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The Purposes of Television

Technology has transformed the world as people know it today. Without technology, society would not be as advanced or successful. The one technological invention that has had an enormous impact on society is the television. A prime example of the television's importance is shown through the film, *Good Night and Good Luck*, directed by George Clooney. The film was set in the 1950s, a time when there was a lot of paranoia in the United States about communism. Surrounding this fear, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin accused countless people of being a communist with little to no proof. However, one television show host, Edward Murrow, actually stood up to McCarthy and challenged him on his unjust actions. The entire debate between these two men was televised. The film highlighted the importance of television by showing that this media outlet has many purposes. Television is not just a form of entertainment, it is also meant to inspire, educate, and shape the world around us.

Television inspires people to share their voices. During this era, many members of the press were afraid to stand up to Senator McCarthy, because they were afraid that they would be accused of being a communist. Regardless of fear, Murrow decided to speak outright against Senator McCarthy. On his show, he claimed that McCarthy was persecuting others instead of investigating them. He also claimed that McCarthy was successfully exploiting the fear of others regarding communism. Even if McCarthy wanted to sue Murrow for defamation, he would not

have been able to because Murrow was asserting his First Amendment right by sharing his opinion. If the concerning statement is an opinion rather than a fact, then it cannot not be tried in a libel suit. To determine whether a statement is fact or opinion, the court uses the Ollman Test. This test consists of four factors to consider: if the statement can be proven true or false, the common usage of the words in the statement, the journalistic context of the remark, and the social context of the remark. When applied to the test, Murrow's statement would have been considered an opinion. Therefore, his speech was protected. After Murrow spoke out against McCarthy, other reporters were inspired by him, applauded him, and showed their support. Without television, Murrow would not have had the opportunity to share his voice. By using television as an outlet, Murrow inspired others to let their voices be heard.

In addition to speaking out, television provides the opportunity to educate people on issues around them. On his show, Murrow brought to light an issue regarding Milo Radulovich. Radulovich was a lieutenant in the Air Force Reserves. Radulovich was asked to resign because he kept contact with members of his family who were accused of being communists. According to the Air Force, this went against one of their codes because the person could have been a security risk. Radulovich refused to resign and the issue went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court agreed that Radulovich should have been severed from the Reserves, even though there was no doubt that he was loyal to the United States. From this, if Radulovich wanted to bring a libel suit against the Air Force, he would have only needed to prove that the Air Force violated the Standard of Care. There is no basic definition of Standard of Care; it is what a reasonable and prudent person would qualify as how a person should be treated. Radulovich would have only had to prove that because he was a private person. If he was any sort of public figure, he would have had to prove actual malice or negligence. This issue showed

the real impacts McCarthy's policies had on people. By using television to illuminate the situation, citizens were educated on how they were impacted by governmental policies.

It is important that people learn about issues around them so that they can help find a solution to the issue. Television helps shape the world around us. Due to Murrow's debate with McCarthy on his show, the Senate decided to investigate McCarthy for misconduct. The Senate ultimately decided to censor McCarthy, because his actions were unbecoming of a senator. Since he accused people of being a communist with minimal evidence and inciting fear in others, McCarthy violated the Standard of Care. Since he violated it, McCarthy could have been sued for libel under the negligence tort. In this tort, a plaintiff would need to prove one of the causes of the defendant's negligence: cause of facts or cause of law. In this case, his negligence rooted from cause of fact. If McCarthy had not accused others of being a communist with minimal proof, then hundreds of people would have not lost their jobs or lived everyday in fear. If the debate between Murrow and McCarthy was not televised, then it would have been very unlikely that McCarthy was censored as soon as he was. If that did not happen, then the United States would have had a paranoid oppressor in office longer, and he would have continued to destroy people's lives.

Television is not just a form of entertainment, it is also meant to inspire, educate, and shape the world around us. Although many people watch television for entertainment purposes, many watch television for other important reasons. Television is extremely revolutionary to the American society and has a multipurpose effect. It allows one to express themselves and show others whatever they desire to. The television was not originally created to just provide entertainment. It was created for a bigger purpose: to serve others. Television provides

opportunities for others to learn, to inspire, and to socialize. Without television and its many functions, people would be less informed, fruitful, and happy.