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ETEC 540 - TEXT TECHNOLOGIES

FROM RADIO TO TV

IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY & EDUCATION

This video is a project submission for ETEC 540 – Text technologies. This video will explain how the transition from radio to television as a broadcasting medium occurred, the differences between television and radio and the implications of television on literacy and education.



Both radio and television are ‘broadcasting’ technologies. Broadcasting occurs when there is a single source of content being provided to multiple recipients. Broadcasting is an effective way of disseminating information. That is, broadcasting can be used to share a messages with a very large audience. Broadcasting does not provide the audience the opportunity to interact with the source, the audience can be thought of as a consumer of the content provided by the content provider.

Radio and television are also similar in that they follow a broadcast schedule. The schedule is determined by the content provider and distributed to the consumers to let them know what time they should ‘tune in’

ADOPTION OF TELEVISION

- ▶ Radio Networks:
 - ▶ National Broadcasting Corporation
 - ▶ Columbia Broadcasting System
- ▶ Development of Content
- ▶ Rapid Production of Televisions

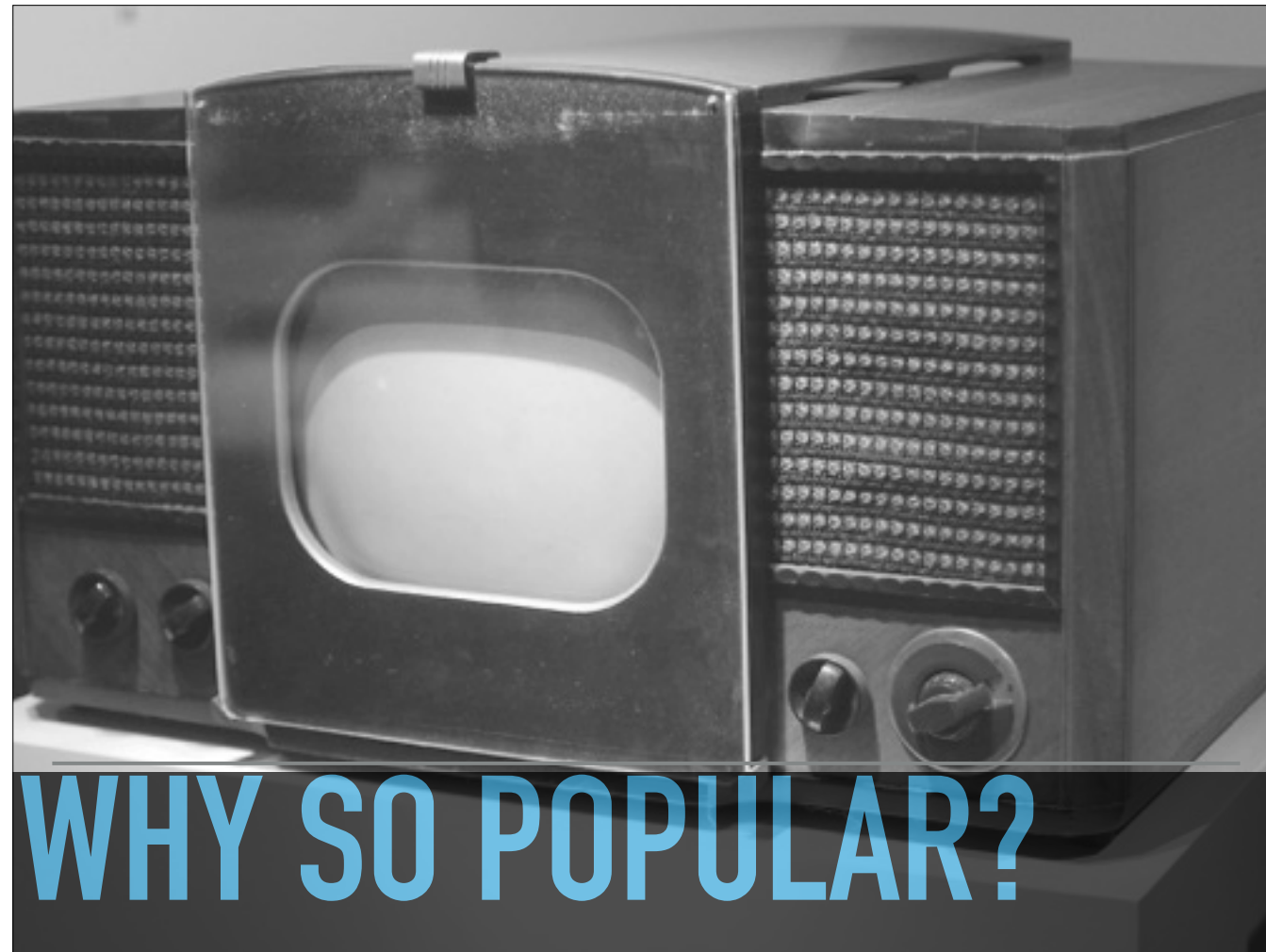


Total TV Set Production									
1947	5,437	6,353	6,639	7,886	8,690	11,684			
1948	33,836	45,779	58,352	52,129	55,493	72,325			
1949	150,338	147,800	226,543	294,918	292,994	290,543			
1950	438,700	479,500	486,600	542,600	485,000	582,500			
1951	650,700	679,319	875,000	500,000	465,000	352,500			
1952	904,833	609,337	510,561	322,878	309,315	361,182			
1953	719,234	736,597	830,112	567,878	481,536	534,479			
TOTAL	2,493,186	2,493,576	3,169,007	2,200,319	1,949,308	2,094,883	316,289	603,760	770,065
							880,433	560,197	*490,169
							*1,263,199		

After World War II had ended, the established radio networks in the United States began to use their radio profits to explore the viability of creating television networks. In 1946, there were only a few thousand televisions in existence, receiving content provided by small networks affiliates in major urban centres. The production of television content from the former radio networks drove the demand for televisions in American households. Early television programs included Howdy Doody and the Texaco Star Theatre.

To get an idea of the scale of the rapid adoption of the television, if we looking at the estimated number of tv produced in January 1947, there were just under fifty-five hundred units produced, compared to the seven point two million produced in 1953, just six years later.

By 1955, it is estimated that half the households in America had a black and white television.



This is an image of one of the first widely sold commercial television sets. This product was sold in 1946 to 1947.
What was it about the early television set that made it so appealing? What was the difference that attracted the masses?



One of the differences between radio and television is the amount of audience engagement or participation.

