

English Language and Composition
Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes

Directions: The following prompt is based on the accompanying six sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Introduction

Television has been influential in United States presidential elections since the 1960's. But just what is this influence, and how has it affected who is elected? Has it made elections fairer and more accessible, or has it moved candidates from pursuing issues to pursuing image?

Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections.**

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

Source A (Campbell)
Source B (Hart and Tiece)
Source C (Menand)
Source D (Chart)
Source E (Ranney)
Source F (Koppel)

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source A

Campbell, Angus. "Has Television Reshaped Politics? " In *Encyclopedia of Television / Museum of Broadcast Communications*, vol. 1, ed. Horace Newcomb. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2005.

The following passage is excerpted from an article about television's impact on politics.

The advent of television in the late 1940's gave rise to the belief that a new era was opening in public communication. As Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, put it: "Not even the sky is the limit." One of the great contributions expected of television lay in its presumed capacity to inform and stimulate the political interests of the American electorate.

"Television, with its penetration, its wide geographic distribution and impact, provides a new, direct, and sensitive link between Washington and the people," said Dr. Stanton. "The people have once more become the nation, as they have not been since the days when we were small enough each to know his elected representative. As we grew, we lost this feeling of direct contact—television has now restored it."

As time has passed, events have seemed to give substance to this expectation. The televising of important congressional hearings, the national nominating conventions, and most recently the Nixon-Kennedy and other debates have appeared to make a novel contribution to the political life of the nation. Large segments of the public have been given a new, immediate contact with political events. Television has appeared to be fulfilling its early promise.

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source B

Hart, Roderick P., and Mary Triece, "U.S. Presidency and Television." Available at http://www.museum.tv/debateweb/html/equalizer/essay_usprestv.htm.

The following passage is excerpted from an online article that provides a timeline of major events when television and the presidency have intersected.

April 20, 1992: Not a historic date perhaps, but a suggestive one. It was on this date [while campaigning for President] that Bill Clinton discussed his underwear with the American people (briefs, not boxers, as it turned out). Why would the leader of the free world unburden himself like this? Why not? In television's increasingly postmodern world, all texts—serious and sophomoric—swirl together in the same discontinuous field of experience. To be sure, Mr. Clinton made his disclosure because he had been asked to do so by a member of the MTV generation, not because he felt a sudden need to purge himself. But in doing so Clinton exposed several rules connected to the new phenomenology of politics: (1) because of television's celebrity system, Presidents are losing their distinctiveness as social actors and hence are often judged by standards formerly used to assess rock singers and movie stars; (2) because of television's sense of intimacy, the American people feel they know their Presidents as persons and hence no longer feel the need for party guidance; (3) because of the medium's archly cynical worldview, those who watch politics on television are increasingly turning away from the policy sphere, years of hyperfamiliarity having finally bred contempt for politics itself.

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source C

Menand, Louis, “Masters of the Matrix: Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image.” *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2004.

The following passage is excerpted from a weekly literary and cultural magazine.

Holding a presidential election today without a television debate would seem almost undemocratic, as though voters were being cheated by the omission of some relevant test, some necessary submission to mass scrutiny.

That’s not what many people thought at the time of the first debates. Theodore H. White, who subscribed fully to [John F.] Kennedy’s view that the debates had made the difference in the election, complained, in *The Making of the President 1960*, that television had dumbed down the issues by forcing the candidates to respond to questions instantaneously. . . . He also believed that Kennedy’s “victory” in the debates was largely a triumph of image over content. People who listened to the debates on the radio, White pointed out, scored it a draw; people who watched it thought that, except in the third debate, Kennedy had crushed [Richard M.] Nixon. (This little statistic has been repeated many times as proof of the distorting effects of television. Why not the distorting effects of radio? It also may be that people whose medium of choice or opportunity in 1960 was radio tended to fit a Nixon rather than a Kennedy demographic.) White thought that Kennedy benefited because his image on television was “crisp”; Nixon’s—light-colored suit, wrong makeup, bad posture—was “fuzzed.” “In 1960 television had won the nation away from sound to images,” he concluded, “and that was that.”

. . . “Our national politics has become a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals,” [one commentator] concluded. “An effective President must be every year more concerned with projecting images of himself.”

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source D

Adapted from *Nielsen Tunes into Politics: Tracking the Presidential Election Years (1960-1992)*. New York: Nielsen Media Research, 1994.

TELEVISION RATINGS FOR PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES: 1960-1996

Year	Networks	Candidates	Date	Rating	Homes (millions)	People (millions)
1960	ABC CBS NBC	Kennedy-Nixon	Sept. 26	59.5	28.1	N/A
1964 1968 1972	NO DEBATES					
1976	ABC CBS NBC	Carter-Ford	Oct. 6	52.4	37.3	63.9
1980	ABC CBS NBC	Anderson-Carter-Reagan	Oct. 28	58.9	45.8	80.6
1984	ABC CBS NBC	Mondale-Reagan	Oct. 7	45.3	38.5	65.1
1988	ABC CBS NBC	Bush-Dukakis	Sept. 25	36.8	33.3	65.1
1992	ABC NBC CNN	Bush-Clinton-Perot	Oct. 11	38.3	35.7	62.4
1996	ABC CBS NBC CNN FOX	Clinton-Dole	Oct. 6	31.6	30.6	46.1

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source E

Ranney, Austin, *Channels of Power: The Impact of Television on American Politics*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

The following passage is taken from a book that examines the relationship between politics in the United States and television.

In early 1968 [when President Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection], after five years of steadily increasing American commitment of troops and arms to the war in Vietnam, President Johnson was still holding fast to the policy that the war could and must be won. However, his favorite television newsman, CBS's Walter Cronkite, became increasingly skeptical about the stream of official statements from Washington and Saigon that claimed we were winning the war. So Cronkite decided to go to Vietnam and see for himself. When he returned, he broadcast a special report to the nation, which Lyndon Johnson watched. Cronkite reported that the war had become a bloody stalemate and that military victory was not in the cards. He concluded: "It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out . . . will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

On hearing Cronkite's verdict, the President turned to his aides and said, "It's all over." Johnson was a great believer in public opinion polls, and he knew that a recent poll had shown that the American people trusted Walter Cronkite more than any other American to "tell it the way it is." Moreover, Johnson himself liked and respected Cronkite more than any other newsman. As Johnson's aide Bill Moyers put it later, "We always knew . . . that Cronkite had more authority with the American people than anyone else. It was Johnson's instinct that Cronkite was it." So if Walter Cronkite thought that the war was hopeless, the American people would think so too, and the only thing left was to wind it down. A few weeks after Cronkite's broadcast Johnson, in a famous broadcast of his own, announced that he was ending the air and naval bombardment in most of Vietnam—and that he would not run for another term as President.

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

Source F

Koppel, Ted. *Off Camera: Private Thoughts Made Public*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

The following reflections come from the printed journal of Ted Koppel, a newscaster who is best known for appearing on the news show Nightline.

