

# Good president nixon and the watergate recordings essay example

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## Dare

Upon reading the instructions for this assignment, I decided to listen to recordings from the beginning, middle and end of the timeline of accessible tapes. Accordingly, I chose the recordings for July 27, 1972; March 20, 1973 and April 25, 1973. I had never heard the recordings or read the transcripts prior to this assignment so it was a very interesting experience. Indeed, in actually hearing the conversation it was like going back in time. On the one hand, hearing the president speak so casually and at times offensively made me realize that despite the status of the office, the men who have held it are still human. On the other hand, because the quality of the recordings ranged from poor to passable, it was difficult to really get a sense of Nixon's vocal patterns or detect changes in pitch or inflection. In fact, without the assistance of the transcripts, I am not sure that I would have completely understood them. Moreover, as expected in a conversation between people that have known each other and worked together for a number of years, there seems to be a large amount of "oral shorthand" between Nixon and Haldeman that on a first hearing did not make much sense. This was especially true for the many names of people that were mentioned. To increase my comprehension, after a first hearing I did some research on the history of Watergate and the people involved. I then listened to the recordings for a second time. During the rehearing, it was much easier to understand what they were talking about after knowing who they were talking about. Furthermore, it was easier to follow along with the conversations without having to strictly follow the transcript. It was almost as if I was learning a second language; the more I listened to the tapes the

easier it got. I think this is important to note because from my experience in this assignment, it would seem that to properly detect anything in another person's voice, one would need to have experience listening to the voice under analysis or at least heard it more than once in a number of different settings. Without that, it would be hard, in my opinion, to know what one tone or inflection meant. I also think that detecting deception by listening to recordings (rather than face-to-face) is made more difficult in that you have to do your analysis without any of the physical clues that might tip you off to deception such as a nervous tick. In any event, below I describe my analysis of the recording that I heard.

The first recording, dated June 23, 1972, is of a conversation Nixon is having with his Chief of Staff Haldeman about the FBI's investigation of the Watergate break-in and how the White House should respond. Nixon and Haldeman agree that they should get the CIA to tell the FBI to stop their investigation because it was related to national security. Nixon clearly doesn't want the FBI discovering the true details of the break-in and making them public. His anxiousness is clearly illustrated in his repeated questioning of Haldeman about the plan. His tone is not steady but rather seems to switch between high inflection and pitch when he is cursing someone and low when he is apparently considering the repercussions if the details of the break-in were revealed.

The second recording, dated March 20, 1973, is again a conversation between Nixon and Haldeman discussing their options in response to the trial of the Watergate burglars and their request for financial support. The voice patterns of both Nixon and Haldeman suggest that they are scared,

perhaps coming to the realization that they might be in trouble. Nixon especially has a subdued almost hushed intonation. It is almost as if his mouth is speaking while his mind is somewhere else.

The last recording, dated April 25, 1973, is a telephone conversation between Nixon and Haldeman about whether or not the White House Counsel John Dean has recorded conversations of them discussing Watergate. Nixon is at once agitated and distant. His pitch rises when speaking about the possibility that Dean was recording suggesting he is angry and upset that one of his staff might have betrayed him or that no one will take Dean's word over the president's word. On the other hand, his inflection varies when discussing whether or not he still has support in the nation suggesting that he is fearful that he does not have it, almost as if he is trying to convince himself that all is good and everything will work out in the end. His tone changes again when discussing how the also have evidence that can hurt Dean and help Nixon.

## References

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