Now we will hear from Marshall McLuhan as he describes what he meant when describing television as a 'cool' media. Television is cool because the viewer is detached from the media but engaged in high participation. By participation, he alludes to the idea that the viewer is completing much of the meaning from the media.

COOL MEDIA

- ▶ High in participation / completion
- ▶ Low in definition
- ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ Television
 - ▶ Cartoons
 - ▶ Telephone

HOT MEDIA

- ▶ Low in participation / completion
- ▶ High in definition
- ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ Radio
 - ▶ Photographs
 - ▶ Movies

INFORMATION PROCESSING

Television provides viewers the opportunity to extract meaning from both visual and auditory channels. Radio content is 'hot' as it requires more attachment from the listener. As listeners only receive information through the auditory channel, much more needs to be described in order to describe a scene. Television programmers can emphasize meaning through the use of visual and auditory effects, hence less information needs to be conveyed through auditory means.



So what did the rapid adoption of television mean for radio and what effects did it have on literacy?

When discussing media, displacement is the concept that an older media is being moved out of the public attention through the introduction of a new media.

With all the new content that television provided, how was society dividing its time? What was being displaced to allow for multiple hours of television consumption by the average american household?

DISPLACEMENT

- ▶ What activities were being replaced by watching television?
- ▶ Quantity of viewing time

Annual Average	Time Spent Per Day
1950	4 hrs. 35 mins.
1955	4 hrs. 51 mins.
1960	5 hrs. 6 mins.
1965	5 hrs. 29 mins.
1970	5 hrs. 56 mins.
1975	6 hrs. 7 mins.
1980	6 hrs. 36 mins.
1985	7 hrs. 10 mins.
1990	6 hrs. 53 mins.
1995	7 hrs. 17 mins.
1996	7 hrs. 11 mins.
1997	7 hrs. 12 mins.
1998	7 hrs. 15 mins.
1999	7 hrs. 26 mins.
2000	7 hrs. 35 mins.
2001	7 hrs. 40 mins.
2002	7 hrs. 44 mins.
2003	7 hrs. 58 mins.
2004	8 hrs. 1 min.
2005	8 hrs. 11 mins.
2006	8 hrs. 14 mins.
2007	8 hrs. 14 mins.
2008	8 hrs. 21 mins.
2009	8 hrs. 21 mins.

Source: The Nielsen Company, NTA Annual Averages, 1994-present estimates based on start of broadcast season September to September; beginning in 2007, estimates include Live+7 HiTV viewing. Prior to 1997, Audience Sample; 1997 to present: People Meter Sample.

What activities were falling by the wayside during the rise of television? Less reading, less radio, less homework? Television cartoons displaced the reading of printed comics.

What was all this time glued to the tube doing to the minds of the viewers?



**FIRST WE BUILD THE TOOLS,
THEN THEY BUILD US.**

Marshall McLuhan

Here Marshall McLuhan's quote helps us understand the idea of displacement due to the advent of new media.

The radio networks developed television content, which resulted in a demand for televisions and more content. The old media, radio, fell out of favour as public opinion and enjoyment of the new technology, television took over.

