**Advantages and disadvantages of television**

Television is one of the greatest achievements of the 20-th century. It is the most popular part of mass media. Today every family has a TV-set. TV has changed much since the time of its invention and so has its role. There have been numerous debates concerning advantages and disadvantages of television. When TV first appeared its main purpose was to give official information to people. It was supported by the government. Now television plays a big role in every civilised society. Today television gives people a possibility to be well informed and enjoy "civilised pleasures." The programmes are various and people have a chance to select what they want to see. Television provides great opportunities for education. There are programmes devoted to specialised subjects. With the help of TV it is possible to learn foreign languages, to know a lot of wonderful things concerning the world flora and fauna. TV teaches the ideals of democracy and political argument. Watching television can be compared with reading books. It provides an outlet for creative talents. By the beginning of the 21-st century TV became a coloured world network. Numerous programmes people can receive by satellite or cable. The choice of the channels ranges from six to twenty. These channels show programmes of various kinds from documentaries, current events and sports to programmes American films and science fiction cartoons. Now this medium of communication allows people to see and speak with each other if they are separated by thousands of kilometres. TV bridges between Russia and the USA once were very popular. They showed that TV was a unifying force and that our planet in reality is a small world. Previously innovations were promoted on TV. TV shocked, surprised and stimulated. It brought ballet, opera, and theatre to big masses of people. It was even in the vanguard of new drama. Moreover, TV can keep children quiet. If they are noisy their mothers turn on the set. If people do not like TV they do not buy it or switch it off.

At the same time there are a lot of arguments against TV. It is said that only three generations have grown up with television, but they managed to forget how to spend their free time without television. Its role is increasing not because it is an entertainer or informant, but because of the grip it has on many people. It is called a "living room monster" or "one-eyed monster." It is established that the biggest viewers are pensioners and housewives. The latter watch TV while their husbands are at work. In total they spend five hours daily sitting before the "boxes." Children watch commercials, horror films or films of violence. TV prevents children from creating their abilities. They get accustomed to TV to such an extent that they watch it all the time. To force their children away from their favourite evening programmes to their homework has eventually become the main problem of the parents of different countries.

Moreover, TV is damaging for health. It has bad effect on the eyes, particularly of children. The physicians proved that if children do not watch TV their eyesight improves. But if children do not watch TV they find themselves without anything to talk about at school, where comedians and singing stars are major topics during breaks between classes. The same is true about some adults. Sometimes TV programmes become the topics of common interest of the people and without, them they have nothing to talk about.

Nowadays some people in our country watch television programmes from about six in the morning to the early hours of the next day. It means that contemporary people for various reasons depend upon television. They watch everything from news and sports reports to dramas, educational and entertainment programmes. Today some people become TV addicts and feel - unhappy if they fail to find another way of passing leisure time. Free time is regulated by television. TV occupies our free time. Instead of going to the theatre or reading books people watch TV. People rush home, gulp food to be in time to watch their favourite programmes. Very often programmes are bad, as TV cannot keep pace with demand. People have stopped reading books and depend on TV pictures. Spoken words become more important that the written ones. TV cuts people from the real world. The virtual world becomes more important. TV is absolutely irrelevant to real living. No surprise that television is often called "chewing gum for men's brains." People become lazy, instead of doing sports they watch TV. Television takes free time of the people. Instead of joining a choir or playing football or reading books people watch various programmes. Dinnertime is often pressed by television if it is not in the kitchen. If people are deprived for various reasons of watching their favourite programmes they feel inconvenience. The best thing is to watch only selective TV programmes and not to be governed by them. Only few people today can live without television. It should be said that television continues to play an important part in the human life despite increasing influence of the Internet, video games and other high-technology sources of information.

- Do you like to watch TV?

- Sometimes I like to watch TV. But I do not spend much time in front of this "one-eyed monster" I watch only my favourite programmes. I like sports programmes and science fiction serials. Football is my favourite sport, so I try not to miss important games that are shown on TV. I am especially interested in the European Football Cup. I also like science fiction. Although I prefer reading science fiction to watching it, I should admit that there is a number of good science fiction movies and serials. Among them are "Star Wars", "Star Trek", and "Babylon-5." A couple of years ago "Babylon-5" was shown on TV-6 and I did not miss a single film. Now there are many science fiction and fantasy serials shown on TV, but generally they are not of high quality, so I prefer to spend my free time doing other things.

- What programmes do members of your family like to watch?

- My grandmother likes Latin American "soap operas." These are usually love stories with a happy end. My parents like to watch "Civilisation". This programme is devoted to outstanding personalities and events. It is very informative. They also like documentaries devoted to something unusual.

- What kind of TV is most popular today?

- I think that "reality TV" is very popular today. Millions of people watch "reality TV" series "Behind the Glass" and "The Last Hero." The major advantage of such programmes is that they are not movies based on a strict scenario. Ordinary people find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. "Reality TV" shows the directed real life in which people are competing for a tangible reward. But unlike in real life everything happens quicker. Of course they have to follow certain rules, but generally they are free to behave, as they like. This, I think is most attractive. Nobody knows beforehand the result of the game. It interests people because the game is as unpredictable as the real life. People who watch such programmes try hard to figure out what would they have done in such circumstances. The "reality TV" is substituting all previous programmes such as the "Travellers' Club", "In the World of Animals" because they are static. They set forth the results of the adventures of the cameramen. In "reality TV" everything is dynamic.

- Can you agree with the statement, that if millions of people watch the same programmes, the whole world becomes a "global village"?

- In a way, we can say that the whole world has become a big village. In every country of the world people watch the same programmes. Such programmes as "Who wants to be a Millionaire?". "The Weakest Link" have been invented in Britain but they are popular in the USA and in our country too. People all over the globe have common hopes, fears, and beliefs. Thus it is not surprising that people in Russia like Latin American "soap operas" or British TV games.