

Advanced Placement English Language & Composition
Summer Assignment Part 2:
Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business

This one you do have to read completely, but it's about a topic near and dear to all our hearts—technology—television, cell phones, etc.

1. Before you read the text, **write** about your ideas and feelings about technology of any kind. Your response should consider how your life would be different if you HAD to live without it (I didn't say it would be easy or fun, but could you do it?). This does not have to be a long, full-blown essay.
2. Next, take a look at the lyrics to "Amused Ourselves to Death" by Roger Waters:
(<http://pinkfloydhyperbase.dk/solo/amused.htm>) as well as the YouTube video of his performance:
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMijMWQInUc>).
3. Given the lyrics and the video, what do you think prompted Waters to write this song? **Provide a THOUGHTFUL written response, please.**
4. Now read Neil Postman's work *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and see if you can figure out his argument. See if you can **summarize** his argument into ONE sentence. If you need to, write a summary of the main point of each chapter.
5. After you finish the text, once again write about your ideas toward technology. Has anything Postman has written affected your perception of technology and the world in which we live? Do you agree or disagree with any of his statements? Give a THOUGHTFUL written response with reasons, please.
6. Choose any of the three major "mainstream" (ABC, CBS, or NBC) evening news programs for ONE day. Use a watch or a stop watch and time the length of all the stories presented. Give a title (subject) for each story and the amount of time devoted to that segment. Ask Mom and Dad if there have been any changes in the substance of the news networks since they were your age. Ask them what they think about these changes if there have been any. Write a two paragraph maximum report of your findings.
7. Keep a log of all of the technology you use over the summer (and how long you use it): the computer, cell phone, I-Pod (or MP3 player), DVDs, audio CDs, television, video games, computer games, ANY technology you may use. Estimate the time you spend using each of these. No judgments given. Just keep track of the time you spend and what type of technology you are using.

Your work for this assignment should be formatted as follows:

Times New Roman 12 pt. Margins: 1" all around. Double spaced (if you don't know how to make your word processor do this automatically, e-mail me and I will give you directions).

NOTE: Double spacing begins AFTER the title. The next page is an EXAMPLE of how to set up this assignment.

Amusing Ourselves to Death

1. These are my feelings about technology. I really, really like technology. Technology is a good thing. I cannot imagine a world without technology. That would really, really be whack. No computer games, no myspace.com, no texting my (blah, blah, blah) **THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT NOT TO WRITE!!**
2. After reviewing the lyrics of “Amused Ourselves to Death” by Roger Waters, it is clear that Waters wrote this song to.....
3. In his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Neil Postman argues that.....
4. Chapter summaries (if you feel you need to do this).
5. Having read Neil Postman’s, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of ShowBusiness*, I (agree/disagree) with his argument. Upon reflection, it is clear that technology.....
6. On June 2, 2008, I watched the nightly newscast of (ABC, CBS, NBC) world news at 5:30 p.m. on channel____. The news began with a story aboutthat lasted for approximately 10 seconds. The next story was....which lasted for 1 minute. Etc.

After watching the news, I talked with my Mom/Dad/both my Mom and Dad about what the nightly news was like when they were my age. My Mom/Dad/Mom and Dad said that when they were my age, the news.....
7. Cellular phone: Daily, approximately 10 hours 30 minutes per day.

Computer Game: Daily, approximately 18 hours per day.

IPOD: Mondays, approximately 6 hours weekly

(etcetera, etcetera, etcetera)