So what does all this mean, if people are watching more tv instead of reading books, listening to the radio or completing their homework? More specifically, how did television change us?

NEW TECHNIQUES IN BROADCASTING

VISUAL INFORMATION

In addition to the extensive sound effects and music that had been used on radio, television producers had new ways of adding emphasis and meaning to television through visual effects, camera techniques, lighting and editing. What follows is a brief description of some of these new techniques afforded in the new media of television that are used by directors to communicate their message.



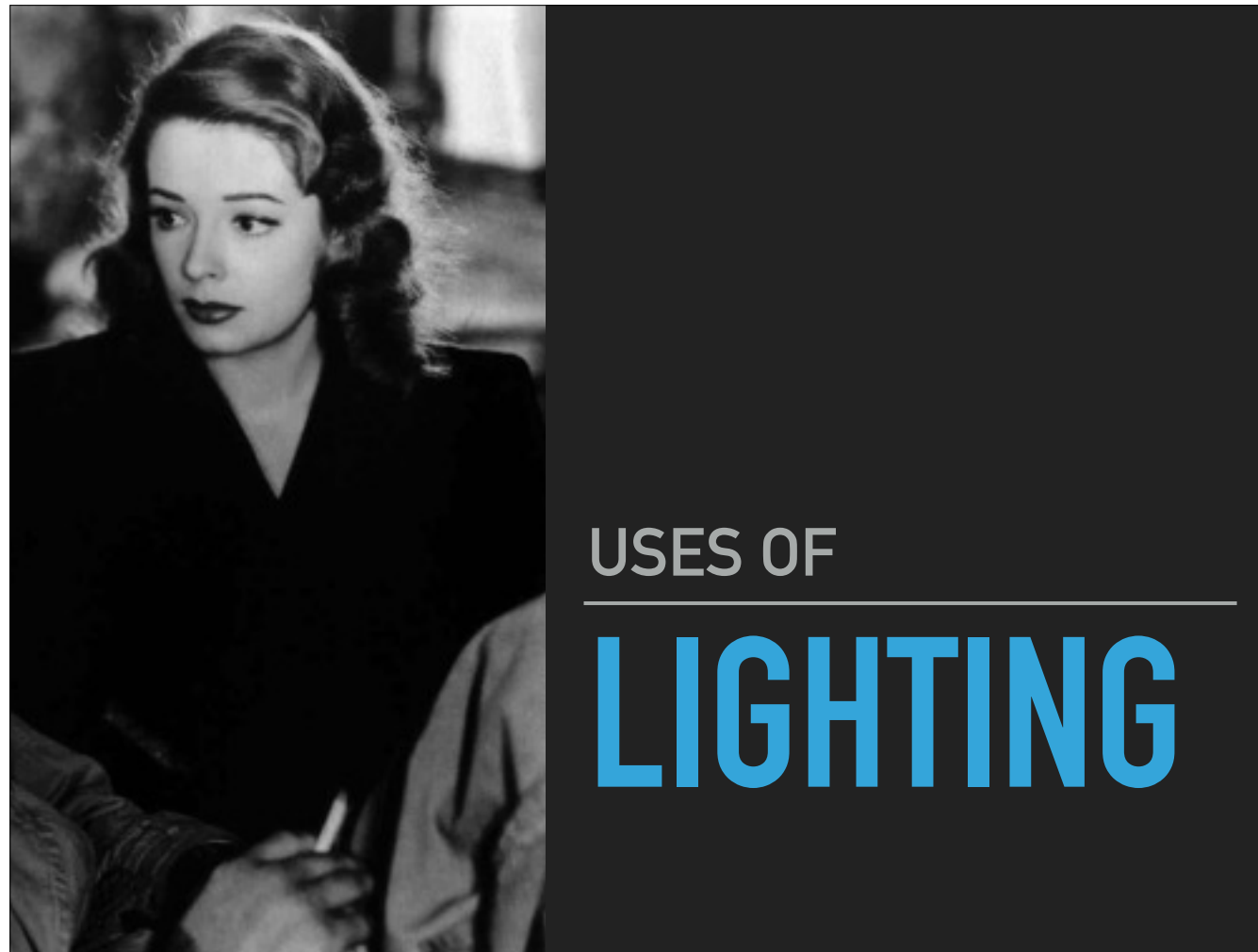
USES OF THE **CAMERA**

There are many ways the camera can be used to direct attention and control emphasis in a scene

The field of view can either establish a shot or provide an extreme close-up, depending on how the director chooses to communicate their message

The camera angle can establish position or power, looking down on someone conveys a different meaning than looking up at them. The camera angle can be used to create consistency, or used to create dis-orientation or add energy to a scene.

The camera can be in focus, not in focus, or shift between the two.



