

TEACHER GUIDE

1952 DOC. #2: Nixon Postcard

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The impact of the new medium of television was immediately clear after Nixon’s speech when the network received an avalanche of wires, letters, and phone calls. The vast majority of these contacts were in support of his continued candidacy. Nixon had ended his speech by asking viewers to phone or wire the Republican National Committee to let them know what voters thought. But TV viewers never heard the address to which they should send their letters because his final remarks were cut off.

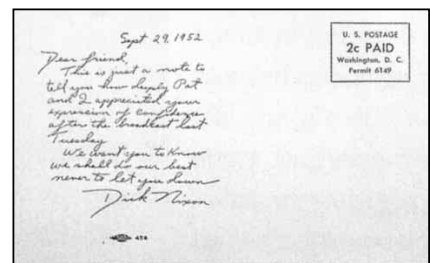
It was common in the early days of television for candidates to be cut off at the end of a live speech. Politicians were used to making long speeches and needed to carefully edit and time their remarks for prime-time television. In later years candidates would rely less on televised speeches and more on brief spot ads to maximize the use of their TV budgets.

Nixon’s campaign managers responded to each person who had written in support of the candidate by sending postcards designed to look like personal notes.

> **Project** the document.

QUESTION	What message does this postcard convey about Nixon?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	He is a family man. The Nixon family is young, happy, and united.
EVIDENCE	standing together, smiling, parents holding children

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Nixon Postcard

PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION **What techniques are used to make this postcard appear to be a personal note from Nixon?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER It appears to be handwritten.

EVIDENCE written in cursive script

SUGGESTED ANSWER **Uses familiar language and suggests a long-term relationship.**

EVIDENCE addressed to "Dear Friend"; refers to "Pat and I"; signed "Dick"; says "we shall do our best to never let you down"

FURTHER QUESTIONS

The use of the family image became especially important for candidates after the Second World War. Why do you think this was the case?

Discuss the relative advantages of TV and direct mail as means to reach voters.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

"Commoner"

"Family Man"