

Think First

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Free expression  
through  
responsible  
journalism

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## Morse v. Frederick's Greatest Hits

### Overview and Rationale:

Morse v. Frederick, also known as the "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" case, could have far-reaching effects on student speech. This lesson allows students to assess the case from different perspectives, to consider ways in which it might be applied and to foster an open dialogue at school about student speech.

### Goals for Understanding:

#### Essential question:

What effect could the Morse v. Frederick ruling have on our school?

#### Critical engagement questions:

What concerns might school administrators, parents, teachers and other adults have about student speech outside school?

What can we do as a staff to promote an open, healthy environment for free speech?

### Overviews and Timeline:

#### Activity 1 (two classes or meeting periods):

Students will read the following materials about Morse v. Frederick to become acquainted with the case from various points of view.

#### The decision

<http://www.splc.org/pdf/frederickdecision.pdf>

#### "Supreme Court rules in 'Bong Hits 4 Jesus' case"

<http://www.splc.org/newsflash.asp?id=1558&year>

#### "Bong Hits No More"

<http://boardbuzz.nsba.org/archives/025134.php>  
(follow links at end of blog entry to read earlier coverage)

#### "Supreme Court Rules Against Student in 'Bong Hits 4 Jesus' Case"

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,286587,00.html>

#### "Ruling 'Bong Hits' Out of Bounds"

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1637131,00.html>

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Materials were produced for this Web site by the Journalism Education Association (<http://jeapressrights.org>) and the Center for Scholastic Journalism (<http://jmc.kent.edu/csj>).

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**“United States Supreme Court Wrap-Up 2007: One for Schools”**  
<http://www.abanet.org/yld/tyl/dec07/depth.html>

**“Early Legal Applications of the Morse Decision”**  
[http://www.splc.org/report\\_detail.asp?id=1372&edition=43](http://www.splc.org/report_detail.asp?id=1372&edition=43)

**Activity 2 (two classes or meeting periods)**

Students will discuss situations that could fall under the Morse v. Frederick umbrella, such as:

**Social networking**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/25/AR2007062501962.html?referrer=emailarticle>

**Taking medication at school**

[http://www.abajournal.com/news/en\\_banc\\_9th\\_circuit\\_strikes\\_girls\\_strip\\_search/](http://www.abajournal.com/news/en_banc_9th_circuit_strikes_girls_strip_search/)

**T-shirt messages**

<http://www.aclu.org/freespeech/youth/26631prs20060830.html>

**School dress codes**

<http://www.aclu.org/freespeech/youth/36618prs20080902.html>

**Religion**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/washington/18scotus.html?\\_r=1&ref=us&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/washington/18scotus.html?_r=1&ref=us&oref=slogin) and <http://www.clsnet.com/> (look for Morse v. Frederick link at left)

**Cyberspeech**

[http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2007/07/court\\_rules\\_against\\_student\\_su.html](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2007/07/court_rules_against_student_su.html)

**Gay rights**

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/our-work/publications/general/of-counsel-3-4-making-friends-in-high-places.html>

**Reading material**

<http://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/othergroups/ftfr/ftfrinaction/reportstocouncil/ftfrreporttocouncilac07.pdf>

**Activity 3 (one or two classes or meeting periods)**

Students will brainstorm on ways to promote students' freedom of speech both inside and outside the school. (Examples: organize a “Free Speech Day” with guest speakers; host a panel discussion with representatives from the school administration, local legal community, organizations such as the ACLU, local media and



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local college/university journalism faculty; plan a series of articles or a special section on free speech issues; work with other student organizations on a free speech event.)

Activity 4 (one or two classes or meeting periods)

Students will come up with a concrete plan to put their idea into practice.

Assessment:

Students will use the action plan to bring their idea to fruition. Grading will be based on participation in class discussions and demonstrated ability to analyze situations in a mature, logical fashion.

References:

Those cited.