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Watching TV is a common pastime in the US and I have spent many evenings sitting on my couch glued to the TV. However, I don't have a TV here in Japan and many are surprised to hear that I don't want a TV, because I don't really enjoy Japanese TV. During my time studying abroad I often watched TV while cooking and eating and was surprised at how different Japanese TV programs are from US programs.

One of the biggest differences between programming is Japanese variety shows, in these programs the participants do many different types of things in one episode and other participants react to what is happening. I'm not used to shows that span multiple genres in one episode, in the US shows focus on one thing such as cooking, singing, game shows, history, crime, news, sports, and so on. We don't have shows that are similar to Japanese variety shows, most unscripted U.S. shows focus on normal people not celebrities. Even more surprising was the reaction boxes in the corners of the screen focusing on individual participant's reactions, I still don't understand what is appealing about watching other people's reactions, especially since the reactions are always positive. American TV likes to build up conflict, and I think is sometimes too negative, but I think Japanese variety shows are too positive, and since no one has anything bad to say I find the people disingenuous.

Scripted programs are also very popular in the US, as they are in Japan, and there are many genres such as medical, crime, comedy, highschool, romance, fantasy, and science fiction. These shows are very popular and often last for many years, usually for as long as they are popular. I have dedicated many years of my life for some shows like Game of Thrones, which I watched for four years. I know that Japan also has many long running dramas, but it also has many one or two season shows. You also don't have to worry if you miss the airing of a new episode in the US because reruns of episodes are always playing on TV. I was shocked to see that on the channel guide in my Japanese dorm there were no reruns of drama episodes, this made it very difficult to watch dramas because I usually missed the new episodes. I really wish Japanese TV played more reruns so I would have been able to watch the dramas that were popular at the time and talk about them with the people in my dorm.

Although I often do not enjoy Japanese TV, I have enjoyed some programs and have been able to learn a lot about Japan through watching.