

Model Journal Entry following the ZWS

Neil Postman's "Five Things We Need to Know about Technological Change."

1. a. Who is speaking? b. To whom?

- a. Neil Postman, an American author, New York University professor, cultural critic, and media theorist.
- b. Postman is addressing religious leaders. His audience is obvious from this line in his introduction: "I offer them to you in the hope that you will find them useful in thinking about *the effects of technology on religious faith.*"

2. Where is s/he speaking?

Denver, Colorado

3. When is s/he speaking?

March 28, 1998

4. What kind of text is this?

A talk or speech

5. Why is s/he speaking? What's the purpose?

To inform, educate, and warn his audience about the challenges of technological change

6. What is the main message?

Postman argues that, over the history of humanity, technological innovations (he gives examples like the printing press, the car, television, and standardized testing) have disrupted institutions and cultures greatly and irreversibly. We/religious leaders should be aware of the impact of technological changes so that technology will not control us. He lists 5 aspects of technological change of which the audience should be aware:

1. There is always a price to pay for technological change; sometimes the price is worth it, sometimes not
2. Technological change creates winners and losers; the winners usually try to convince the losers that they are winners too
3. All technological change is designed on the basis of one or more ideas; when the technology becomes part of the culture, it biases culture towards those ideas and, therefore, causes our experience of the world to change
4. Technological change transforms all of culture, not just parts of it
5. We treat technology as if it were a part of the "natural order of things," but technology is human-made and therefore, we have power over it

7. What do we make of it?

- I find this piece fascinating in its prescience
- While I agree with his claims, technological development since 1998 shows his examples are not always correct
- He's being mostly NEGATIVE; he barely mentions possible benefits of technological change--this is something to disagree with, perhaps

- Postman is speaking at a moment where everyone's enthusiastic about technology (he mentions computer people, Bill Gates) and he's trying to balance that enthusiasm
- Postman is trying to augment his message by passing it on to religious leaders who then can pass it on to their congregations--makes sense
- I would be interested in applying these ideas to the Net and the Web as we experience them now through mobile technology. There are SO many examples of how carrying a smartphone has changed the way people behave--The phone being used as a "nanny"; friends walking down the street not talking to each other while texting (sometimes to each other!); the narcissistic obsession of the selfies...