

“These aren’t just kids practicing their
First Amendment rights. They’re living them.”

—Lata Nott, Executive Director, First Amendment Center

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Synopsis & Overview

Raise Your Voice is a 45-minute documentary that follows the student journalists at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida as they navigate their school mass shooting as both survivors and journalists. The film explores youth free speech history, connecting the Parkland students to a broader story about the power of young voices through social movements.

Characters (page 4) →

About the Film (pages 5 & 6) →

About the Filmmaker (pages 7) →

Questions to Consider (pages 8 & 9) →

This study guide offers discussion questions and activities that can be used to support student engagement and learning with the *Raise Your Voice* documentary.

Five focus areas are covered in the study guide:

First Amendment (pages 10-17) →

Journalism (pages 17-23) →

Supreme Court (pages 24-29) →

Expression & Censorship (pages 30-35) →

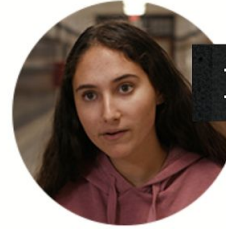
Activism (pages 36-41) →

Characters



MARY BETH TINKER

Youth free speech advocate and plaintiff in the 1969 Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*.



LENI STENIHARDT

Eagle Eye News editor-in-chief
MSD Class of 2020



MELISSA FALKOWSKI

Journalism teacher at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and newspaper advisor to Eagle Eye News.



DARA ROSEN

Eagle Eye News editor-in-chief
MSD Class of 2020



REBECCA SCHNEID

Eagle Eye News editor-in-chief
MSD Class of 2019



NEHA MADHIRA

Eagle Nation online editor-in-chief
Prosper High School Class of 2019

About the Film

by Raise Your Voice director Maribeth Romslo

On February 14, 2018, I watched news coverage of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. I was angry. I was sad.

On CNN, Anderson Cooper interviewed MSD journalism teacher Melissa Falkowski. What she said left a mark. She had kept 19 students hidden and calm for nearly 2 hours in the newspaper classroom closet until the SWAT team arrived to escort them to safety. In her interview, she said that our country is failing our kids by not keeping them safe in schools.

I watched in tears and complete agreement. We shouldn't have to worry that when we hug our kids in the morning, that they could be shot to death at school. Or at the mall. Or at a movie theater. Or at church. Or at a dance party.

Our hearts cannot continue to break like this.

In the days that followed, I was glued to the television and in awe of the MSD students who were speaking up, calling out, and demanding change.

We live in a world that systematically tells kids to sit down and be quiet. The students of Parkland weren't having it. Emma Gonzalez declared BS. #NeverAgain trended on Twitter. Four days after the shooting, March for Our Lives was announced. These were kids, and they were just getting started.

And I couldn't stop thinking about Melissa Falkowski huddled in a utility closet with 19 teenagers.

I found the MSD high school newspaper website, Eagle Eye News. I spent a solid hour on the site, reading well-reported stories about topics that are important to teens today, such as vaping and rape culture. Well before the tragedy, these kids knew how to write, and they knew how to speak up.

About the Film *(continued)*

Eighteen years ago, I lost my cousin to gun violence. My kids have lockdown drills at their public schools, and I have to talk to them about things like shootings and terrorism. I am also a filmmaker with a journalism degree, and I believe deeply in empowering young people to use their voices.

So while I live in Minnesota, halfway across the country from Parkland, this story hit close to home. I emailed Mrs. Falkowski and asked her if I could make a film featuring her students, and focusing on the power of young voices. After just a few phone calls, I met up with her and her Eagle Eye student staffers in Washington, DC to film their coverage of March for Our Lives.

On that trip, I met Mary Beth Tinker, a student free speech advocate who won a landmark Supreme Court case in 1969 which states that students and teachers do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

That chance meeting with Ms. Tinker gave more depth and history to this project. In February 2019, Ms. Tinker organized events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in Des Moines, Iowa. (Serendipity side note: my name is also Maribeth and I also grew up in Des Moines!). The anniversary events were the perfect opportunity to connect the history dots of student free speech in America.

Raise Your Voice is a story about youth leading social change with the power of their voices.



About the Filmmaker



Maribeth Romslo is a director, cinematographer, and producer who believes that stories have the power to change the world. Her award-winning films have played at festivals around the world.

She recently created an original documentary series ([Handmade*Mostly](#)) for Reese Witherspoon's new media platform, Hello Sunshine, and a conceptual dance film ([Kitchen Dance](#)) supported by a Minnesota Arts Board grant about the work of women.

