***Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1988)**

**Issue:** Student Journalism and the First Amendment

**Bottom Line:** Schools Can Censor Student Newspapers

**Background**

Cathy Kuhlmeier, Leslie Smart, and Leanne Tippett, juniors at Hazelwood East High School in St. Louis, Missouri, helped write and edit the school paper, the Spectrum, as part of a journalism class. An issue of the paper was to include articles about the impact of divorce on students and teen pregnancy. The school's principal refused to publish the two stories, saying they were too sensitive for younger students and contained too many personal details. The girls went to court claiming their First Amendment right to freedom of expression had been violated.

**Ruling**

The Supreme Court ruled against the girls. A school newspaper isn't a public forum in which anyone can voice an opinion, the Court said, but rather a supervised learning experience for students interested in journalism. "Educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech in school-sponsored expressive activities," the Court said, "so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate [educational] concerns."

**Impact**

Schools may censor newspapers and restrict other forms of student expression, including theatrical productions, yearbooks, creative writing assignments, and campaign and graduation speeches. But the Court's ruling in Hazelwood encourages schools to look closely at a student activity before imposing any restrictions and to balance the goal of maintaining high standards for student speech with students' right to free expression.

Information from: <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20080915monday.html>

**Thematic Question:** How does the topic of rights and responsibility relate to this court case?

**Notes:**