Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier / **Cartoon Analysis— Answer Key**

Source: Cartoon from *Rio Mirada,* the student newspaper of Rio Americano High School in Sacramento, CA (https://www.riomirada.com/uncategorized/2013/03/09/student-press-rights-need-defending/). Reprinted with permission.

In 2004, a financial scandal changed the lives of students attending a Roslyn High School in Roslyn Heights, New York. Students writing for the student newspaper, *The Hilltop Beacon*, investigated and produced an article that led to the exposure of the embezzlement of over 11 million dollars in funds by school officials. Those two school officials were indicted and later served lengthy prison sentences. *The New York Times* published an article about the student editors.[1] In 2020, HBO released *Bad Education,* a movie based on the events at Roslyn High School.

The cartoon above was created by students at a California high school and ran in the student newspaper. The article that accompanies it, *Student Press Rights Need Defending*, cites several attempts by administrators across the country to stop high school newspapers from exposing malfeasance (wrongdoing) by their own school districts.

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[1] Rebekah Rombom, "On Top of the News at Roslyn High," *New York Times,* June 27, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/27/nyregion/on-top-of-the-news-at-roslyn-high.html.

Observe

1. What people and objects are shown? Make a list of what you see in the cartoon including captions.
   Student answers will vary but may include a principal, a newspaper, bags of money, a door labeled "East High," a newspaper article entitled "Principal Steals Money," and a dialog balloon that says, "This article reflects poorly on our school!"

2. What is the setting?
   East High School – This was the high school in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier.*

3. Are there any objects or people that seem to be exaggerated? If so, why do you think the artist exaggerated?
   The money bags are exaggerated to show that he has a lot of money in his office. The principal's facial expressions are exaggerated to show his disapproval of the article.

Evaluate the Message

4. In your opinion, what is the cartoonist's message? What elements of the cartoon give you that impression?
   Student answers will vary but should include that the principal is dishonest. He is using the excuse that an article about him stealing money would reflect poorly on the school, when it only reflects poorly on him.

5. Do you agree with the point of view and message of the cartoonist? Why or why not?
   Student answer will vary.

Questions to Consider

6. Has the time come for state legislatures to effectively overturn the decision made in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier?*
   Student answers will vary. Some students may say that the decision should not be overturned because it has been working well – allowing most articles to be punished and keeping disruptive articles out of school newspapers. Other students may believe it is time to overturn the decision citing that principals can easily claim that articles may cause a disruption or seem to be an endorsement of principles with which the school disagrees stifling student freedom of the press.

7. What potential problems do you foresee occurring if students were given the same First Amendment protections that professional journalists enjoy?
   Student answers will vary. This question is designed to allow students to begin to explore the idea of a "slippery slope"

8. The students producing *The Hilltop Beacon* were able to get their article published in *The New York Times,* a national publication. To what extent do you believe student speech is already protected?
   Student answer will vary but might include that the students' speech can only be restricted within the school environment. They are not subject to the same censorship in a newspaper

published outside of the school and the principal's control. Within the school environment, principals should allow speech that will not disrupt the educational mission of the school.