

McLuhan and You

These questions are intended to get you thinkin' like McLuhan and take a look at the world through his eyes. Answering these questions by using all of this week's readings and playing with McLuhan will, hopefully, get you thinking critically about language, text, and technology. I have provided some example answers. To receive full credit your answers must be thoughtful, well explained, and use the readings from the week.

I. Think about something we don't consider a communication medium that has had an effect on our lives. And answer these questions:

- a. What does the medium enhance?
A light bulb enhances sight in the dark and at nighttime.
- b. What does the medium make obsolete?
A light bulb makes candles and gaslights less important.
- c. What are two social implications of the medium?
 - i. *The light bulb changes how we view the workday. Because lots of light is not necessarily dependent on the sun, people's workdays extend beyond darkness and we can expect stores to be open later.*
 - ii. *The light bulb changes how we travel. Because there are lights all over roadways or projected from cars, travel is not dependent on daylight. People can plan travel into the night and don't have to be home before nightfall.*

II. Think about something we generally consider a communication medium that has had an effect on our lives. And answer these questions:

- a. What does the medium enhance?
- b. What does the medium make obsolete?
- c. What are two social implications of the medium?

III. McLuhan is a master of the aphorism—"a concise observation with a general truth." Select TWO aphorisms or short quote from below and explain the significance of the sayings. Explain in your own words what McLuhan means when he uses it and what it shows about a technology's influence over our lives.

Character no longer is shaped by only two earnest fumbling experts. Now all the world's a sage (14).

The wheel is an extension of the foot (30-32).

...our habit of thinking in bits and parts—"specialism"—reflected the step-by-step linear departmentalizing process inherent in the technology of the alphabet (45).

Printing is a ditto device (50)

Ours is a brand-new world of allatonce-ness (all-at-once-ness) (63).

Environments are not passive wrappings, but are, rather, active processes which are invisible (68).

Print technology created the public. Electric Technology created the mass (68).

The technology of the railway created the myth of a green pasture world of innocence (72).

IV. Select another aphorism or short quote (a McLuhanism) from the second half of *The Medium is the Message*. Write it down and explain in your own words what McLuhan means when he uses it and why you think it is insightful.

V. Go to the last page of *The Medium is the Message* (the cartoon) read it and then fill in the blanks.

Now, with _____ and _____, thought and action are closer and social involvement is greater. We again live in a village. Get it?

Why did you choose what you did to fill in the blanks and do you agree with McLuhan—that we again live in a village? How come?

LAST—Name one of the pictures you think works really well to show or explain one of McLuhan's ideas and describe why it worked.