Topic 2: Technology has a significant impact on our lives, from how we communicate to how we view news and entertainment programming. Write an essay about how you use technology, how it influences your life, how you think new technology will influence the media industry in the next five years, and what should be done to insure we don’t have a digital divide in the years to come.

 “I was told to make this Twitter. Hi.” My brilliant use of the 140 characters aside, I was neither happy nor excited to put my new Twitter account to good use. It was the summer Urban Journalism Workshop at New York University (NYU), and I was a rising senior at Stuyvesant High School who refused to believe that print journalism was dying. After all, our school newspaper, The Spectator, was not only doing well, but its print version was also far more popular than its web counterpart.

 Slowly, I forgot about Twitter. I continued on with my editor position on The Spectator and graduated with aspirations of majoring in journalism. Then halfway through my first semester at NYU, I was reintroduced to the world of tweeting by my roommates. As constant tweeters, they insisted that I reactivate my account and follow them online. I agreed hesitantly, still not too enticed by the idea of online journalism. I followed them, read their tweets, and even made my own every few weeks. Little by little, I got used to having Twitter open as one of my Firefox tabs. I decided to follow more people, and soon enough, descriptions and links to hundreds of NYTimes, Wall Street Journal, and other news articles began popping up on my Twitter feed.

 I soon realized that my world had expanded to beyond just high school. News was no longer the latest school policy—it was now unemployment numbers, wikiLeaks, congressional decisions, South Korea vs. North Korea, Egyptian riots, etc. The previous year, my life revolved around a smaller environment—my high school—and so print journalism was easy. We fed news to 4,000 students at most, and the paper was the best way to stay informed, as our website was never up-to-date. Now, in a larger environment, we need a more convenient and efficient way to communicate the news. Print journalism suddenly becomes a hassle, both to read and to print.

Technology gives us the ability to learn about another country by simply using a computer, or even more conveniently, a phone. We can now read the news without ever leaving our seats. We can connect to co-workers and friends via social networking sites. We can even tweet 140-character-max messages @ news companies that would otherwise fail to hear our voices. [The rest of the paragraph is all true, but is obvious. I think the fail to hear our voices theme should be pursued] [[Technology also gives news a hint of ease. Gone are the days when our only option was to pay 25 cents for a paper we would later lug around on the subway. We can now get subscribe to e-mail digests from the Wall Street Journal or download the New York Times application on the iPhone.]]

The media industry has taken notice. Television stations have already created Facebook pages for people to ‘like’. After becoming a fan of series such as “Chuck” and “How I Met Your Mother,” I can now receive information about the shows instantly through my Facebook minifeed. I can find out when the next episode of “How I Met Your Mother” will air, or learn what Zachary Levi will be up to next. I can be a part of their world without having to step outside of my own. As for the companies themselves, they can improve by using the feedback they receive from their followers’ likes and comments. They in turn turn those likes into advertising opportunities.

This is what the next five years will have the potential to bring to the media industry—collaboration through interaction. Media companies can use technology more effectively by encouraging their fans to collaborate rather than just follow. By receiving advice and opinions that are both realistic and diverse, the media industry can better cater to their fans’ requests. A couple of years ago, NBC released an Interactive Story for their show, *Heroes*. As the title suggests, these characters were not created by the writers and producers of *Heroes*, but from submissions pitched by followers of the show. Doing so allowed NBC to further appeal to viewer interest and as a result, garner more interest in its TV show.

In the essay “Steps Toward a Small Theory of the Visible,” author John Berger writes that today’s society has created in us “a spectacle of empty clothes and unworn masks, [and] all that is left to share is the spectacle, the game that nobody plays and everybody can watch” (Berger 160). In other words, we have lost our ability to collaborate, to communicate, to see past the image on the screen [This directly contradicts what you say above. I think this is kind of weak. I would suggest ditching the quote (which doesn’t make much sense anyway) and instead proposing a solution to the digital divide, e.g. what if we set up a recycling industry for computers and cellphones to go to poorer students? Maybe social media could help. Something more active.]. If we continue on this path, we will no doubt fall prey to a digital divide. The media industry needs to reach out to its followers, to the people who care about the shows, because otherwise, there will be no interaction and therefore no substance.

Technology is not only a benefactor—it is also a solution. It allows news to be more than just a one-way street. With technology, the media is capable of reaching out to its audience. And with this interaction, both the media industry and its audience can benefit.