I challenge you to imagine life without the many technologies we have such as cell phones, cars, and computers. This is a scary thought for many, because they wouldn’t be able to function without these technologies. Over the last one hundred years, there has been an explosion of new technology. The technology we have now is greatly advanced from technologies of the early 20th century. These advanced technologies are shocking to a generation that grew up with simple technologies. Advancement in technology has expanded our horizon, but these advancements have also had some negative effects. When comparing “Red Wheelbarrow” and “An Apology,” we see that the inventions that were ground breaking in the past are gradually losing importance as new technological advances are being made and human attitudes are changing along with technology.

There has been a great jump in the ability of current technologies from the technologies of the past. The equipment of the past used simple machines to complete the work at hand. The wheelbarrow was created by a Chinese general in A.D. 200 to transport “large quantities of military supplies along narrow embankments” (Gargus). The wheelbarrow technology of the past was moved by one wheel and two handles that were used to push with and direct the wheelbarrow. One new technology that accomplishes what the wheelbarrow does is the tractor. The tractor still uses a bucket to move the dirt, but it has an electrical system that moves the machine around making the work much easier. In its time the wheelbarrow was important, but it
has lost its value as we have created better technology. The tractor is an example of a new invention that changed lifestyles, which also changed the attitudes of people using them. We also see this change of attitude in “An Apology” by the man driving the car.

The “Red Wheelbarrow” portrays a simplistic period of time. The first statement made is “So much depends/upon/a red wheel/barrow,” (Williams l.1-4) which shows the importance the poet places on the wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow was a valuable tool when this poem was written in 1923. The wheelbarrow represents a time when work was harder, but life was simpler. The simple equipment used in this time period was essential because it helped people do tasks that were necessary for survival. The people that only had these simple tools may have had to work harder, but they also benefited from the hard work. The hard work, produced by the circumstances, prevented the people in the time people from being lazy. Throughout history, many people have been forced to live off the land due to the lack of advanced technology; therefore, nature has been seen “as an all-encompassing environment and many of its manifestations were worshiped and looked upon with awe” (Ferkiss 1). People who lived off the land had a direct encounter with nature and what it supplied, which gave them a better appreciation for nature. Our society is losing the values that came along with simple technologies as we continuously move to total reliance on modern technologies.

It is brought to our attention in “An Apology,” how attitudes have changed as technology has advanced. In the first stanza, we see an attitude that overlooks the wheelbarrow when the poem says “Forgive me/ for backing over/ and smashing/ your red wheelbarrow” (Bergmann l. 1-4). The tone of the poem is sarcastic and belittling. It really seems like the person is trying to say: “Sorry I backed over your insignificant wheelbarrow in my car that is so much better.” In this poem, we see a shift in what technology is meant to provide. Throughout history, people
have created their technologies to survive, and now, in modern time, technology is being created to make life more comfortable. Advanced technologies make our lives more comfortable because we can have more free time, easier work, and faster production. New technologies have made many aspects of life easier, but they also have had negative impacts. These negative impacts that have been seen in people include laziness, desire for instant gratification, and decreasing social skills. The negative impact of technology is demonstrated in “An Apology” by the arrogant tone and violent action.

Our society can be at its best if it takes the positive from “Red Wheelbarrow” and “An Apology.” The simple ways of life and values that are seen in the time period of the “Red Wheelbarrow” are great to look back on and apply to our lives. By looking back, we can see that hard work pays off and that simple living is less stressful, even though it may not be as attractive. The technology seen in “An Apology” has given us great advantages in many areas of life. “The full development and diffusion of innovations such as electricity, telephones, and automobiles have accompanied the emergence of mass production, mass consumption, and mass government” (Miller, Michalski, and Stevens 7). We should use these advantages to further our society. Modern technology frees up the time that was previously needed to complete strenuous labor. Our society should look back to “Red Wheelbarrow” to see the good that has come from previous ways of life and look at “An Apology” to never forget the opportunities we have with our current technology.

Society is constantly changing as we gain new technologies and previous ones are becoming outdated. The older technologies brought a way of life that was simpler in many ways, but they may not always be able to provide for the ever increasing amount of demand humans desire. New advanced technologies expand our horizons, but they still have some negative
impacts, that if not realized can be devastating. When technology is used appropriately, it makes life much easier, but, when it is abused, it can actually make our lives more complicated.
Work Cited