All of us in commercial television are confronted by a difficult choice that commercialism imposes. Do we deliberately aim for the lowest common denominator, thereby assuring ourselves of the largest possible audience but producing nothing but cotton candy for the mind, or do we tackle the difficult subjects as creatively as we can, knowing that we may lose much of the mass audience? The good news is that even those aiming low these days are failing, more often than not, to get good ratings.

It is after midnight and we have just finished our *Nightline* program on the first Republican presidential “debate” involving all of the candidates. . . .

It is a joke to call an event like the one that transpired tonight a debate. Two reporters sat and asked questions of one of the candidates after another. Each man was supposed to answer only the question he was asked, and was given a minute and thirty seconds in which to do so. Since the next candidate would then be asked another question altogether, it was an act of rhetorical contortion for one man to address himself to what one of his rivals had said. . . .

Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, *Nightline* made the whole thing look pretty good. That’s the ultimate irony.

SAMPLE QUESTION ONLY: DRAFT FORMAT

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SAMPLE SCORING GUIDELINES FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

These scoring guidelines will be useful for most of the essays that you read. If they seem inappropriate for a specific essay, ask your Table Leader for assistance. Also consult with your Table Leader about exam booklets that seem to have no response or a response that is unrelated to the question.

Your score should reflect your judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students have only 15 minutes to read and 40 minutes to write. Therefore, the essay is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards that are appropriate for out-of-class writing assignments. Instead, evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored an 8 or a 9, may contain occasional flaws in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. These lapses should enter into your holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for essays that are scored an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument and synthesis of cited sources, or impressive in their control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 effectively take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They effectively support their position by effectively synthesizing* and citing at least three of the sources. The writer's argument is convincing, and the cited sources effectively support the writer's position. The prose demonstrates an ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not flawless.

7 Essays earning a score of 7 fit the description of essays that are scored a 6 but are distinguished by more complete or more purposeful argumentation and synthesis of cited sources, or a more mature prose style.

6 Adequate

Essays earning a score of 6 adequately take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They adequately synthesize and cite at least three of the sources. The writer's argument is generally convincing and the cited sources generally support the writer's position, but the argument is less developed or less cogent than the arguments of essays earning higher scores. Though the language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, generally the prose is clear.

5 Essays earning a score of 5 take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They support their position by synthesizing and citing at least three sources, but their arguments and their use of cited sources are somewhat limited, inconsistent, or uneven. The writer's argument is generally clear, and the sources generally support the writer's position, but the links between the sources and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer's ideas adequately.

* For the purposes of scoring, synthesis refers to combining the sources and the writer's position to form a cohesive, supported argument and accurately citing all sources.

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SAMPLE SCORING GUIDELINES FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

(continued)

4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 inadequately take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They attempt to present an argument and support their position by synthesizing and citing at least two sources but may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify either their own argument or the cited sources they include. The link between the argument and the cited sources is weak. The prose of 4 essays may suggest immature control of writing.

3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less understanding of the cited sources, less success in developing their own position, or less control of writing.

2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate little success in taking a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that television has had a positive impact on presidential elections. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves. These essays may misread the sources, fail to present an argument, or substitute a simpler task by merely responding to the question tangentially or by summarizing the sources. The prose of essays scored a 2 often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as a lack of development or organization, grammatical problems, or a lack of control.

1 Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for the score of 2 but are especially simplistic or weak in their control of writing or do not cite even one source.

0 Essays earning a score of zero (0) are on-topic responses that receive no credit, such as those that merely repeat the prompt.

— Essays earning a dash (—) are blank responses or responses that are completely off topic.

Our country, The United States of America, employs a peculiar sort of governing system: democracy. Simply by definition, democracy's goal as a system of rule for the people by the people implies that the greatest number of people possible should be involved. Although the media's mission of supplying pertinent information to the masses ~~follows~~ follows democratic ideals in definition, the media's impact upon American society, especially in the area of presidential elections, has done little to increase participation in political process and by doing so, has created a new sort of identity for the president himself.

To begin, the basic assumption of using the media to relay "news" to the people is not a bad one: television has brought widespread "penetration," "geographic distribution," and a "feeling of direct contact" to the people of America (Source A). ~~Expanded~~ spanning the distance between two oceans, our country is too large for direct, personal contact between legislators and citizens, and television has ~~enabled~~ ^{allowed} thousands of people the opportunity to be informed with ~~possible~~ national events.

II₂

Between 1960 and 1980, the number of homes watching presidential debates skyrocketed from 28.1 million in 1960 to 45.8 million in 1980 (source D). Basically, television has ~~an~~ brought our nation together in that more people than ever before can be a part of the political process if they so desire. While this "early promise" (source A) of television does easily align itself with democratic ideals, another important ideal, that of the people's free choice whether or whether not to participate, has shown television's less "promise"-ing aspects.

Television initially spurred many Americans to pay attention. Anyone with a ~~any~~ TV could, in a way, be on the floor in the U.S. Capitol from his or her seat in the comfort of the living room back at home in Tennessee. Unfortunately, the media's portrayal of ^{political} events quickly became less than appealing as "even those aiming low [easy to understand content] These days are failing, more often than not, to get good ratings" (source F). Networks who try to be too journalistic shoot over the

heads of many viewers, those who search for a "least common denominator" (E) become boring to others, and those who try a middle ground remain simply mediocre. Americans' quick disinterest is apparent in ~~debate~~ presidential debate ratings. After only ~~three~~ nationally aired debates ratings began to fall from 80.6 million viewers in 1980 to 65.1 million viewers in 1984. This trend continued through the most recent data, that of the 1996 election, where only 46.1 million viewers ~~paid attention~~ ~~over an increased number of networks~~ watched the debates (source D). ~~It is a~~

In a more general sense, Rodrick Hart and many others put it best when they commented, "Years of hyperfamiliarity [have] finally bred contempt for politics itself" (source B). Rather than increasing public interest in national events, the media has actually pushed people from it making Americans more and more likely to take a complacent role in their governance.

Out of this new, less involved view

of national politics has come a new sort of leader - the one who is genuinely concerned with his image within society. For example, President Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the first presidents of televised White House affairs, was "a great believer in public opinion polls" (source E).

Throughout history, this has been far from the case. Thomas Jefferson, one of our nation's most revered former presidents, faced much scrutiny for his decision to implement the Embargo Act during his second term. A president that prided himself on his lack of ceremony and close relationship with the people, Jefferson nonetheless left the Embargo in effect for several years greatly hurting his reputation. Regardless of his actions concerning trade with Britain and France, Thomas Jefferson is still loved by the American people. Modern presidents, however, are more concerned with their "image" (source C) within society. More often

than not, presidents face "a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals" (source c) in elections today. This shift in the identity of our nation's leader, far from a positive one, is almost solely the result of the media's influence upon society.

