



Dwight D.  
Eisenhower  
Memorial

## NATIONAL EISENHOWER MEMORIAL EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

### LESSON

# The 1952 Election: A New Kind of Campaign



#### Duration

One 45-minute period

#### Grades

7–12

#### Cross-curriculum Application

U.S. History, Media Arts, English



## Historical Background

Dwight Eisenhower's campaign for president in 1952 was like none before it. More and more Americans had televisions in their homes and the Eisenhower campaign made unprecedented, creative use of the new medium. The campaign developed innovative television commercials to make the case for Eisenhower as president, using one-minute "spot" advertisements that addressed the primary concerns of his platform, such as the cost of living, corruption, and Korea. Eisenhower promoted a reduction in government expenditures to lower taxes and inflation and called for the prevention of fraud, bribery, favoritism, and unethical behavior in government officials. Eisenhower's platform also advocated for internationalist foreign policies and spoke out against the mismanagement of the Korean War. These commercials reached a wide audience because they aired during popular programming, and support for Eisenhower became overwhelming and bipartisan. Eisenhower's campaign also marked a new kind of "celebrity" politics with smiling candidates on campaign posters.

## Objective

Students will view a series of these commercials from both the Eisenhower campaign and that of his opponent, the Democratic nominee, Adlai Stevenson. Carefully analyzing these commercials as primary sources, students will determine each commercial's message and the use of persuasion techniques. Finally, students will develop their own campaign media strategy for Eisenhower and create a storyboard of a commercial on a platform issue.

## Essential Questions

1. How did presidential candidate Dwight Eisenhower build a winning coalition?
2. How did television change presidential campaigning and elections?
3. What were the most significant issues of the 1952 presidential campaign?

## Sources

### 1952 Presidential Election Campaign Commercials

- » "Eisenhower Presidential Campaign Commercial." 1952. Disney Studios.  
<https://archive.org/details/Eisenhow1952>



*Teacher Notes: "I Like Ike" 1952 campaign commercial cartoon for Eisenhower by Disney Studios and Citizens for Eisenhower, a bipartisan grassroots movement.*

*Interesting details:*

- *The commercial emphasizes family and promotes Eisenhower having wide appeal.*
- *It features common political symbols, such as Uncle Sam.*

» *Eisenhower vs. Stevenson 1952. The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2012. Museum of the Moving Image.*

<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952>

*Teacher Notes: Collection of fourteen campaign commercials from the 1952 presidential race.*

*Interesting details:*

- *The site features seven commercials each for the Republican and Democratic parties.*
- *Each commercial includes a transcript.*

## Materials

- » Commercial Analysis Worksheet
- » Supplies for creating storyboards

## Preparation

- Cue the 1952 Disney Studios Eisenhower Presidential Campaign Commercial <<https://archive.org/details/Eisenhow1952>> to show students.
- Cue the presidential campaign commercials from the 1952 election <<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952>> to show students.
- Print out copies of the Commercial Analysis Worksheet - one for each student.

## Procedure

1. Introduce Dwight Eisenhower, candidate for the 1952 presidential election. Play the Disney Eisenhower campaign commercial for students.
2. As a class, have students consider how presidents spread their message and platform before the advent of television. What technologies did they have access to in order to promote their campaign? How did television change presidential campaigning and elections? Have the students think about the evolution of media technology, such as word of mouth and newspapers, radio, television, and social media. Have them consider the amount of people



each technology can reach.

