

REMOTE CONTROL: HOW MUCH DOES TV CONTROL YOUR LIFE?

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[Assignment: Write a short essay about some aspect of popular culture (TV, movies, comic books, etc.) in which you sort things into categories in order to make a point about them. Be sure to include specific details in your classifications and to give examples of each.]

(1) Hello, America! In this issue our magazine, Remote Control, has decided to honor the people who have made this magazine into one of the top-grossing magazines in the country. Yes, it is you, the viewers, who have made American television the growing phenomenon it is today. So we would like to dedicate this issue to the television viewers of America.

(2) First, we have a quiz for you to take to see to which of the three categories of viewers you belong. Just pick either a, b, or c in answer to the following questions.

- A. When you come home after work you
 - a. eat dinner with your family, enjoy the nice weather outdoors, and then come in and tune to whichever prime time movie is playing;
 - b. immediately gulp down some supper and grab the remote control so you don't miss The Cosby Show;
 - c. flip on the tube, nuke a dinner in the microwave and eat in front of the TV and it doesn't really matter what's on.
- B. You bought a VCR
 - a. so you could rent some good movies to watch with the family;
 - b. so you could tape your soap each day;
 - c. because it came with the "Home Entertainment" package with the wide-screen TV you bought at the appliance center.
- C. If you have cable TV you
 - a. just have the Disney channel for the kids;
 - b. have HBO and, of course, a sports channel;
 - c. have 97 channels from which to choose.
- D. When you look at a TV programming schedule you
 - a. look to see if there's anything special on;
 - b. look to make sure they haven't cancelled L.A. Law because you'd just die if they did;
 - c. don't need to look at the schedule because you have it memorized.

(3) Now look at your answers. If you've answered mostly a's then you fall into the category of Casual Viewers. You're the kind of people who like to watch a good movie on Sunday night and an occasional ball game during the season. You even sit down with your kids to

watch a National Geographic show on public television to illustrate just how educational TV can be. If you happen to have time to catch the latest episode of The Cosby Show that's great, but if you have other things to do, well that's fine, too. Television complements your activities, but does not control them. Those viewers who allow TV to control most of their activities fall into the Obsessed Viewers category. If your answers to the quiz were mostly b's, then read the following carefully.

(4) As Obsessed Viewers, you try to plan your schedule around your favorite shows. Absolutely nothing could tear you away from L.A. Law because you couldn't bear to miss out on any part of the storyline. As for you older viewers, you were probably members of "The Mouseketeer Club" when you were young and you've stayed faithful to your soap for years. Others of you probably bought those "Who Shot J.R.?" buttons and stickers during the pinnacle of Dallas fame. And guess what? You haven't stopped watching the show!

(5) You are the people that the soap and TV digest magazines love because you have several subscriptions to keep up on every detail about your show. The VCR and video industry also like you because you're the ones who keep buying tapes so you can record your show if you can't be home to see it. However, although you might be obsessed with watching a show or two, you're still involved in activities that don't include television.

(6) Finally, for those of you who answered mostly c's in the quiz, you are categorized as the Abusers. Now I know this term may sound a little harsh, so I'll refer to you with that classic term--the Couch Potatoes. You are the people who had the TV on in the background while taking the quiz. The entire TV industry loves Couch Potatoes. Not only are the VCR and video industries grateful to you, but especially the satellite television industry. You're the ones who have the huge dish out in your back yard and brag to the neighbors about the TV show from France you saw last night.

(7) Unlike the Casual Users, whose activities are merely complemented by watching TV, watching TV is your only activity. And because it's your only activity, you've become very good at it. You can recite the entire weekly program schedule of network television. You would also be invincible at TV trivia games, except you're too busy watching TV to play. You Couch Potatoes have a tremendous impact on the entire business industry. Just look at the increased sales of microwave dinners and other snack foods.

(8) Whether you're Casual Users, Obsessed Viewers, or classic Couch Potatoes, we at Remote Control want to say "thanks" and "keep us tuned in!" Enjoy this issue and best wishes from all of us at Remote Control.