensitizing Technology

Children are overexposed to technology's mind-numbing effects, therefore, creating unprecedented behavioral problems in the future leaders of America.

American Psychological Association. *Violence in the Media — Psychologists Study TV and Video Game Violence for Potential Harmful Effects*. APA, 2013,
<https://www.apa.org/research/action/protect>.

This source gave a lot of information on the relationship between aggression and screen time. It specializes in young child research. They say, "Early research on the effects of viewing violence on television — especially among children — found a desensitizing effect and the potential for aggression" (APA). It is not ok for young children, or anyone, to become desensitized to the affects of violence. We need to protect against this dangerous reality. This source lists off many other ways aggression can be manifested. It gives its readers a greater understanding of the detrimental effects televisions can have.

Browne, Kevin D. *The influence of violent media on children and adolescents: a public-health approach*. Science Direct, The Lancet, Vol. 365, Issue 9460, 19 Feb 2005,
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673605179525?casa_token=y8ZiVd7JiOQAAAAA:vwgdPJTmNY6G9RNP55EqBRTg_CuwdmleY49Mk-1bfMEYMBkv_oT_BvX91GEJo29tPvJ_IgnaUOA.

This source is a part of Browne's Master degree. He talks on the influences of t.v. on the public and personal health. Browne says, "Meta-analytical studies have also shown that aggressive or antisocial behaviour is heightened in children and adolescents after watching violent television or films." It is a very informative article. It speaks on the