3. Explain Dwight Eisenhower's innovative use of television for political commercials during the 1952 election. Also introduce the issues discussed in Eisenhower's platform, such as cost of living, corruption, and the Korean War.
  4. Play one commercial for Eisenhower and then one for Stevenson from the *Living Room Candidate* website. Explain that Americans living in 1952 would have seen these commercials on television just as we see commercials on television today. Discuss the students' initial reactions to each commercial and ask them the questions on the worksheet: What are the qualities of the commercial--are there images, music, narration, text, live action? What is the political issue discussed and what is the candidate's view on that issue? What techniques of persuasion did the commercial use to convey its message? You can write the answers on the board for reference.
  5. Pass out the Commercial Analysis Worksheet.
  6. Tell students you will play a different set of commercials from the same election and have them individually fill out the worksheet, answering questions for the two commercials. You might have to play each commercial a couple of times.
  7. Discuss each commercial as a class using the worksheet for talking points. Ask students to compare and contrast each commercial, discussing the messages they try to convey, platform issues, and persuasion techniques. Discuss what these commercials reveal about each candidate's campaign media strategy. Did the commercial promote the candidate or criticize the opponent? How did each commercial use persuasion techniques? Did they focus on certain issues? Other aspects of campaign media strategies include air time, audience, and length of advertisement. For example, Eisenhower's campaign media strategy focused on cost of living, corruption, and the Korean War. The commercials aired during popular programming to reach the widest audience and were only a minute in length. Eisenhower's opponent, Adlai Stevenson, used a campaign media strategy that criticized the Republican Party and also aired thirty-minute speeches on television, but only on specific nights. Those advertisements did not reach as many people.
  8. Assignment: Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. Each group will develop a campaign media strategy and create a political commercial for Eisenhower on a particular campaign issue. Each group will present their strategy and commercial to the class. The commercial
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will be drawn on paper in storyboard format, and the strategy will accompany the storyboard in narrative form (about three sentences). Alternatively, students could create the storyboard in powerpoint, with another digital tool, or record a one-minute video commercial for Eisenhower.

## Differentiation

If teachers have access to multiple computers in a classroom or a computer lab, the students could be assigned to groups for different Eisenhower and Stevenson commercials for higher support. Each group can sit at a computer and analyze a set of Eisenhower or Stevenson commercials, or compare and contrast one commercial for each candidate.

Teachers may want to use a storyboard template to aid students such as *Create Storyboards* by the University of Houston: <http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37>

Advanced students could examine presidential campaign commercials across time, analyzing the media strategy of later elections to that of the 1952 election. How have campaign commercials changed or remained the same? Do they convey similar messages? How do their persuasion techniques compare?

## Assessment

Students will be assessed on the campaign media strategy, commercial assignment, and their ability to analyze the commercials as a primary source. For example, does the student use evidence from the source to make an argument about Eisenhower's campaign? Does the student use effective persuasion techniques to promote Eisenhower's stance on foreign policy?

Per the attached rubric, the media strategy, campaign commercial storyboard or video, and Commercial Analysis Worksheet should demonstrate a factual understanding of Eisenhower's campaign platform, as well as critical thinking in using persuasion techniques to convey an argument through media.

## Related Resources

### *Lesson Plans*

- » "Analyzing Political Campaign Commercials." Kristina Frank. Teaching American History. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/tah-loudoun/blog/lessons/analyzing-political-campaign-commercials/>



This lesson explores the roles of political parties in elections. Students examine political campaign commercials from two different perspectives: a presidential election campaign staffer and a voter.

- » *Ad Campaign For or Against Ike*. American Experience: Eisenhower.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/teachers-resources/eisenhower-teachers-guide/>

Activity in which students use primary sources to research Eisenhower's appeal and design a poster, brochure, flyer, or song that expresses a for or against stance regarding Ike as a candidate.

- » *Eisenhower as Candidate 1952*. Eisenhower's Presidency. National Park Service.

[http://www.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/eise\\_presidency.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/eise_presidency.pdf)

Contains four lesson plans including Eisenhower as Candidate in 1952. Makes use of objects in the museum collection, including campaign buttons.

- » *Developing Critical Analysis*. Museum of the Moving Image.

[http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/files/pdf/LivingRoomLessons.ANALYSIS\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/files/pdf/LivingRoomLessons.ANALYSIS_FINAL_1.pdf)

This lesson plan asks students to analyze political commercials through image and sound by examining Lyndon B. Johnson's "Peace Little Girl (Daisy)" ad from 1964.

#### *Secondary Sources and Digital Resources*

- » *Create Storyboards*. University of Houston.

<http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/page.cfm?id=23&cid=23&sublinkid=37>

This educational site includes information on creating storyboards and provides multiple storyboard templates in both physical and digital forms.

