# 2000 DOC. #4: Election Campaign Commercials

## Background Information

Let the voters know who you are and what you stand for. Attack your opponent’s character and record. Show that you are the one to trust. These simple rules have often defined a winning strategy for the first 200 years of U.S. presidential election campaigns. In the political campaign ad wars of the 20th century, negative campaigning has become a primary tactic because it has been proven to work, especially since the advent of television as the primary medium influencing voters. President Lyndon Johnson successfully portrayed Republican challenger Barry Goldwater as a dangerous extremist in his 1964 campaign TV commercials (1964 doc. #2), and Goldwater lost by a landslide. Vice President George H. W. Bush attacked Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis morosely in his 1988 campaign commercials and was able to come from behind in the polls to win the presidency (1988 docs. #2 and #4).

The following documents are three political campaign TV commercials from the 2000 presidential campaign, one each supporting Bush, Gore, and Green Party candidate Ralph Nader. Pay close attention to both the style and the message of each commercial.

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## 2000 DOC. #4a

Bush “Dangerous World” TV Commercial

**Video Clip**
30 sec.

**FOR DOC. #4a:**

**Commercial Script:**

**BUSH “DANGEROUS WORLD” TV COMMERCIAL:**

POLITICAL AD PAID FOR BY BUSH FOR PRESIDENT, INC.

Bush (VO) | Today we live in a world of terror, madmen, and missiles.

GOVERNOR GEORGE W. BUSH

(Continued on next page)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suggested Answer</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the primary message of this commercial?</td>
<td>The Bush commercial communicates that the world is a scary place but that he will make the U.S. safer through military strength.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What words does Bush use to communicate this message?</td>
<td>Bush communicates fear through words such as “terror, madmen and missiles,” “dangerous world still requires a sharpened sword,” and “blackmail.” He communicates strength via the phrases, “I will rebuild our military,” “missile defense,” “touch of iron.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>What images does the Bush commercial use to communicate that message?</td>
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> Ask some students to focus on the spoken words, others on the images, and others on the audio track.

> Play the video clip, 2000 doc. #4a.
The commercial opens with the image of a little girl inside a desolate, fenced-in, and windswept compound. This fearful image is followed by quick shots of missiles, night bombings, and a “Caution” sign. The tension is added with images of the little girl disappearing, a rock falling, and a safety cone tipped over. Bush’s confident expression and the soldier’s hand reaching out to the smiling girl communicates a hopeful image of strength.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER**

Bush (VO) | Our military is challenged by aging weapons and low morale. Because a dangerous world still requires a sharpened sword, I will rebuild our military.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER**

To strengthen military and restore morale.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER**

Bush (VO) | I will move quickly to defend our country and allies against blackmail by building missile defense systems.

**WWW.GEORGEWBUSH.COM**

**SUGGESTED ANSWER**

Bush (VO) | As president, I will have a foreign policy with a touch of iron, driven by American interests and American values.

**SUGGESTED ANSWER**

Gore “Happy Thanksgiving” TV Commercial

**Video Clip**

30 sec.

commercial has no voice over