Paz / Kunkel: Johnson, “Watching TV Makes You Smarter”

**Presentation**

Started with ethos of Steven Johnson—biography. Ethos with sons… directed to parents…

Gave the background; explained the intent, which dealt with *24* and the problems people have with it.

Zac gave a nice appraisal of the central claim.

Jack identified the main claim (Modern TV exercises the brain), the tone (defensive)—automatically causes the reader to be against it. Sub-headings—5 paragraph paper organization. Graphs. **Nice rundown of the structure.**

Zac reviewed the claims. Jack connected the structure with a 5-paragraph format.

Zac then reviewed “televised intelligence” (like in *Frasier*), by which people don’t really exert themselves in any way (Mistook *Scream* with *Student Bodies*)

Jack reviewed the jargon of the *ER* use of jargon. Zac described that it was “up to you” to determine the plot / theme work. Flashing errors reduce analytical work; there are less of them now.

Jack: Reviewed the counterargument. Reality TV as bad television. “Even the junk has improved.”

Zac: High emotional intelligence from reality shows.

Jack reviewed the “Rewards of Smart Culture”

Jack: I did a SOAPS. Reviewed that.

Paz: Reviews both sides of the claim that TV is bad for kids when the realism pushes the limits of what is socially acceptable. There’s room for each side to learn.

Jack: Language—allusions, informal language, metaphors… uses shows from his own time.

* Do some of Johnson’s arguments lose merit by referencing older TV shows that are less common now?
* Do shows today have the same complex plot lines and require the same intelligence that Johnson referenced in older shows?
* Has TV become as cognitively beneficial as reading is?
* Does our culture demand more intelligent programming as Johnson suggests? Is there an economic advantage to having these shows?

Voss: Went to the fourth question—economic advantage to having these shows? There is one… as Johnson said—people want to go back and rewatch shows to be sure what people are actually saying. *24* = we watched as a family, bought the whole series.

* Nick Reed: Explained family wanting to binge on episodes.
* Chandler Wheat: *Game of Thrones* is supposed to be an awesome show. Putting the show in order = takes plenty of time to read into it. If you don’t catch the train at the station, you won’t catch up.
* Zac Paz: Growing numbers of plotlines.
* Wheat: *Walking Dead* = large cast…hybrid…asked about it… can’t just pick up…
* Paul Hanna: *Big Bang Theory*… episodic…
* Schumacher: Economic advantage with syndication…
* Paz: What would Johnson say about it as an intelligent TV show?
  + Shaffer: Static characters… episodes have a larger story, but you can watch each one in a vacuum and still appreciate it.
  + Eble: Like cartoons…characters die, then come back.
  + Andrew Carmichael: Shows have become more dynamic—you have to infer more. Is that why comics have gone away? So… comic books aren’t as complex anymore?
  + Paz: Sleeper curve…only contributes to it…
  + Rumsey: *Avengers* = culmination of many different story lines…
  + Chandler Wheat: *Expendables*, *GI Joe*… different characters…
  + Pappalardo: Spider Man left out of *The Avengers*…
  + Eble: Many characters = necessitate multiple threading?
  + Wheat: Response…
  + Asgian: *Sherlock Holmes* film…
  + Eble: But TV has more time, latitude…
  + Paz: Film only has 2 ½ hours… TV takes more time.
  + Rumsey: Time—deeper shows are hour-long episodes.
  + Kunkel: *The Office* = many plot lines.
  + Eble: Comedies have followed suit.
  + Schumacher: One story line culminating can ruin the rest.
  + Asgian: Has to come to an end…
  + Nick Reed: Back to Paz’s comment… *24* = 24 episodes, one hour of each day.
* Kunkel: Cognitive energy = like reading?
  + Asgian: Reading has stayed the same… time frame…
  + Carmichael: You can set your own time frame… reading allows you to go at your own pace.
  + Eble: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu Plus… how does that treat your and Johnson’s claim?
    - Rumsey: Scheduled TV shows take away your control of reading…
    - Carmichael: Reading still has more of a leash on imagination…
    - Eble: *Lord of the Rings*…
    - Carmichael: That helps you to remember your reading better because you created it.
    - Asgian: You get to be the director.
    - Carmichael: Books will always have the imagination angle…
    - Wheat: Two facets of the creativity angle: Our mind versus the film director who takes what the author has written. They have to think about writing, soundtrack… creativity goes far beyond our own. They’re doing it on a microscopic level. Big-time movies—you have to perfect everything else in the background.
    - Carmichael: We can applaud imagination, but we want to make information our own…
    - Wheat: Depends on intentionality.
    - Eble summed up, giving each speaker credit.
    - Paz: *Harry Potter*—room of requirements (?)
    - Orkwis: In the fifth book of *Harry Potter*…
    - Carmichael: *The Dark Knight Rises*… pointing arrows.
    - Paul Hanna: *How I Met Your Mother*…
    - Eble: Contrast with *Breaking Bad*  / *HIMYM*—knowing the ending…
    - Schumacher: *Breaking Bad*… the gun… writers can intentionally paint themselves into a corner.
    - Shaffer: Watching things a second time—my sister is finishing watching *Breaking Bad*…

