Evidence for political effects from fictional programming remains thin. In this study we offer a conservative test of the political power of fictional television dramas by evaluating whether minor differences in character portrayals and plot details affect viewers’ attitudes and policy preferences. We rely on a variation on the switching replications design in which a representative sample watched one of four versions of an episode of Special Victims’ Unit: Law and Order edited to manipulate the alleged rape victim’s sexual history and the jury verdict regarding the alleged perpetrator. We find that subtle variations in the exemplars and storyline influence viewers’ attitudes towards four issues: standards of evidence in rape cases, confidence in the justice system, and immigration policy and health care system. Our findings suggest that fictional programs need not be explicitly didactic in order to influence viewers’ political views; in fact, exemplars may be more influential when they are only incidental to the plotline.