

Sesame street media reaction paper assignment



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Sesame Street ??? Media Reaction Paper Television, movies, newspapers and many other media outlets provide a variety of views on cultural diversity in America. Thousands of channels of programming are available through our cable providers and satellite services. With all of these channels available, it is not very easy to find a show, whether it be a news outlet or a simple TV show for pure entertainment, that truly displays diversity in America without placing people into stereotypes.

Sesame Street, a children's educational program, shows an unbiased view on diversity by America's standards. Sesame Street aired on televisions across America in 1969 (PBS Independent Lens, 2008). The program was introduced around the era of civil rights movements, so Sesame Street was pioneering a new way to show America's children what it truly meant to be different from one another. Sesame Street was proud to encompass a multi-racial cast in an urban environment (PBS Independent Lens, 2008). At the time, this type of programming was slightly controversial because of the mix-raced cast.

With that said, it was very important at the time to introduce a cultural diverse world to the nation's children. One of the goals of Sesame Street was to teach children in the urban environment, much like the settings in the show. The show was created and aimed to teach our young, preschool Americans crucial elements in a child's beginning curriculum, such as self-esteem, literacy, math and other general topics (PBS Kids, 2008). In addition to contributing to the general knowledge and education, Sesame Street is famous for teaching children about diversity in a positive way.

Children are not born to be prejudice or discriminatory, these are behaviors of which are learned and taught by the people that are around to influence the child (Winograd, 2007). A goal for Sesame Street, according to Gary Knell, president of Sesame Workshop, is to teach children about respect and tolerance to differences and to counter the negative influence of the general public (Winograd, 2007). A healthy mix of human and puppet characters are ingeniously interacting on the show. The “ real” people on the show are white, black, Asian and Hispanic.

Sonia Marzano played on of the main “ people” characters on the show, Maria. Sonia, who was a first generation American in her family, did struggle with racism in the media. Even though she did struggle, she was very happy to be able to be a positive Latina role model during that era (Salyer, 2008). As a child, I loved Sesame Street and watched it religiously. I recall on the show an Asian character that played the shop owner and there was also a black man who was often in the same scenes as “ Maria”. Not only are the people diverse, so are the fictional characters.

The monsters and puppets are all very different and encompass a variety of cultural differences. There are clear age differences in the monsters and puppets. Some are obviously babies and seem to grow up into young adult age monsters. The characters are also many different shapes. Petite and small monsters or puppets to the biggest puppet, Snuffy the elephant, are demonstrated on the show. The puppets are also a variety of colors, just as people can be. There is a monster of every color of the rainbow on the show. Not only are the monsters different shapes, sizes, and colors, they also have different voices and accents.

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I remember watching an episode with my children that is mentioned on the PBS Kids website. Rosita is a little girl monster who is Spanish and has a strong accent. Rosita was upset when she realized that her friends did not have the same accent as she did. The point towards the end was to teach Rosita that everyone is different and her accent is something that made her unique and special. Sesame Street is a long running TV program that is an amazing influence for our children. The show genuinely depicts cultural diversity without stereotyping the characters.

Sesame Street definitely fosters a better understanding of cultural diversity and living in a multicultural society. I watched this program as a child and encouraged my children to do the same. I expect that many more decades will come for Sesame Street to air on television. I cannot think of a better program that instills better values, sense of self-esteem, tolerance, and respect. References PBS Independent Lens (2008). The world according to Sesame Street. Retrieved November 23, 2008, from <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/worldaccordingtosesamestreet/film.html> PBS Kids (2008).

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