An ideal, as a nation ~~claiming~~^{heralding} itself as an example of democracy for the rest of the world, the United States must follow the definition of democracy, that is allowing the greatest possible involvement, in order to improve as a nation. Though the media has brought the opportunity of involvement to many American households, it has sent many more away and has actually created a sort of public apathy for the political process. At the same time that citizens stray away, presidents have become more concerned with the now limited opinions surrounding their office. This inverse relationship of concern is far from fulfilling our

forefathers hopes and even farther
from granting the media the
title of a positive influence upon
society.

5.

Television has allowed events and people to be more accessible, even if the audience is ~~the~~ hundreds of miles away. This has not necessarily had a positive impact. Since the 1960's, ~~the~~ American presidential elections and events surrounding the elections have been broadcasted on television. Although this allows for more of an audience to be politically active, as a result, images have become almost as important as ~~correct~~ ~~the~~ a person's ~~appearance~~ actions. Through television, an authority figure has the power to manipulate public opinions ~~or~~ or change the complete truth to something more suited to their viewpoint. Television is dangerous.

It is historically evident that during a presidential campaign, a candidate will discuss a subject that relates to the audience around him. A candidate will not go into great detail about retirement funding if he is speaking to an audience between the ages of 18 and 30. Instead, he will discuss a topic that his audience has an interest in. In this way, he can gain support from many ages and groups. ~~misconstrued~~ ~~When~~ ~~Bill Clinton~~ ~~discussed~~ ~~his~~ Through television, this method could lead to concern about ~~the~~ topics other than politics. When

discussing his underwear in a political campaign to an MTV audience, ~~the~~ Bill Clinton was focusing on his image, not the issues at hand. The members of the MTV audience that could relate to him and voted for him were not voting ~~intelligently~~ completely about the issues Clinton dealt with, but his image. ~~There are experiments conducted, or groups of people~~ During the election of 1960, those who listened to presidential debates over the radio felt that ~~person~~ John F. Kennedy did not do as well as those who watched the debates on television felt he did. This evidence shows the "distorting effects of television" (source C) in its emphasis on image. By ~~using~~ using television as a key in presidential campaigning, a certain percentage of voters are basing their votes on image and personality instead of political issues at hand.

Television can also be used as a form of manipulation. Audiences may not be getting the full story or coverage on an event or issue. This ~~a~~ lack of information or change in information can alter their opinion. Ted Koppel wrote in 2001 that a presidential debate was a "joke," but "because

we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good" (Source F). In this scenario, Nightline changed the debate for ~~the~~ its audiences, who in turn may have changed their minds for or against one candidate or the other. Through the power of editing, companies can cut and alter footage to sway their audience one direction or another.

One person can also have a profound affect on public opinion. If a movie star is seen wearing a ~~strip~~ new blue shirt, millions of fans go out and buy the same or a similar shirt because they admire and trust the star. This scenario can also apply to news and politics. If an influential person were to declare that he or she disagreed with one of the candidates, some of their fans might ~~change~~ use ~~disagree~~ their opinion when voting. ~~The~~ During the Vietnam War, a ~~well~~ well known and trusted news anchor, Walter Cronkite declared that he did not completely agree with the president's actions overseas. "So if Walter Cronkite thought that the war was hopeless, the American people would think so too" (Source E). ~~The~~

Walter Cronkite had so much affect on public opinion that President Johnson decided to ~~and would~~ ~~not~~ ~~believe~~ the remove some troops from Vietnam.

Television ~~can be~~ is used as a ^{tool} ~~book~~ by the presidential candidates, producers, and people of influence to sway public opinion.

The use of television has had a negative impact on presidential elections because it ~~can~~ ~~has~~ has the ability to unfairly alter opinions.

F,

Presidential elections have evolved greatly from the time of John Quincy Adams and Abe Lincoln. While these presidents had to travel around and physically speak to people around the country, modern-day presidents like Ronald Reagan and George Bush have the option of sitting in one room and having their message broadcasted across the country. This change has influenced presidential elections in a positive way, but it has also made the presidents themselves very vulnerable to the individual wielding the camera.

The popular phrase: "what you see is what you get" is rarely true in media. Media program editors and producers can edit broadcasts to fit their personal preference, taking away from the truth. Source F says concerning a presidential debate: "Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good." This is the perfect example of media editing. This option was a good thing in this particular case, but it could also be very detrimental to a candidate's campaign if the editing was done to make them look bad. With a growing influence of media, presidential candidates are at the mercy of those who film them. If supporters film them, they will probably look good, but if opponents film them, it could ruin their chances of winning the

presidency.

Despite this vulnerability, elections have been positively influenced because of the door television has opened to a more informed public. With television, people from every state and town in the United States can watch the various candidates with their own eyes. In 1984 alone, 65.1 million people watched the presidential debate (Source D). 65.1 million people is a staggering number. If television wasn't around, that number would be hugely decreased and therefore electors would be voting on less information. Television allows people to get a variety of factors that will contribute eventually turn into their vote; their decision of who will next lead the United States.

"Because of Television's sense of intimacy, the American people feel they know their Presidents as persons..." (Source B). If you genuinely know a person, you are able to make better, more accurate judgements of them. If you know them as a person, not by their career, you are better prepared to decide to trust and support them, or get them replaced if you don't feel they are right for the job. Television has supplied this intimacy in regards to presidents. By broadcasting events like "nominating conventions, important Congressional hearings... and other debates..." (Source A) the American electorate has been able to make more

educated decisions about their presidents. Presidents, in turn, have to make a better impression on the people.

In 1968, president Lyndon Johnson spoke inaccurately of our progress in the Vietnam war. Walter Cronkite, a TV newsman got the correct story and reported it to the nation (Source E). In this case, TV acted as a check; when the president didn't tell the truth, someone else got it correct on television. This will make for a better president in general, because candidates will know that they should tell the whole truth all the time.

As the American public grows more used to the media, presidents will have to make increasingly better impressions on the people, and they will have to be better people in order to gain the trust and support of their nation.

BB,

In a technology based society like America, media such as television and radio are our most valuable means of communication. The invention of TV changed the face of the world, and is a source of not only entertainment but news. Millions of Americans get their news from the television screen each night, and it is also a main source ~~of~~ for political news and debating. The use of television in presidential elections should be a positive way of campaigning when used correctly because it allows America to know each candidate and allows American citizens to feel more involved in their nation's government.

Almost every home in America contains a TV. It is a major part of our lives, a part that has proven to shape the way Americans live (Campbell). ~~By using~~ News cameras allow use to first hand experience breaking news, and allows Americans to feel involved and ~~united~~ united. For example,

When the World Trade Centers were attacked America was glued to its TV. By watching and listening, Americans from coast to coast felt involved in the tragedy. The same goes for politics; TV allows citizens to be involved and have a sense of "direct contact." (Campbell) Americans should feel as if they know their leaders, after all, they are the ones who each day make decisions that effect our futures. Personally as an American citizen, I like feeling as if I really know my president, not just as a formal relationship but rather more as a friend. TV is the way for Americans to reach that sense of comfort with their candidate. (Hart) TV involves an intimacy that cannot be matched by radio.