Her feature film ([Dragonfly](#)) was selected for "Best of the Fest" at the 2016 Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival. [Amelia](#), the first film in her historical fiction series to inspire girls in STEM, premiered at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival Kids.

Maribeth lives in Minneapolis. She is a mom to two young voices (in second and sixth grades) and is a member of the Twin Cities chapter of [Film Fatales](#).

Questions to ask before exploring *Raise Your Voice*:

1. How did you first learn about your First Amendment rights?
2. Do you think your free speech rights apply in school? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe the role of student voices in America?
4. What do you know about censorship of student voices?
5. Why is the protection of the press important in a democracy?

Questions to consider after exploring *Raise Your Voice*:

1. What lines/images/moments stuck out to you, and why?
2. What surprised you? What do you want to know more about?
3. What emotions do you feel when watching the film?
4. How does the filmmaker connect free speech history with present day free speech in America?
5. How might student free speech be different today if the students would have lost the *Tinker v. Des Moines* Supreme Court case in 1969?
6. What First Amendment rights did the Parkland students exercise as both journalists and survivors?
7. Neha was censored for writing a critical op-ed of her school administration. What is the difference between an op-ed and a news story?

Focus on the First Amendment

Overview + Discuss + Activities

Focus on the First Amendment

Overview

Raise Your Voice explores the First Amendment rights of students in America through the stories of Mary Beth Tinker, the Parkland student journalists, and a censored student in Texas. Here are some discussion questions and activities for using *Raise Your Voice* with a focus on learning about the First Amendment.

Sections of the documentary with a First Amendment focus:

- 50th Anniversary of *Tinker v. Des Moines* (11:29-14:16)
- DC intro of students at Newseum (04:30-05:56)
- *Tinker v. Des Moines* and youth free speech in America (08:22-11:41)

“I didn’t know at the time that I was using my First Amendment rights. I had these examples of kids who were strong and brave that I had seen on the news.

I figured out that later you can do things that make a difference even while you’re scared. Even while you’re nervous. And you probably will be nervous and scared when you’re doing things you feel strongly about.”

—Mary Beth Tinker, Youth free speech advocate,
Plaintiff in the 1969 Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*



Focus on the First Amendment

Discuss

- **The First Amendment is part of the Bill of Rights. What is the Bill of Rights?**

The Bill of Rights is the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution. It spells out Americans' rights in relation to their government:

- Guaranteeing civil rights and liberties to the individual.
- Setting rules for due process of law.
- Reserving all powers not delegated to the Federal Government to the people or the States.
- Specifying that “the enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

- **The Bill of Rights was ratified 10 years after the Constitution. Why do you think the Bill of Rights (and First Amendment) was not just included in the Constitution?**

Federalists argued that the Constitution did not need a bill of rights, because the people and the states kept any powers not given to the federal government.

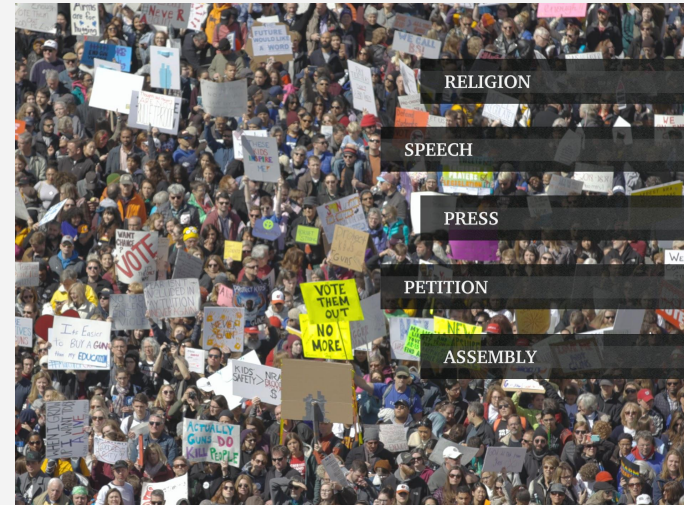
Anti-Federalists held that a bill of rights was necessary to safeguard individual liberty.



Focus on the First Amendment

Discuss

- Referring to the text of the First Amendment, answer the following questions:
 - What are the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment?
 - In what ways can you see the five freedoms working in your school? How are they failing?
 - How has the interpretation of the five freedoms changed over time? Who is responsible for creating those changes?

