

# TRANSCRIPT

The First Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debate: September 26, 1960

Part 1:

MR. FLEMING: Senator, the Vice President in his campaign has said that you were naive and at times immature. He has raised the question of leadership. On this issue, why do you think people should vote for you rather than the Vice President?

MR. KENNEDY: Well, the Vice President and I came to the Congress together 1946; we both served in the Labor Committee. I've been there now for fourteen years, the same period of time that he has, so that our experience in uh - government is comparable. Secondly, I think the question is uh - what are the programs that we advocate, what is the party record that we lead? I come out of the Democratic party, which in this century has produced Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, and which supported and sustained these programs which I've discussed tonight. Mr. Nixon comes out of the Republican party. He was nominated by it. And it is a fact that through most of these last twenty-five years the Republican leadership has opposed federal aid for education, medical care for the aged, development of the Tennessee Valley, development of our natural resources. I think Mr. Nixon is an effective leader of his party. I hope he would grant me the same. The question before us is: which point of view and which party do we want to lead the United States?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Nixon, would you like to comment on that statement?

Mr. NIXON: I have no comment.

Part 2:

MR. NIXON: I of course disagree with Senator Kennedy insofar as his suggestions as to what should be done uh - with re- on the farm program. He has made the suggestion that what we need is to move in the direction of more government controls, a suggestion that would also mean raising prices uh - that the consumers pay for products and im- and imposing upon the farmers uh - controls on acreage even far more than they have today. I think this is the wrong direction. I don't think this has worked in the past; I do not think it will work in the future. The program that I have advocated is one which departs from the present program that we have in this respect. It recognizes that the government has a responsibility to get the farmer out of the trouble he presently is in because the government got him into it. And that's the fundamental reason why we can't let the farmer go by himself at the present time.

Questions:

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1. Based on Part 1, what was Kennedy's reasoning for voting for him rather than Nixon?

Based on Kennedy's answer would you have voted for him? Explain

2. After Kennedy's response, why do you think Nixon said "I have no comment."?
  3. What was Nixon's overall message in Part 2?
  4. If you only saw these pieces of the debate, who would you say won the debate? Why?
  5. Based on the above examples, what can a voter learn about during a debate?
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