

Olivia Cigna

Professor Emerson

English Composition 110 H1

6 September 2018

The Value of the Written Word

In this day and age, technology is most likely beyond what historians would have ever thought possible. The advances in technology have caused people to wonder if civilization needs the traditional aspects of life, or if they can simply be replaced with some form of technology. This idea has provoked the discussion of whether or not written word and the process of reading is pertinent in today's world, or if it could be erased by something more beneficial and advanced. I believe the written word is essential and relevant to today's world because it defines human civilization, allows for the interpretation of situations or people, and it develops the mind. These are skills that "a video" can not accomplish.

The ability to read is something that has been important to human civilization since the beginning of time. The ways in which we read or the ways in which we learn how to read have changed, but the idea that reading is essential to human life is still prevalent. As Karen Swallow Prior discusses in a selection entitled, "How Reading Makes Us More Human," she claims that, reading is something that "[sets] us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom." If the act of reading and writing is replaced with video, will the other distinctive human activities follow? Will humans eventually become one with the animal kingdom over time? The human activities that differentiate us from the animal kingdom are what advanced human ability in the first place. But by taking these aspects away, it will push civilization backwards. Reading is something that

must be taught and can not simply come naturally, like spoken language (Prior). If reading is no longer taught and the way in which we receive our information is now through video, how will civilization adapt? What will this do to our intelligence?

The practice of “reading” is not just about being able to decipher the words on a page, it also allows humans to “[interpret] in the sense of ‘reading’ a person or situation” (Prior). This kind of reading is another important ability that can separate humans from the rest of the animal kingdom. Humans have an intuition that comes with this sense of reading a person or situation. This skill is essential in order for humans to assess the details of a situation effectively.

Reading develops the mind. Reading the written word and being able to understand it allows the mind to grow and advance. The process of reading can lead to better language and listening skills. In a selection from Cassie Werber entitled, “Facebook is predicting the end of the written word,” she indicates that a video can be one of the “best [ways] to tell stories in this world.” She explains that video allows for more information in a quicker amount of time and this will help humans “digest much more information” (Werber). The use of a video might allow humans to digest more information but there is no way to tell if humans actually understand the information being thrown at them. Additionally, there is no evidence given that the use of a video is helpful to the mind. Reading provides humans with a lot of benefits, like stimulating one’s mind and retaining new knowledge, which is more than just being able to digest information faster like a video provides.

In my personal experience, I have found much success with the process of reading. I believe that reading is something that needs to remain in human civilization so that humans can advance and become better individuals. Reading has advanced my knowledge, allowed me to

make interpretations, and developed my mind throughout time. I agree with the ideas expressed by Karen Swallow Prior that reading distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom because it is such a unique tool that we are taught. Growing up in a world where the technology around me is constantly changing the way in which we do things, I do not agree that the use of a video, rather than written text, will improve human civilization. Written text is still and will continue to be relevant to today's world.