

TEACHER GUIDE

1960 DOC. #3: Race Against Communism Broadside

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Soviet Union launched the first earth satellite, Sputnik, into orbit in 1957. Many in the U.S. reacted to this news with a fear that the Soviets were winning the “space race.” Kennedy spoke of a “missile gap,” suggesting that the Soviets were attaining military superiority as well. He blamed the Eisenhower administration for this. Later his own Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara would say, “There was a missile gap, but the gap was in America’s favor!” (Armstrong n.pag.). Kennedy also attacked Nixon for being “experienced in policies of retreat, defeat and weakness” (David 68).

Nixon denied that the United States had declined in influence or power under Eisenhower’s administration. He presented himself as qualified to deal with the Russians due to his experience traveling to 50 countries including the Soviet Union where he debated Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

The document you will see here is a broadside. Broadside is simply large sheets of paper with information printed on one side. In early presidential campaigns broadsides were posted in public places to encourage voters to choose one candidate or to attack another. They often would contain the words to a song or an image. In modern times marketing directors added color and advertising techniques to turn broadsides into what we know as the political poster. This broadside was paid for by Labor’s Committee for Kennedy and Johnson.

> **Project** the document.

QUESTION	What are the messages of this broadside?
SUGGESTED ANSWER	The U.S. must win in the race for world leadership with the Soviet Union. Kennedy will make this happen.
EVIDENCE	“winner takes all”; Democracy is racing Communism for world leadership flag; “for full speed...vote Kennedy”

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Race Against Communism Broadside

PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION **Which candidate does this support?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER It supports Kennedy.

EVIDENCE “Kennedy for President” and “Labor’s Committee for Kennedy”

QUESTION **If the candidates’ names were missing, could you tell whom it supported?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER You couldn’t tell without Kennedy’s name.

EVIDENCE both candidates favored the race to stay ahead of the Russians; the image itself could support either candidate

QUESTION **Kennedy said that the U.S. was falling behind the Soviets. Who does this image suggest will be the winner of the race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union? What is your evidence?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The U.S. will win.

EVIDENCE the “Democracy” runner is over the hurdle first and closer to the finish flag; he also is more upright and seems to be exerting less energy

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Why do politicians often use “good guy versus bad guy” imagery to promote their message?

How do you think the advent of television affected the use of materials like broadsides?

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Foreign Policy