



## AP Government & Politics: United States 1999 Sample Student Responses

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In the 1990's, presidential campaigns have focused more on the candidates themselves than on the issues they favor and the political parties they represent. This is due to the media's focus on a candidate's background and experience, as well as a ~~focus~~ focus on the candidate's personal features and appearance. In addition, candidates have used the media for ~~complete~~ advertising, as well as simply to get attention in order to focus the campaigns on themselves rather than their issues.

The media is always after a good story to attract viewers. They would prefer not to bore people with nitty-gritty sort of details about a campaign, but would rather like to get a nice ~~background~~ story on where a candidate has been and what he's done in the past. This includes great accomplishments, but also includes juicy scandals that the media just love to exploit. Therefore a candidate's background is more likely to make for a good story, and attract more viewers, than his actual campaign issues. Also, with more and more televised debates and public events, the ~~media and the~~ ~~media~~ <sup>people are</sup> <sup>more</sup> <sup>inclined</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>notice</sup> ~~focus~~ a candidate's appearance. If a candidate presents himself well, if he speaks clearly, and if he looks sharp, then people are more likely to support him over a sloppy ~~and~~ candidate who drones on and on.

This focuses the campaign more on the candidates themselves than their issues.

In addition, candidates use the media in order to center their campaigns on themselves. One way to do this is through ~~negative~~ advertisements. A candidate can present himself any way he wants to in an advertisement. He would probably rather focus on his background, past experience, and family life rather than on controversial issues and petty things like party platform. Also, <sup>any good</sup> a candidate knows that people are more likely to vote for the more visible candidate; the one they see very day in the papers, or on television. Therefore, a candidate will try to attend as many public events as possible to get that visibility. Both advertising and public visibility are two ways in which candidates have managed to center their campaigns on themselves rather than on issues or ideology.

Over the past decade many changes have taken place in presidential election campaigns. Campaigns were previously focused on issues and political parties. Now these campaigns have become more candidate centered. The shift from party-centered to more candidate-centered presidential election campaigns is due to ~~the way media cov~~ media coverage and candidate use of the media.

The media has altered its focus, contributing to ~~a~~ candidate-centered campaigns. One way in which the media has contributed is by focusing on each candidate's platform. Newspaper and television reports are centered around the candidate's goals and the promises made if he or she takes office. They put an emphasis on what each individual has to offer, and not just the issues or goals of the party to which he is attached. Another way the media has helped draw attention to candidates is by presenting each candidate as an individual. Differentiation between the candidate and his party allow voters to become more attached to a candidate, even if he is not a member of the voter's preferred party. The media presents these candidates by reporting on their personal lives, goals, and past political history as opposed to reporting on the actions or history of the party.

Candidate use of the media has also helped form a more candidate-centered campaign. Candidates have begun to take advantage of

the media resources provided to them. One source of coverage that has become increasingly popular is the television commercial. More and more candidates, not only presidential, have started using paid advertisements to present themselves and their platforms to the American people. These commercials are also used to show downfalls of the opposing candidate. Televised debates are another popular form of publicity that candidates use to separate themselves from their party. Each candidate in a debate can use his own platform and present his own ideas.

Through the media and other means of publicity, presidential election campaigns in the 1990s have moved away from issues and party labels and have become more candidate centered.

In the 1990's, presidential election campaigns have become more candidate centered due to the coverage of campaigns by the media.

The media focuses more on the candidate as a person other ~~than~~ than their party and beliefs. One example of this occurred in the 1992 presidential election. Third-party candidate Ross Perot ran for presidency that year. During his campaign the media did not focus on his beliefs at all. Instead they focused on the amount of his wealth. They showed the ways that he uses his own money to fund his campaign ~~other~~ instead of contributions.

Another example of this was in the 1996 election. The media mainly focused on the white-water scandal of president Clinton instead of awaring the public of his beliefs.

Candidates ~~the~~ themselves also use the media to contribute to candidate centered campaigns. In 1992, President Bush used the media to portray his heroic efforts in Vietnam. Also in both the ~~92~~ 92 and the 96 elections, Bill Clinton used the media to show that he is young and energetic. He was televised many times during his routine jogging in the morning. That obviously does not focus on his beliefs and issues but focuses on ~~the~~ himself as a person.

As we see here there are two reasons

that have led to candidate centered campaigns. The first is the media's attempt to do so. And the second is the candidate's contribution to encourage the media to do so.