~~TV has been~~ Radio has been replaced by TV over the years, because it gives us another view on our presidential ~~candidates~~ candidates. Although radio is a great way to listen to

debates, it does not let us see the way the candidates carry themselves. Image is important to Americans, and they more than likely don't want a president who has bad manners and does not carry himself well. If someone is going to be the image of the free world, that image needs to be one that represents America well. (Menand) Televised debates draw millions of viewers per election, because Americans want to be involved ~~and~~ visually with the candidates. (Chart)

Although TV in elections is helpful to the voters, it is only effective when used correctly. For example, during the Vietnam war, Americans felt dis-connected from the troops. Walter Cronkite traveled to Vietnam to uncover the real story, and when CBS aired his report America was stunned. Their opinions on the war changed, and Johnson knew he would have to end it. (Ranney). Americans do not deserve to be lied to by their leaders, and if it

wasn't for TV who knows how long our soldiers would have stayed in Vietnam. This is also an example of TV's power; broadcasting companies should always be truthful, and not try to sway the public's opinion towards one candidate or another. Ted Koppel recalls a debate when he felt the wrong image was conveyed, "Because we were able to pull the best three or four minutes out of the ninety-minute event, Nightline made the whole thing look pretty good. That's the ultimate irony," (Koppel).

Especially during election times, broadcasters should always try to display the true image of each candidate.

Overall, the tool of television has changed the face of American politics as we know it. It helps bring Americans into the action ~~and~~ in Washington, and allows a citizen to be able to know the personality of the presidential candidates.

Although TV is a great tool to use

during elections, Americans must also be mindful and careful not to be persuaded by certain news stations. They should also use other sources of communication to learn about each candidate before reaching their final decision. If TV is used in a positive and helpful manner, it will bring back the involved government that our nation ~~is based~~ was based on.

G₁

Today, television has the opportunity to portray someone as something they are not. By the way you hold yourself and how you speak can have an impact on those watching. Due to television, Presidential elections have become more popular than ever. Some people may state that television has had a positive impact, but I disagree because television has shaped a person to be shown how an audience would like to see him.

In 1960, C. Menand believes that Kennedy's victory was due to his image. Most of the viewers thought that Kennedy had crushed Nixon on national broadcast, but through the radio it came out as a tie. Why is that? Menand stated that due to Kennedy's appearance, by portraying a cleaner look, he

was the best candidate. Because Kennedy had a fresher image than Nixon he won the debate, not because he said something better, but because of how he looked.

There is no significance in knowing what type of underwear that the President wears. Source B has found a way to mock the Presidential elections through humiliating the candidates. A presidential candidate who reveals the type of underwear they have on should not be taken seriously. So why is it that Clinton felt it necessary to disclose to the public that he wears briefs, not boxers? By humiliating himself he feels closer to the public, which will help boost his image.

Television is not all it is cut out to be. Source F clearly states that a ninety-minute highlight

segment was cut down to three or four minutes of the best part of the debate. But not allowing the audience to view the screenshots and only see the best parts the viewers are not getting the full truth of the different candidates. This process can not help either candidate because they all look their best.

The sources have shown that image, becoming known to the public as a person, & cutting segments short can help candidates become elected for offices. Although it does not hurt the candidates it portrays a false image. It is better to get the truth than nothing at all.

H H,

What is the true gauge of the influence media has over the public? In this time period, we see the ~~after~~ effects media has ~~for~~ us on a daily basis, trying to look like movie stars, determining how successful we are by our t.v. ~~manipulation~~ hero's point of view, and living the life of reality t.v. more than our own. However, the particular media branch, television, has an impact ~~on~~ ~~in~~ the political world as well. Presidents are seen more, "as persons," (source b) and we are much more involved in their personal lives. ~~Television has a leaves an impression with it's viewer and people often judge presidents based on their appearance, or lack thereof, on the television. I believe that radio is influential, that t.v. can be muddling and the particular information disclosed on t.v. is misleading, I believe that t.v. has an negative impact on Presidential elections.~~ Television has a leaves an impression with it's viewer and people often judge presidents based on their appearance, or lack thereof, on the television. I believe that radio is influential, that t.v. can be muddling and the particular information disclosed on t.v. is misleading, I believe that t.v. has an negative impact on Presidential elections.

First of all, radio was ~~and~~ developed many decades before t.v., and is known to be a very influential media segment. Unlike t.v., radio provides the public with information without the ability to edit footage in a way that is misleading to the eyes. While audio information can also be misleading, the affects of visuality are proven to be very high. Radio also allows presidential candidates to ~~appear~~ keep the

political appearance. When t.v. comes into play, teen stations, such as MTV, take the opportunity to find out informations about the individuals that will be appealing to their ~~spectrann~~ audience segment. As good marketers, t.v. stations will make their shows directed at a particular group that is why the former asked president Clinton wore, "briefs [or] boxers" (source B). MTV was not meaning to be demeaning of president Clinton, however all the other listeners unintentionally came across information which needless to say, probably was offensive. By doing this Clinton unintentionally opened the doors to many serious issues he allowed himself to be judged by the, "celebrity system," (Source B) and similarly allowed himself to be used as an example of why many t.v. viewers are, "acutely cynical" (source B). For instances like this alone, many people become dis-satisfied for the way presidential candidates are portrayed on t.v. For these reasons, ~~therefor~~ radio is a much better medium in the world of politics.

Secondly, t.v. can be misleading. When listening to a ~~radio~~ radio, one is bases their opinion solely on the content of the information ~~the~~ ^{you} receive. However, when watching television, one is much more likely to be influenced by looks, poise and non-verbal displays

HH₃

in the Kennedy / Nixon debates, radio listeners, "scored it a draw," (Source C) while t.v. viewers believed, "Kennedy had crushed Nixon," (Source C). As it so happens, ^{it was} ~~Nixon~~ ^{that} believed Kennedy's wins were because of his, "Image," (Source C) it is shown how misleading the television is because of the visuals. Whereas this might help with programs, in a presidential election, it is much more important for the content of the speech to be qualified than the candidate's image. Because so many people have discovered the t.v. to be a bad medium for politics, the millions of viewers of the debates dropped by 6 million from 1992 to 1996

X,

Though some might argue that television has made a wider audience interested in the American presidential elections, the addition of television to politics has ultimately been detrimental.

Early presidential candidates had to rely on their opinions, as well as propaganda, to get themselves elected. Voters were, for the most part, focused on the issues at hand. With the birth of televised debates, image soon became part of the equation. Not only did they think about what they were going to say, but also their body language and dress, making the speeches even more calculated than before. The pre-planned aspect of today's debates often leads to tiptoeing around questions to get in all of their talking points, subtracting from the genuinity of the speakers.

