

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1952 DOC. #4: "Vote Stevenson" TV Commercial

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Adlai Stevenson criticized Eisenhower’s appearance in the TV commercials. He refused to appear in commercials himself during the 1952 campaign, commenting that “this isn’t Ivory Soap versus Palmolive...This is a choice for the most important office on earth” (Troy 200). Presidential candidates through the years had often been reluctant to appear inappropriate by asking for votes in person. In 1828 John Quincy Adams had refused to attend rallies for that reason. In 1860 Abe Lincoln had refused to go out “on the stump” and as recently as 1948, the previous election, Thomas Dewey had refused to do radio spots for fear of being seen as undignified.

Airtime on television was still relatively cheap in 1952 since only less than 40% of households had TVs at the time. Stevenson had considerably less money to spend than Eisenhower. His campaign managers nevertheless produced several commercials for Stevenson without the appearance of their candidate. Both Eisenhower and Stevenson ran commercials about the Korean War that was then being waged by U.S. soldiers. In the follow-up to the campaign Stevenson’s commercials were considered less effective than the “Eisenhower Answers America” series.

> Play the video clip.

**QUESTION** What message does the singer give about Eisenhower?

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** He is more likely to keep the U.S. at war.

**EVIDENCE** “a soldier man is always bound to think in terms of battleground”

**QUESTION** What message does the singer give about Stevenson?

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** He is a leader for peace like Abe Lincoln.

**EVIDENCE** “from Illinois whence Lincoln came...Stevenson – civilian-son – will lead us till the peace is won”

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**“Vote Stevenson”  
TV Commercial**

**Video Clip**  
LENGTH: 38 seconds

QUESTION **Why does the singer keep repeating the candidate's name?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER To reinforce name recognition.

EVIDENCE in short TV commercial, repetition helps people remember candidate's name in the voting booth

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Why would Stevenson choose the particular singer he did to deliver his message?

Why might music and TV make a good match for campaigning?

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Music:** Popular music has always been the soundtrack for American presidential campaigns, from William Henry Harrison's Log Cabin Songbooks (see 1840 Doc. #4 "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too") to the songs used to introduce George W. Bush and Al Gore at their respective conventions in 2000 (see 2000 doc.#1).