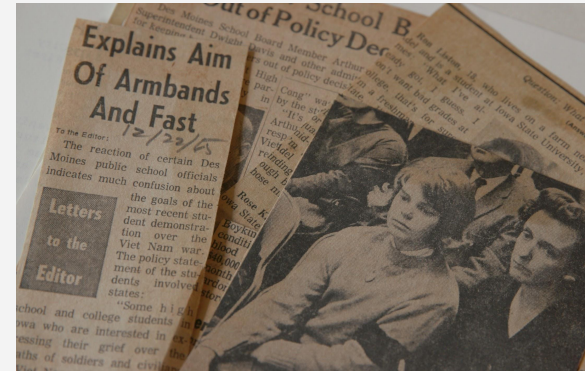




Focus on the First Amendment

Activities

- **Identify First Amendment rights in news stories:**
 - Supplies needed: Newspapers (digital/online or print/paper publications)
 - Choose a newspaper and find five different articles that illustrate each of the five freedoms of the First Amendment.
 - Summarize each article.
 - State why the story is evidence of each of the freedoms.
- **First Amendment collage activity:**
 - Supplies needed: Magazines, newspapers, scissors, glue.
 - Look for imagery in magazines and newspapers that represents the five freedoms provided by the First Amendment.
 - Cut out the imagery and make a collage about the First Amendment.
 - Present your collage to a small group and explain why you chose the imagery in your collage.





Focus on the First Amendment

Activities

- **First Amendment survey:**
 - Discuss the value of surveying knowledge of a topic in the community and best practices for creating and conducting an insightful and unbiased survey.
 - Divide up into teams of two students. Each team will develop a survey of five questions to provide insight into your school community's understanding of First Amendment rights.
 - Once each team has drafted and agreed to five questions, pair the team up with another team to review questions and provide feedback. Teams should reconvene after the feedback, discuss their pretesting findings, revise the questions as necessary and desired. Analyze and present the results of your survey.
- **Primary source analysis:**
 - Read an article of your choice in the [Tinker 50th anniversary special issue of Eagle Eye News](#).
 - Summarize and discuss the article with another classmate during class time.



Focus on Journalism

Overview + Discuss + Activities

Focus on Journalism

Overview

Raise Your Voice follows the Parkland student journalists as they cover the tragedy at their school as both survivors and journalists. The documentary also examines student censorship through Neha Madhira's story.

Here are some discussion questions and activities for using *Raise Your Voice* with a focus on learning about journalism.

Sections of the documentary with a journalism focus:

- Opening scene/closet (00:00-03:37)
- Mary Beth Tinker on journalists and Vietnam war (17:54 -20:07)
- Student journalists doing important work (25:58-28:23)
- Pulitzer scene (30:55-32:56)

“Every story we write is to inform the student body of our high school. So if we can’t report news, whether it’s good or bad, that’s happening at our school and voice our opinions on things that need to be talked about, then the student body is going to be left in the dark and so will community members.”

—Neha Madhira, *Eagle Nation Online* editor-in-chief
Prosper Douglas High School, Class of 2019



Focus on Journalism

Discuss

- What are the different types of journalism? What is the difference between news stories, feature stories, opinion articles, and activist journalism?
- Examine how news stories are often written in an inverted pyramid style:
 - Lede: The opening of a story, usually a summary of the most important information.
 - Most newsworthy information first: who, what, why, where, when, and how.
 - As the article continues, the less important details are presented.
- What are standard ethical practices of a journalist? Discuss the standards of honesty, independence/objectivity, fairness, diligence, and accountability that are part the work of a journalist.



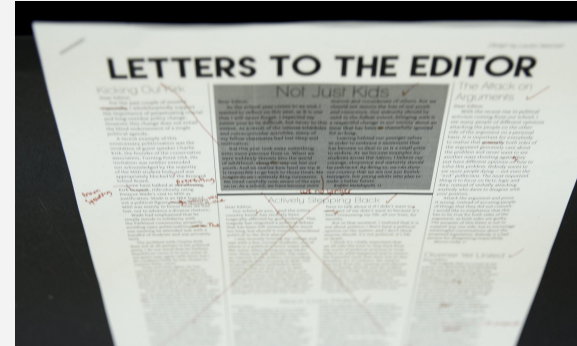


Focus on Journalism

Activities

- **Primary source analysis:**
 - Choose [a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist](#) and read one of their articles.
 - Pair up with another student and discuss your articles:
 - Summarize the article
 - Identify the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story
 - What type of story is the article (news, feature, opinion, investigative, etc.)

- **Evaluate bias and objectivity in news:**
 - Supplies needed: Newspapers (digital/online or print/paper publications)
 - Choose an article to read. Write down the ways you think the writer is being objective and the ways you think the writer might be biased.
 - Discuss your impressions on the writer's objectivity or bias with a partner.
 - Play the [Factitious online quiz game](#) to determine your ability to spot fake or misleading news stories.