Eble: So… who would dispute the claim about intelligence?

* + Henry: Intelligence from books
  + Paz: Something juvenile, meant for kids.
  + Orkwis: Narrative movements within *Catcher in the Rye*
  + Paz: Johnson—you’re not supposed to be missing anything…
  + Eble: So…back to Henry…what is intelligence? (Asgian, Kunkel, Paz, Hanna)…
  + Kunkel: *Prison Break* = formulaic

Paz: Do people want an intelligent product?

* Schumacher: Market = so big that you can find what you want. My sister watches E!; others watch sitcoms…
* Shaffer: Mom loves to watch HGI, Home Improvement…
* Henry Myers: In terms of intelligence… shows are more in-depth. I don’t feel any better off for having seen any of them. *Breaking Bad* is deep with its many threads… So are you better off for watching *Breaking Bad*?
* Eble: If you know how to watch it, yes.
* Schumacher: I don’t think that way with books…
* Carmichael: I watched war movies with guns, stuff blowing up… *Saving Private Ryan* at 10 years old helped me understand that people die in war. Side note… “When are you going to give Nick ‘The Talk.’” Kids understand more…
  + Paz: There’s some danger there… kids hear much, but do they notice accurate representations?
  + Asgian: When I was a kid—ball games or cartoons… there are also books that are mind-numbing.
  + Henry: Impressive TV shows… how does that help you?
  + Eble—long answer… blended learning…
  + Carmichael: Practicing making connections… I would have to ask someone to explain everything to me…
  + Zac Paz: Read from Johnson…
  + Eble: Read from the junk food / nourishing metaphor.
  + Hanna: Spoke to cartoons / kids
  + Shaffer: *Breaking Bad*  / leaving questions.
  + Schumacher: Netflix / Google Plus takes away some elements—you don’t necessarily have time to think. *Great Expectations* was made to be a periodical.
  + Orkwis: To Henry’s question about shows like *Breaking Bad* making you smarter. *House*… everything on that show is medically accurate.
  + Eble: Sure… but what about the sensational elements that lead to false schemas?
  + Orkwis: Sure thing…but that’s separate from the knowledge.
  + Shaffer: My mom laughs about *Grey’s Anatomy*…
  + Schumacher: Like a fetish…

Eble: Comments on reality shows…

* Hanna: *Jersey Shore*… I have no interest in watching what someone does.
* Zac Paz: He refers to some as junk food—*Jersey Shore* = junk food.
* Kunkel: Randomness… unpredictability…
* Eble: Clarified…
* Kunkel: Reality TV changes…
* Henry: Presented the counterargument… but why does he need to talk about bad TV?
  + Eble: That relates to the exigency.
  + People talked…
  + Carmichael: Why does he have to talk about this?
  + Eble: Exigency… TV / stereotype about TV hurting people, not helping us reach the intellectual status of other art forms.

Eble hijacked class discussion.