- » "Presidential Elections and Political Parties, 1796-1968." 1970. Emerson Kent from the University of Texas at Austin.

[http://www.emersonkent.com/map\\_archive/us\\_elections.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/us_elections.htm)

This site features a map of presidential elections from the National Atlas of the United States of America. Eisenhower received 55% of the popular vote in the 1952 election and 67% four years later.



- » “Women and the 1952 Election.” Smithsonian Institution.

<http://historywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=314>

This article discusses women and politics in the 1950s. It includes information on Mamie Eisenhower and how she established the First Lady’s role as a campaigner. The article also states how the Republican party was determined to gain women’s votes and how they focused on domesticity and the family as guards against communism.

- » *Statesman*. American Experience: Eisenhower.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/eisenhower/>

Companion site to the PBS film “Eisenhower.” It includes informative articles, a timeline, a collection of primary sources, and a robust teacher’s guide.

### *Primary Sources*

- » “Eisenhower campaign chronology, July – November 1952,” (p. 25-28) *Dwight D. Eisenhower Called to a Higher Duty, 1945-1961*. Eisenhower Foundation.

[https://eisenhower.archives.gov/education/eisenhower\\_life\\_series/higher\\_duty.pdf](https://eisenhower.archives.gov/education/eisenhower_life_series/higher_duty.pdf)

Includes statements, public appearances, meetings with prominent individuals, and a listing of whistle-stops as Eisenhower toured the country during his campaign.

- » *Campaign Series*. *Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, 1952-1960*. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

<https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/finding-aids/pdf/eisenhower-dwight-papers-as-president/campaign-series.pdf>

Finding aid for Eisenhower campaign papers available for research on site at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. About one fourth of the series covers the 1952 campaign and 1953 inauguration.



- » Republican Party Platform of 1952. American Presidency Project. University of California, Santa Barbara.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25837>

This website contains the Republican Party platform of 1952. Foreign policy, communism, and corruption are some of the issues discussed.



## Commercial Analysis Worksheet

*Adapted from the "Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet" from the National Archives.*

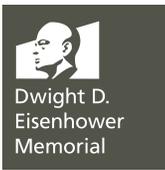
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**For those that apply, describe the qualities of the *Eisenhower* commercial:**

Quality	Description
Music	
Color	
Narration	
Images	
Live Action	
Symbols	
Animation	
Text	

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## Commercial Analysis Worksheet

*Adapted from the "Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet" from the National Archives.*

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**For those that apply, describe the qualities of the *Stevenson* commercial:**

Quality	Description
Music	
Color	
Narration	
Images	
Live Action	
Symbols	
Animation	
Text	

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### A New Kind of Campaign Rubric

	Fully Meets Expectations <i>3 points</i>	Minimally Meets Expectations <i>2 points</i>	Not Yet Within Expectations <i>1 point</i>
<b>Factual Understanding</b>	The storyboard demonstrates understanding of Eisenhower’s campaign platform and identifies its key details.	The storyboard demonstrates understanding of Eisenhower’s campaign platform, but does not identify key details.	The storyboard does not demonstrate understanding of Eisenhower’s campaign platform.
<b>Sourcing</b>	The storyboard demonstrates understanding of the commercial’s origin: especially when it was created and the creator’s goal.	The storyboard demonstrates partial understanding of each commercial’s origin: when it was created and the creator’s goal.	The storyboard demonstrates insufficient understanding of each commercial’s origin: when it was created and the creator’s goal.
<b>Evidence-Based Claim</b>	The storyboard makes a reasonable claim about Eisenhower’s campaign platform and uses appropriate sources and evidence to support that claim.	The storyboard makes a reasonable claim about Eisenhower’s campaign platform, but the sources and evidence only partially support that claim.	The storyboard makes a claim about Eisenhower’s campaign platform that is not supported by appropriate sources and evidence.
<b>Presentation</b>	The storyboard is well-organized and clear with an attractive design. No (or only minor) spelling and grammar errors.	Storyboard is somewhat disorganized or unclear. Design detracts from message. Several spelling and grammar mistakes.	Storyboard shows little or no organization. Unclear or confusing design. Repeated major spelling and grammar errors.