Focus on Journalism

Activities

- **Be a journalist:**
 - Go out into the community and find stories related to any of the five freedoms of the First Amendment. Interview sources ranging from your city's mayor to your school's principal to a fellow student.
 - There are several journalistic styles in which stories can be written: news, feature, opinion, etc.
 - Keep the who, what, when, where, why and how in mind for news stories and include the most important information at the beginning of the story (inverted-pyramid style).
 - Feature stories can be written in a narrative style and focus more on the human angle of the story.
 - Opinion articles should back up all assertions with facts.





Focus on Journalism

Activities

- **Create news photographs:**
 - With a camera or a phone, take photos that tell a story in your school community.
 - Write a caption that supports the photograph. Caption writing tips from The Poynter Institute:
 - Check the facts. Be accurate with credit lines, details and anything else that might catch a reader's eye.
 - Captions should add new information and context to the image. Don't merely repeat the story headline or summary, and avoid stating the obvious elements that are captured in the image.
 - Always identify the main people in the photograph.
 - A photograph captures a moment in time. Whenever possible, use present tense. This creates a sense of immediacy and impact.
 - Conversational language works best. Write the caption as though you are talking to a family member or friend.
 - The tone of the caption should match the tone of the image. Don't try to be humorous when the photo is not.



Focus on the Supreme Court

Overview + Discuss + Activities

Focus on The Supreme Court

Overview


One of the stories in *Raise Your Voice* is a landmark Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, that establishes student rights to free speech in America.

Here are some discussion questions and activities for using *Raise Your Voice* with a focus on learning about the Supreme Court of the United States.

Sections of the documentary with a Supreme Court focus:

- Tinker setup and precedent (08:23-11:40)
- How the court has dealt with cases involving young people (13:48-17:54)





“The importance of Tinker is that it’s the first time the Supreme Court said students have free speech rights too. The First Amendment isn’t just for adults, it also applies to students.”

—Lata Nott, Executive Director, First Amendment Center





Focus on The Supreme Court

Discuss

- What was the chain of events that led to the *Tinker v. Des Moines* ruling by the Supreme Court?
- How does the Supreme Court work/operate? What is the process for a case to be tried in front of the Supreme Court?
- Who currently sits on the Supreme Court and how do you think they would rule on *Tinker v. Des Moines* if it were tried today?
- What is precedent and why do courts think it is so important?





Focus on The Supreme Court

Activities

- **Oral argument listening exercise:**
 - Listen to the first 10 minutes of [the Supreme Court oral argument](#) of *Tinker v. Des Moines* where the Tinker lawyer, Dan Johnston, presents his case to the justices.
 - Write down five observations from listening to the oral argument.
- **Primary source analysis:**
 - Read the opening and section I of the [Tinker v. Des Moines Supreme Court opinion](#), delivered by Justice Abe Fortas.
 - From reading the text, write a summary of why you think the majority of the court ruled in favor of the students?
 - In small groups discuss your summaries. Also discuss why do you think the two dissenting judges did not rule in favor of the students?





Focus on The Supreme Court

Activities

- **Study and argue the cases that challenge the Tinker standard:**
 - Examine the three cases that challenge Tinker. Unlike Tinker, the students lost in these Supreme Court cases.
 - [Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier](#)
 - [Morse v. Frederick](#)
 - [Bethel v. Fraser](#)
 - Summarize each case.
 - Pair off and choose one of the three cases. In each pair, decide who is the plaintiff and who is the defendant.
 - Write and deliver an opening argument for each side.



Focus on Expression & Censorship

Overview + Discuss + Activities

Focus on Expression & Censorship


Overview

Free expression can be a powerful tool for communication, activism, and healing trauma. *Raise Your Voice* explores the power of youth expression as well as what happens when young people are censored.

Here are some discussion questions and activities for using *Raise Your Voice* with a focus on student expression and censorship.

Sections of the documentary with an expression/censorship focus:

- Opening scene/closet (00:00-03:37)
- Memorial issue (05:56-08:22)
- Neha (23:11-25:58)
- Reporting on the anniversary of the tragedy (28:24-30:53)

The background of the image is a photograph of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School building. The building is a modern, multi-story structure with a white facade and a dark horizontal band near the top. The name "MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS" is written in large, red, three-dimensional letters along the top edge of the building. The sky is a pale, overcast blue. In the foreground, there are out-of-focus green leaves and branches, suggesting a tree or bush. A dark, semi-transparent horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the quote and attribution text.

“I was angry about feeling helpless and angry about what had happened. So the result was using my voice and all of us using our voices.”