Also, as Americans are bombarded with daily images of politicians, they begin to see them as celebrities, not as the people who could someday control the country. There is an example of this in the infamous "boxers or briefs" question to Bill Clinton, which clearly shows a departure from issues that actually matter, such as taxes or foreign affairs. The new celebrity status of politicians also makes them fair game for tabloid

X₂

fedder, again seen during Bill Clinton's terms as president. When it was reported that the president had had an affair, the country was in an uproar, forgetting all about real politics. There is substantial evidence suggesting that Clinton was not the first president to have an extramarital affair while in office, but the presence of television made it impossible to hide from the public.

By the 1990's the sensational nature of televised debates had worn off, as seen by the dramatic decrease in viewers in debates in 1996. This evidence suggests that while television may have initially made people more interested in politics, the effect is wearing off.

Another negative repercussion of television in politics is the amount of power it gives the media. Thanks to editors, only a few minutes might be shown of a debate lasting over an ~~over~~ hour, so the network can make one candidate look like a hero, and the other a fool, if they so choose. When one considers this, it is evident that t.v. has done nothing to bring straightforwardness and honesty back into politics. There have even been times when the media's portrayal of certain events have

influenced the presidential administration, as in the case of Walter Cronkite declaring the Vietnam war hopeless. It is a frightening prospect to think about how much pull news anchors have in the ultimate fate of our country.

Television will continue to be a part of presidential elections in America, no matter what we think about its role. We can only hope that there will be a return to the issues, and that the beauty-payant aspects of presidential debates will somehow be minimized.

AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SCORING COMMENTARY FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY

Sample: II

Score: 8

This essay effectively takes a position on the impact of television on the presidential elections and effectively synthesizes at least three sources to support this position. On the top of the second page, for instance, the writer notes how “the number of homes watching presidential debates sky-rocketed from 28.1 million in 1960 to 45.8 million in 1980 (Source D).” Through this citation the writer shows the ability to extrapolate from data on a chart to support a position and, further, shows the understanding that this information must be cited. In the same paragraph, the writer continues by using direct citation of Source A, positing, “While this ‘early promise’ (Source A) of television does easily align itself with democratic ideals, another important ideal, that of the people’s free choice whether or whether not to participate, has shown televisions [*sic*] less ‘promise’-ing aspects.” In each instance, the writer synthesizes—that is, combines the sources with the writer’s opinion to form a cohesive, supported argument—rather than just paraphrasing or quoting the sources. Each reference is clearly attributed. The language and development of the essay, though not without occasional error, are effective, and the writer’s position is supported with well-chosen examples (some of which are drawn from the writer’s own experience rather than the sources, which is perfectly acceptable). Overall, this essay is an effective response to the prompt.

Sample: S

Score: 7

This essay adequately responds to the topic but is characterized by fuller development than an essay that earns a score of 6. The writer develops a position on the effects of television on politics and synthesizes and cites three sources to support this opinion. The voice and development of the essay are more than just adequate, raising the essay from a score of 6 to that of 7, but the language and development are not effective enough to merit a score of 8. While most sources mentioned are cited, the first mention of Bill Clinton “discussing his underwear in a political campaign” is not cited, and so this is not an example of effective synthesis. Since papers are read as first drafts and rewarded for what they do well, this error is viewed in relation to the paper as a whole, in which the writer clearly demonstrates the ability to cite and synthesize source materials. The paper earned a score of 7 because it contains enough evidence of more-than-adequate synthesis (which includes correct citation), combined with a clear control of language.

Sample: F

Score: 6

This adequate essay synthesizes five sources in support of the qualified position that television has been good for presidential elections. Essays will be neither penalized nor rewarded for using more than three sources. This essay is scored a 6 because the thesis is adequately developed and the synthesized sources support this thesis. The writer’s use of historical examples in the introduction is appropriate and convincing. Although the essay maintains its focus, it does have some abrupt transitions. One example is the transition from the broad topic of television and the presidency to the narrow argument in the second paragraph that “Media program editors and producers can edit broadcasts to fit thier [*sic*] personal preference.” The third paragraph corrects for this error somewhat, with a transition that clearly shows how

**AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SCORING COMMENTARY FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY**

(continued)

the writer is connecting the larger thesis to the narrower discussion of data gleaned from the chart in Source D. The discussion of Source E, while not wrong, is somewhat simplified by the writer's conclusion that news reporting "will make for a better president in general, because candidates will know that they should tell the whole truth all the time." These occasional clunky transitions and slight oversimplifications, however, do not detract from the overall adequacy of the sample. Because the essay never falls into unevenness or wanders from its topic, it is judged as adequate and scored a 6.

**Sample: BB
Score: 5**

The marker of a 5 essay is often its unevenness, a quality that distinguishes this sample. While the writer takes a position on the effects of television on presidential elections and uses three sources to support this position, the quality of the argument is uneven. On the top of page two, for example, the writer points out that in the aftermath of 9/11, "America was glued to its TV. By watching and listening, Americans from coast to coast felt involved in the tragedy. The same goes for politics; TV allows citizens to be involved and have a sense of 'direct contact.' (Campbell)." While Americans were likely "glued" to more than one "TV," the citation clearly supports the writer's position. A few sentences later, however, the writer states, "Personally as an American citizen, I like feeling as if I really know my president, not just as a formal relationship but rather more as a friend. TV is the way for Americans to reach that sense of comfort with their candidate [*sic*]. (Hart)." In this instance the writer oversimplifies the Hart source so much that the assertion is almost a misreading of Hart's much more complex argument. This wavering between valid and quasi-valid synthesis of sources in support of an argument kept this essay from earning a higher score; according to the scoring guidelines, "Essays earning a score of 5 ... support their position by synthesizing and citing at least three sources, but their arguments and their use of cited sources are somewhat limited, inconsistent, or uneven."

**Sample: G
Score: 4**

This essay is an inadequate response to the topic. The writer does attempt to develop the position that television has had a negative impact on presidential elections but oversimplifies both the argument and the three sources used to support it. While the sources are cited and are not simply paraphrased, the essay spends much of its time reporting on the sources rather than conceptualizing or interacting with them. When the essay does attempt to speculate based on information in the sources, the results are still problematic; the discussion of Source B ends with the logic that "By humiliating himself he [Clinton] feels [*sic*] closer to the public, which will help boost his image." While not completely wrong, this is a gross oversimplification of the issue. Transitions between paragraphs are abrupt and seem to occur when the writer moves on to discuss a new source rather than being controlled by movements in the writer's own argument. In this way, as the scoring guidelines for essays state, "The link between the argument and the sources is weak."

**AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
SCORING COMMENTARY FOR THE SYNTHESIS ESSAY**

(continued)

Sample: HH

Score: 3

This sample earned a 3 because it met the descriptors of a 4 essay but was less insightful and well written than a 4 essay. As the scoring guidelines state, essays scored a 3 demonstrate “less understanding of the sources, less success in developing their own position, or less control of writing” than 4 essays. The writer inadequately takes a position on the impact of television on presidential elections and shows an inadequate understanding of the task by writing an essay that in part becomes a comparison/contrast of radio and television. While the writer does finally conclude that television has a negative impact on elections, this position is neither clear nor fully supported. The essay cites two sources and attempts to use them to support the thesis, but the connection between the sources and the argument is weak. The essay cites Source B about Bill Clinton in an attempt to link this source to an argument against the influence of television on presidential elections; the paragraph, however, concludes “For these reasons, radio is a much better medium in the world of politics.” This statement is oversimplified and does not take into account how radio targets niche audiences just as television does. The final paragraph mentions information gleaned from the graph without attributing this source, which is a flaw in a synthesis essay. The essay has numerous language problems and is not well developed, but it does attempt to synthesize two sources to support a position. The essay finally fits the descriptors for a 4 essay but demonstrates less success, earning it the score of 3.

Sample: X

Score: 2

This essay is, in many ways, insightful and well written enough to earn a score in the upper half of the range. This paper does not, however, synthesize any sources. Synthesis, as defined in the prompt, requires documentation of the sources cited. Instead, this paper is characterized by the description of the score of 2 from the scoring guide; it “merely allude[s] to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves.” Alluding to or using knowledge taken from another source without acknowledging that source is plagiarism. Essays that do not acknowledge the sources that they use (directly, by naming the source in parentheses, or indirectly, by markers such as “As the graph [or photo, or article, etc.] shows”) will not be credited with having synthesized any sources. Had this paper directly or indirectly acknowledged the source of each reference, it could have earned a higher score.



AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION
COMMENTS FROM THE CHIEF READER ABOUT THE SAMPLE SYNTHESIS ESSAYS

**General Characteristics of High-, Middle-, and Low-scoring
Responses to the TV Debates Prompt**

High-scoring essays

These essays generally begin by contextualizing the issue at hand for readers, explaining to them briefly why educated, informed citizens ought to read on. Generally, the thesis in a high-scoring essay does justice to the complexity of the issue being considered while foregrounding the writer's position. In addition, these essays provide an extended consideration of the sources that they reference—they go beyond merely citing sources to assaying their significance to the thesis being developed and forging connections between the writer's position and that of the author of the source. Writers of the top essays enter into conversations with the sources that they choose rather than being overwhelmed by them. These essays attribute information gained from sources rather than simply appropriating this information. Finally, these best essays provide conclusions that do not merely summarize but address the “so what?” issue: How should educated, informed citizens continue to think about the issue at hand? How will it continue to influence the readers' lives?

Middle-scoring essays

These essays generally provide a relatively brief contextualizing statement that helps readers understand why they should engage with the issue at hand. They often present a strong thesis, but it is generally rather bald and straightforward and does not do much to accommodate the complexity of the issue. The writers quote source material and comment on it briefly in order to connect it to their thesis; they forge links between their own positions and those represented by the sources, but the links are often either very literal or strained. The conclusions tend to be a bit repetitive, often returning to language very similar to the thesis.

Low-scoring essays

These essays often seem overwhelmed by the sources. Rather than entering into conversation with other writers, these essays are dominated by them; they tend to leap directly into summarizing or describing the source material rather than contextualizing the issue at hand. The writers either have no recognizable thesis or a weak one that tends to become lost in their consideration of the sources. The essays generally either make rather slight reference to the sources and comment on them only obliquely or paraphrase the sources with little analysis. The sources are not always cited, making real synthesis (which requires acknowledging the ownership of ideas being examined) impossible. Occasionally the essays suggest that the writer misunderstands the sources; sometimes these essays incorporate large, directly-quoted excerpts from the sources with little or no commentary or explanation.

Nielsen Television Ratings for Each of the Presidential Debates from 1960 through 2000

Courtesy of Nielsen Media Research

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Year	Networks	Candidates	Date	Total Rating	Total Homes (millions)	Total Persons (millions)
1960	ABC, CBS, NBC	Kennedy-Nixon	Sept. 26	59.5	28.1	N/A
			Oct. 7	59.1	27.9	N/A
			Oct. 13	61.0	28.8	N/A
			Oct. 21	57.8	27.3	N/A
1964						
1968						
1972						
NO DEBATES						
1976	ABC, CBS, NBC	Carter-Ford	Sept.23	53.5	38.0	69.7
			Oct.6	52.4	37.3	63.9
			Oct. 22	47.8	34.0	62.7
1980	ABC, CBS, NBC	Reagan- Carter- Anderson	Oct.28	58.9	45.8	80.6
1984	ABC, CBS, NBC	Reagan- Mondale	Oct. 7	45.3	38.5	65.1
			Oct.21	46.0	39.1	67.3
1988	ABC, CBS, NBC	Bush-Dukakis	Sept. 25	36.8	33.3	65.1
			Oct. 13	35.9	32.5	67.3
1992	ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN	Clinton-Bush- Perot	Oct. 11*	38.3	35.7	62.4
			Oct.15	46.3	43.1	69.9
			Oct. 19	45.2	42.1	66.9
1996	ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX	Clinton-Dole	Oct. 6	31.6	30.6	46.1
			Oct. 16**	26.1	25.3	36.3
2000	ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, CNN, MSNBC, FOXNC	Bush-Gore	Oct. 3	31.7	32.4	46.6
			Oct.11	26.8	27.4	37.5
			Oct. 17	25.9	26.3	37.7

Source: *Nielsen Tunes into Politics 1992.*

* Does not include CBS. ** Does not include FOX

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[ALSO: Menand on "The Unpolitical Animal—how political science understands voters."](#)

MASTERS OF THE MATRIX

by LOUIS MENAND

Kennedy, Nixon, and the Culture of the Image

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It was TV more than anything else that turned the tide," John F. Kennedy said on November 12, 1960, four days after his election to the presidency. He was referring to the four televised debates between him and Richard Nixon, broadcast earlier that fall. Television debates are now nearly an official rite of passage in a politician's progress to the presidency. Holding a presidential election today without a television debate would seem almost undemocratic, as though voters were being cheated by the omission of some relevant test, some necessary submission to mass scrutiny.

That's not what many people thought at the time of the first debates. Theodore H. White, who subscribed fully to Kennedy's view that the debates had made the difference in the election, complained, in "The Making of the President 1960," that television had dumbed down the issues by forcing the candidates to respond to questions instantaneously. "Neither man could pause to indulge in the slow reflection and rumination, the slow questioning of alternatives before decision, that is the inner quality of leadership," White said. He also believed that Kennedy's "victory" in the debates was largely a triumph of image over content. People who listened to the debates on the radio, White pointed out, scored it a draw; people who watched it thought that, except in the third debate, Kennedy had crushed Nixon. (This little statistic has been repeated many times as proof of the distorting effects of television. Why not the distorting effects of radio? It also may be that people whose medium of choice or opportunity in 1960 was radio tended to fit a Nixon rather than a Kennedy demographic.) White thought that Kennedy benefitted because his image on television was "crisp"; Nixon's—light-colored suit, wrong makeup, bad posture—was "fuzzed." "In 1960 television had won the nation away from sound to images," he concluded, "and that was that."