Soft lighting can be used to set the scene for romance

Spot lighting can be used to subtly draw attention

Backlighting can be used to make an object or character seem angelic by adding a light halo

USE OF --- COLOUR

Colour can be used to convey meaning and affect our judgement and while early television did not broadcast in colour, selective use of colour is critical to television advertising where images are constructed carefully to convey exactly the right 'feeling' about a product. Red can mean hot, could indicate warning, alarm, or passion and I hope it hasn't gone unnoticed that 'cool' blue was chosen as the predominant colour of this movie about the effects of television.



Directors could cut between images and allow the audience to fill in meaning between them

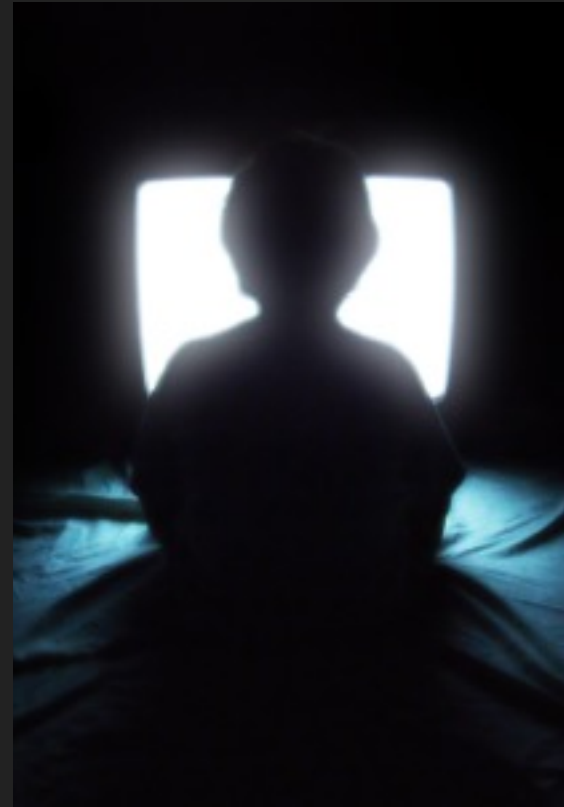
A dissolve from one scene to another could be used to signify the passage of time or change in location.

Slow motion or sped up motion can be used to change the pace of a scene

And musical montages became popular amongst advertisers to convey imagery of lifestyle associated with a brand

PROCESSING TELEVISION

- ▶ Visual & Auditory Signals
- ▶ Predetermined Pace
- ▶ Easy to decode



In order to process all these new visual tricks used by producers, consumers need to learn the language of the new media. Consumers learn these cues by watching television and are then able to identify how this manipulation of the visual image affects their understanding of the message.

As television more closely represents the human life world, it is thought that television is more easy to decode than printed text. Classic television is also different from printed text as it did not allow the user to bookmark their place in the story. The user either chose to remain engaged in the narrative or tune out. The user would need to wait until the next scheduled episode to restart their engagement with the content.

Susan Neuman (1995) shares in her book title *Literacy in the Television Age* that “Television requires very little effort to process, critics warn that excessive viewing of television trains the brain to develop different skills than those acquired through reading and if those skills are being developed at the cost of others, then it could be argued that television negatively affects ones ability to process information via text.

CRITICISM

What does all the visual and auditory information pouring out of the television do to its audience? What are the purported impacts of television? What do critics say are the effects of television its audience.

CRITICS OF TELEVISION

- ▶ Immediacy & Gratification
- ▶ Fast paced shows can wind up the audience resulting in poor behaviour in real life
- ▶ Short bursts of content excite the audience and degrade the ability to sustain thought



The ability to delay gratification is considered to be a characteristic that can measure success.

Many believe that Television entertainment has resulted in the erosion of this ability to delay gratification. As described by Neil Postman, everything on television occurs in the 'now', there is no past or future. Consumption of television media leads us to believe that everything results in immediate rewards.

Many studies have also been conducted on the negative impact of fast paced children's television on a child's ability to maintain attention and focus.

TELEVISION

- ▶ Direct images
- ▶ Concrete
- ▶ Unambiguous
- ▶ Fosters irrational thinking and emotional response

READING

- ▶ Digital Forms (words / numbers)
- ▶ Conceptual
- ▶ Syntactical
- ▶ Fosters rational and structured thinking

Neil Postman describes in *The Disappearance of Childhood* that - “Television [...] does not call one’s attention to ideas, which are abstract, distant, complex and sequential, but to personalities, which are concrete, vivid and holistic.”

AMERICANS NO LONGER TALK TO EACH OTHER, THEY ENTERTAIN EACH OTHER. THEY DO NOT EXCHANGE IDEAS, THEY EXCHANGE IMAGES. THEY DO NOT ARGUE WITH PROPOSITIONS; THEY ARGUE WITH GOOD LOOKS, CELEBRITIES AND COMMERCIALS.

Neil Postman

