

TEACHER GUIDE

1992 DOC. #2: Bush "What I am Fighting For" TV Commercial

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Voters' confidence in the economy is one key indicator as to how people will vote in a presidential election. If people feel the economy is doing well then it is likely that they will see the President as responsible and give him or her their votes. If the economy is seen as doing poorly, the President is likely to be blamed and votes may go to the opponent. In 1992 President Bush was seen as out of touch with the day-to-day economic concerns of the average citizen after he marveled at the "new" scanners at supermarket checkout lanes when such technology had in fact been in place for a long time (as most shoppers knew).

President Bush entered the election campaign in the spring of 1992 with some bad economic news. Unemployment was up, household income was down, health care costs were increasing, and the federal deficit was growing. He faced criticism from third-party candidate Ross Perot for supporting free trade legislation and criticism from conservative Republicans for raising taxes despite his famous pledge in 1988: "Read my lips, no new taxes."

The Democratic team knew that the weak economy would also be a weak point for Bush. A famous sign at Clinton's Arkansas campaign headquarters, "It's the Economy, Stupid," was meant to remind campaign workers to concentrate on economic policy rather than on a host of other issues. Bush's advisors decided to counter this with a series of strong responses in their own political commercials.

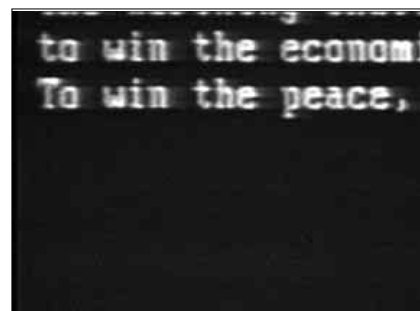
Here is a Bush commercial entitled, "What I am Fighting For." Think about its message and about how it is different from the Clinton commercial you just viewed.

Commercial Script:

BUSH:

The world is in transition. The defining challenge of the '90s is to win the economic competition, to win the peace. We must be a military superpower, an economic superpower, and an export superpower. In this election you'll hear two versions of how to do this – theirs is to look inward, ours is to look forward. Prepare our people to compete, to save, and invest so we can win. Here's what I'm fighting for: open markets for American products, lower government spending, tax relief, opportunities for small business, legal and health reform, job training, and new schools built on competition, ready for the 21st century.

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Bush "What I am Fighting For" TV Commercial

Video Clip

Length: 1 minute

> Play the video clip.

QUESTION **What are the messages of this commercial? Give evidence to support your answer.**

SUGGESTED ANSWER The United States must remain a superpower in the 21st century. It must compete to win economically and militarily. Bush will fight to help the U.S. to go forward.

EVIDENCE “we must be a military superpower, an economic superpower, and an export superpower;” “prepare our people to compete...so we can win,” and “here’s what I’m fighting for”

QUESTION **What types of images have been selected and what messages are they meant to convey?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Image of Bush speaking shows him as strong and confident. Images of a military jet, an automotive and steel plant, and a container ship suggest military, economic, and export strength. Images of a tax credit form, a family, and a school shows support for children and family. The projected words are meant to underscore Bush’s remarks.

QUESTION **What do you notice about the narration and the background music? What message is the soundtrack meant to convey?**

SUGGESTED ANSWER Bush’s delivery is loud and strong, meant to suggest a confident and commanding leader. The music is percussive, rising to a crescendo with applause to suggest enthusiasm as the name “BUSH” concludes the visual images.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Compare this commercial with the “Man From Hope” commercial for themes and style. Which do you think is more effective and why?

Do highly polished commercials like these promote or discourage political participation? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL INFO

Sometimes a candidate’s recorded voice is manipulated to adjust its tone or sound. In 1976, Jimmy Carter’s campaign managers speeded up some of Carter’s speeches to replace the candidates’ slow Southern drawl with a pace reflecting deliberateness. In 1992, the Bush team slowed Bush’s voice to make him sound “less whiny” while his primary opponent, Pat Buchanan, sped up the tape to make Bush seem high-pitched (Kamber 222).

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Economic Issues
Foreign Policy