Daniel Boorstin, the University of Chicago historian, who was later the Librarian of Congress, agreed, except that he didn't date the triumph of the image from 1960; he dated it from the start of what he called "the Graphic Revolution," back in the nineteenth century. Boorstin's "The Image," published in 1961, the same year as White's book on the Kennedy-Nixon race, is the work in which Boorstin introduced his (well-known) definition of a celebrity as a person well known for being well known. His argument was that the rise of mechanical means of communication and reproduction—the telegraph, photography, the high-speed printing press, radio, television—and the subsequent emergence of media "sciences," such as advertising and public relations, had produced a culture of what he called "pseudo-events," events that are neither real nor illusory, neither genuine nor fake, like, he said, the Kennedy-Nixon debates. The debates were manufactured spectacles designed to

generate material for further manufactured spectacles, such as postmortem commentary supplied by the employees of the news organizations that had produced the things in the first place. But the consequences of all this contrivance were real enough. “Pseudo-events . . . lead to emphasis on pseudo-qualifications,” Boorstin maintained. “If we test Presidential candidates by their talents on TV quiz performances, we will, of course, choose presidents for precisely these qualities. In a democracy, reality tends to conform to the pseudo-event. Nature imitates art.”

The maverick economist Kenneth Boulding had published a book called “The Image” in 1956, but Boulding was mostly interested in the fact that people’s behavior is often based on pictures they hold of the world that may have little empirical basis but that serve as “reality.” Boulding thought that this raised intriguing epistemological issues. Though Boorstin found the epistemology of the image intriguing, too, his book was a jeremiad. Visual images were central to the culture that Boorstin was attacking, but by the term “image” he meant something all-encompassing, something like a substitute reality. Today, his book, prose style aside, reads, rather remarkably, like the work of a postmodern theorist. A lot of what French writers such as Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard later wrote about the “society of the spectacle” and the “simulacrum” Boorstin had already said.

Boorstin thought that the image had taken over not because of anything to do with the nature of capitalism (a word that, amazingly, does not appear in his book) but because Americans couldn’t face ordinary life, in which the excellent and the extraordinary are rare, and most things are difficult, imperfect, disappointing, or boring. Americans needed their experience to be constantly sweetened, like chewing gum, and a whole industry had grown up to provide this artificially enhanced reality. Boorstin thought that this pseudo-world had become, Matrix-like, so nearly complete that it controlled even its controllers.

“Our national politics has become a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals,” Boorstin concluded. “An effective president must be every year more concerned with projecting images of himself.” In 1961, this observation seemed alarming or alarmist. Today, no wisdom is more conventional. Reflection on the manufactured quality of the event is a required element in the analysis of manufactured events. Journalists whose business is made possible by the contrivance of political spectacles masquerading as news—the photo op, the press conference, the television debate—feel obliged to point out, ruefully (or conveying an image of ruefulness), how much campaign energy is put into contriving political spectacles. The value of an image in politics is like the value of a stock in the market: it already reflects a discount against the future charge of dissimulation. This is the epistemological challenge that Boorstin and Boulding were talking about. A manufactured event is somehow true and not true. John Kerry on the motorcycle, George Bush on the flight deck: the knowledge that these perfectly real things are also “images” whose “reality” should be regarded with skepticism is part of their content. Everyone knows that “it’s just an image.” But what, exactly, does that mean?

Among the subjects of most enduring fascination for students of political image-making are the principals in the campaign that, for many people, started it all, Kennedy and Nixon themselves. Forty years after Dallas and thirty years after the Watergate hearings, opinion about the “real” Kennedy and the “real” Nixon is as unsettled as it ever was. You can still start an argument about it. Two new, serious books are devoted to the topic. David Lubin’s “Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images” (California; \$24.95) is an art historian’s look at some of the famous photographs of John and Jackie Kennedy. David Greenberg’s “Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image” (Norton; \$26.95) is a political historian’s study of Nixon as he appeared to, and was represented by, different audiences—liberals, the New Left, the press, Nixon loyalists, and so on. Lubin’s book is mostly about images in the visual sense—photographs, movies, and paintings. Greenberg means “image” in the broader sense, as the name for any self-conscious or manufactured presentation. But their attitude toward the “culture of the image” is the same. They think that people don’t read images so much as they read *into* images—that what they make of an image is conditioned by who they are and by what they already know. Those radio listeners who thought that Nixon won the debates heard what they were trained to hear and, as we all do, what they wanted to hear.

“Shooting Kennedy” lives up to its title. Readers who find that title a distasteful pun will probably feel that many of Lubin’s interpretations—of Abraham Zapruder’s film of the assassination as a New Wave movie, for example—are inappropriate, and inappropriate in a way that, for reasons not easy to articulate, feels somehow blasphemous. But this feeling is precisely what Lubin is trying to understand. It is his point of departure: the grip that photographic images of the Kennedys exert on the American imagination must be due to something more than the individual pictures themselves. They enlist feelings of defensiveness or piety, he thinks, because they resonate with a whole “culture of images” surrounding them. The Zapruder film is, in the end, a movie. You cannot detach your experience of watching it from your prior experience of watching movies. So that if it “reads” as a kind of horror movie, in which disaster strikes from above, without warning or reason, this might be because you have also seen Alfred Hitchcock’s “The Birds.” Lubin’s chase after contexts for the Zapruder film turns up, besides “The Birds,” Hitchcock’s “North by Northwest,” Michelangelo Antonioni’s “Blow-Up,” Alain Resnais’s “Last Year at Marienbad,” Arthur Penn’s “Bonnie and Clyde,” and (somehow) Andy Warhol’s “Blow-Job.” He rates Zapruder’s twenty-six-second movie “a crucial cinematic text of the twentieth century.”

In this anthropological spirit—the spirit that treats every artifact as linked to every other artifact in the web of culture—Lubin puts pictures of the Kennedys next to Renaissance Madonnas, magazine advertisements, and television sitcoms. He has, admirably, no shame. For example, he notices that the poignant photograph of John John saluting his father’s casket was printed in *Life* across from a full-page ad for I. W. Harper’s Kentucky Bourbon featuring the image of a top-hatted Southern gentleman, in silhouette, offering a friendly salute. It’s the kind of thing only an art historian (or a Martian) would notice, but, once you see it, you start to wonder how it happened, and why no one at *Life* picked up the visual echo. The answer may be

that people file their images in separate compartments—news in one place, ads in another—and don't think to compare them. "Shooting Kennedy" is an aggressive act of decompartmentalization.