— Rebecca Schneid, *Eagle Eye News* editor-in-chief
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Class of 2019



Focus on Expression & Censorship

Discuss

- What is censorship?
- What emotions did the Parkland students express in the film about reporting on the tragedy that happened in their school?
- How was Neha's experience as a student journalist different from the Parkland student journalists?
- When do you think schools have the authority to censor students? And when do you think they go too far?
- How would you compare how students express themselves today versus how students expressed themselves 50 years ago (when Mary Beth Tinker wore the black armband to school)?





Focus on Expression & Censorship

Activities

- **Hold a reading of banned children's books:**
 - Research children's books that have been previously banned in libraries in your community and across the country.
 - Discuss with another classmate the reasons why these books were banned.
 - Host a reading of excerpts from these banned books.
 - Find out what books are currently banned at your library. Ask your school administrator why they are banned.
- **Poetry exercise:**
 - Think about a time in your life where you felt silenced.
 - Think about a time in your life where you felt heard.
 - Write a poem (any form of a poem) about feeling silenced and/or feeling heard.





Focus on Expression & Censorship

Activities

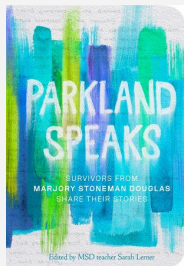
- **Primary source analysis:**

- Choose an excerpt from one of the books published by the Parkland student journalists:



- [We Say #NeverAgain:](#)

- First hand accounts and reporting by student journalists on the Parkland newspaper and television broadcast teams, edited by newspaper advisor Melissa Falkowski and Eric Garner.
- Suggested excerpts:
 - “Self Care: Managing your Trauma” by Leni Steinhardt (pages 230-233)
 - “The Events of February 14th” and “Getting To Work on the Newspaper” by Melissa Falkowski (pages 1-13)
 - “Coping with Trauma While Keeping Emotions in Check” by Rebecca Schneid (92-98)



- [Parkland Speaks:](#)

- Creative writing and poetry by Parkland students, edited by yearbook advisor Sarah Lerner.
- Suggested excerpts:
 - “Dear Senator Marco Rubio” by Leni Steinhardt
 - “A Zoo Animal” by Rebecca Schneid
- After reading your selected piece, write down three ways in which the writer gives you details about the Parkland tragedy that you didn’t already know.
- Discuss the reasons why reading primary sources are important for understanding an historical event.

Focus on Activism

Overview + Discuss + Activities

Focus on Activism

Overview

Activism is defined as “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Throughout *Raise Your Voice*, students use the power of free expression to engage in activism of many kinds and work to make change.

Here are some discussion questions and activities for using *Raise Your Voice* with a focus on activism.

Sections of the documentary with an activism focus:

- Youth activism in America (09:47-11:28)
- Parkland students and Never Again (20:23-22:00)
- Student walkouts (22:01-23:11)
- What is in your Blueprint? (32:57-35:47)

“We went through something traumatic and this is us trying to make a change because of it.”

—Dara Rosen, *Eagle Eye News* editor-in-chief
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Class of 2020



Focus on Activism

Discuss

- In addition to the Parkland student journalists and Mary Beth Tinker, who were the other youth in the film that used their First Amendment rights and how did they use them?
- What is the role of youth as activists in movements? Why are youth effective? What limitations do they have in their activism?
- Do you think journalism is a form of activism? Why or why not?
- What issues are you passionate about that you engage in (or would consider engaging in) activism about?





Focus on Activism

Activities

- **Learn about youth activists:**
 - Research more about one of these young people advocating for their rights:
 - Birmingham Children's Crusade
 - Ruby Bridges
 - Katz's Deli Lunch Counters & The Greensboro Sit-ins
 - The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
 - Greta Thunberg
 - March For Our Lives
 - Neha Madhira
 - Write a summary of how that young person used their First Amendment Rights. Did they face any challenges or criticism for doing so?
- **Petition your local leaders:**
 - Journal about issues in your community that you feel need to change
 - Research who the congressperson or representative is in your district.
 - Write a letter to your local leader about an issue you believe in, using your First Amendment right to petition your leaders.





Focus on Activism

Activities

- **Youth activist portrait:**
 - Research youth activists from history and present day.
 - Draw a portrait of a young activist from history or today that inspires you.

- **Primary source analysis:**
 - Read the [Eagle Eye's editorial board "Manifesto"](#) from their issue after the shooting (pages 28-29)
 - Discuss the role of an editorial board at a publication.
 - Why do you think the editorial board decided to publish the Manifesto?
 - Choose one of the points in the Manifesto and write a counter argument to the point





RaiseYourVoiceDocumentary.com

RAISE YOUR VOICE

a film by MARIBETH ROMSLO

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available through

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