Greenberg's approach to the political image is similar. Boorstin, Greenberg says, was right to identify image-making as having been central to American politics ever since the Administration of Franklin Roosevelt; he was wrong to associate it with inauthenticity. "Fears of image-making and jeremiads against inauthenticity rest on the faulty assumption that images are distinct from reality," Greenberg says. "These aren't shadows cast upon a cavern wall but the stuff of political experience itself." Nixon, he thinks, is the key figure in understanding this development. "No postwar politician did more to educate Americans to the primacy of images in politics," he says.

As both books remind us, the striking fact is that Nixon was much more sophisticated about image manipulation than Kennedy was. Of course, the Kennedys used the media for political purposes. They were neither innocents nor purists—unlike, for example, Adlai Stevenson, who, in his acceptance speech at the 1956 Democratic National Convention, called political advertising "the ultimate indignity to the democratic process" (a phrase quoted by Greenberg). But, as Lubin's analyses make clear, the artistry in most of the famous photographs of the Kennedys was due not to the Kennedys but, largely, to the photographers. People loved to take pictures of the Kennedys; the Kennedys were beautiful, and they photographed beautifully. They didn't need to do much to stage-manage their photo ops. Nixon was neither beautiful nor photogenic. For him, image manipulation was not a supplement to political life; it was close to a basic necessity.

From the start of his career, Nixon was surrounded by people whose experience was in advertising. One might assume that he sought those people out, but he seems, in fact, to have attracted them. His earliest backer, Roy Day, who founded the Committee of 100, in 1945, which recruited Nixon to run for Congress against Jerry Voorhis, sold advertising for a Southern California newspaper. H. R. Haldeman began his career at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency; he volunteered to work for Nixon after watching the Checkers speech on television, in 1952.

Nixon's reliance on advertising expertise was eventually the subject of an exposé, Joe McGinniss's "The Selling of the President 1968"—a book presented, as the title suggests, as the underside of the stories that White was telling in his best-selling campaign histories. McGinniss quoted Boorstin extensively, and his contempt for Nixon's use of advertising was so intense that he just assumed that readers would share it. He seemed to feel that the fact that Nixon made a number of takes when recording television commercials was proof of a deep inauthenticity. Today, as Greenberg says, "The Selling of the President" seems naïve. Of course politicians produce television commercials, and of course they fix them up before they put them on the air. Television had something to do with turning Presidential campaigns into tactical image wars, but so did print-dinosaur journalists like White, who covered campaigns as though they were boxing matches, a sequence of punches and counterpunches, points and knockdowns, with a running score kept by opinion polls.

Nixon and Nixon's handlers were not dinosaurs and they were not Boorstinites. The man who wrote to Nixon in 1967 to explain how he could win the Presidency with a campaign waged mostly on television was William Gavin, who was an English teacher—which means, in 1967, that he had read Marshall McLuhan, and he cited him in his campaign memos. McLuhan had himself been an English professor; he had written important articles on topics like landscape in the poetry of Alfred Tennyson. In 1964, he published his big book, "Understanding Media," in which he took to task technological troglodytes like White and Boorstin. White had got it completely backward about the debates, McLuhan said. Nixon on television wasn't "fuzzed": he was, on the contrary, too well defined. Television dislikes definition; it favors blurriness. This is why movie stars don't travel well when they go over to television, and it is why Kennedy "won" the debates. Television is, in McLuhanite terms, a "cool" medium. Because the television image is relatively minimal, TV viewers become, paradoxically, more engaged. They are continually filling in information; so, as McLuhan explained, "anybody whose *appearance* strongly declares his role and status in life is wrong for TV." Nixon "lost," in other words, because he looked like a candidate for president. "When the person presented *looks* classifiable, as Nixon did, the TV viewer has nothing to fill in. He feels uncomfortable with his TV image. He says uneasily, 'There's something about that guy that isn't right.'" Kennedy's asset, therefore, was not his "crispness," as White imagined, but his blurriness. He "did not look like a rich man or like a politician. He could have been anything from a grocer or a professor to a football coach. He was not too precise or too ready of speech in such a way as to spoil his pleasantly tweedy blur of countenance and outline."

For Nixon and his handlers, the lesson was plain: he needed to project an image that voters could "fill in" as it suited them, and this, rather than the banal fact that Nixon campaigned using the methods of commercial advertising, is what McGinniss's book documents. By 1968, Nixon had mastered the trick of presenting himself as, if not all things to all people, enough things to enough people to win two Presidential elections. Greenberg notes that the phrase "the new Nixon" first appeared in 1953: almost from the start, Nixon was a politician who seemed perpetually to be reinventing himself. But the Nixon of the 1968 campaign, the Nixon who had on his team public-relations-savvy people like Roger Ailes and Leonard Garment, and who listened to them, is the Nixon who most deserves the epithet. This Nixon is the reason that people persist in thinking of Nixon as "complicated," and this Nixon made it possible for Greenberg to write a book on the many Nixons.

The test of Boorstin's prediction—that the image culture, and television in particular, would ruin democratic politics—is the men who have been elected to the Presidency since 1960. The question isn't whether any of them were elected because of television. White was probably right that television provided the edge for Kennedy in 1960, though in part that was because it gave him huge exposure—as many as a hundred and twenty million people watched one or more of the debates—in a race against a two-term Vice-President who was far more familiar to the electorate. The question is whether any president since 1960 would have been unelectable without television. It would be hard to make the case that one was. McLuhan's point that television prefers a soft focus may be true, but politicians had

discovered the advantages of making themselves into screens on which voters could project their own hopes and fears long before television was part of the process. Appearing on television is something national leaders are compelled, these days, to do. A candidate who fell to pieces in front of a television camera would not be elected, and would not deserve to be.

McLuhan understood that television was not simply radio with pictures, or cinema in a box, but a medium with its own effects. Still, he exaggerated the cognitive side of things, and in this he was not so different from White and Boorstin and McGinniss. He, too, bought into the notion that new media had transformed public life. He just thought that it was all for the better—that it would bring about the end of war and the birth of the “global village.”

But what makes the epistemological status of an image different from the epistemological status of a speech or an editorial? Print does not have a special relationship to reality or authenticity, and the electronic media, which McLuhan appointed himself the true prophet of, did not make people more responsible, empathetic, and engaged, either. Greenberg is surely right that images are not somehow distinct from “reality”—especially in political life, where projecting the appropriate image at the appropriate moment is part of leadership, whatever the politician says or does off camera.

This was especially the case during the Cold War; by 1960, the notion that the struggle against Communism must be waged primarily with images, the alternative being unthinkable, was well established, and is responsible for the special attention paid to the way Kennedy and Nixon “came across” as icons or as performers. But Nixon’s career did not end in failure because he manipulated his image, or because there was a discrepancy between the way he appeared in public and the “real Nixon” whose voice we hear on the White House tapes. Nixon’s problem didn’t have anything to do with his image in an electronic media culture. It had to do with the Constitution, a document that was written with a pen.