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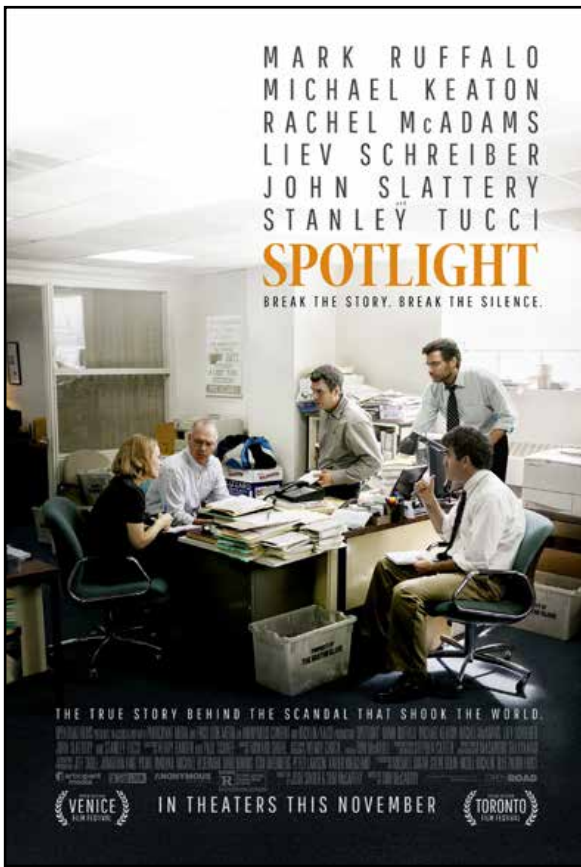
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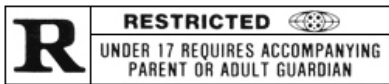
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SPOTLIGHT

BREAK THE STORY.
BREAK THE SILENCE.
128 MINUTES • 2015



Best Motion Picture of the Year and Best Writing, Original Screenplay
from the Academy Awards.

Best Original Screenplay from BAFTA Awards.

Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture
from Screen Actors Guild Awards.

Movie of the Year from AFI Awards

Best Picture, Best Director, Best Writing, Original Screenplay, Best Ensemble
Cast from Alliance of Women Film Journalists

SUMMARY

The true story of how the *Boston Globe* uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and cover-up within the local Roman Catholic archdiocese. The newspaper exposé shook the entire Archdiocese of Boston to its core.

In existence since the 1970s, Spotlight Team is the investigative reporting unit of the *Boston Globe*. The journalists can spend months on a single story.

As a rule, they are not to discuss their work with anyone else, whether it is family, friends or other staff at the newspaper. In 2001, Marty Baron, the newly hired editor-in-chief, requests Spotlight to place a current story on hold and instead flesh out a story by a fellow *Globe* columnist Eileen McNamara about allegations of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest against a minor.

The team — Walter Robinson, team editor, and investigative journalists Michael Rezendes, Sacha Pfeiffer and Matt Carroll — scrutinizes what seems to be the cover-up by Cardinal Bernard Law of the Archdiocese of Boston, but are, at first, hesitant to work on the story. The team sees Baron as an outsider to Boston. His outsider status includes not being born and raised there, and not being Catholic. In addition, he has become the *Globe's* first Jewish editor-in-chief.

Their first task is to see whether they can have some court documents on the case unsealed — a task that requires suing the Catholic Church. Robinson and his team talk to lawyers who have worked on alleged sex abuse cases perpetrated by Catholic priests in Boston, known victims and insiders in the Catholic Church. Through this investigation, they get wind that the problem is not contained to one priest and one victim. That discovery leads to a change of focus from the priest to the systemic cover-up by the bishop of the archdiocese. There had been no action to stop the problem so the assumption was that leaders condoned it.

Although the movie never mentions it, the *Boston Globe* won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in public service for the Spotlight reporting team's articles on the church sex-abuse cover-up. The prize citation read, "For its courageous, comprehensive coverage of sexual abuse by priests, an effort that pierced secrecy, stirred local, national and international reaction and produced changes in the Roman Catholic Church."

Inspired by the success of the movie "Spotlight," the *Boston Globe* and the Hollywood companies behind the film set up a \$100,000 fellowship to promote investigative journalism.

DIRECTED BY
Tom McCarthy

WRITTEN BY
Josh Singer
Tom McCarthy

STARRING
Mark Ruffalo
Michael Keaton
Rachel McAdams

SOURCE: Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com>



Michael Keaton played Walter “Robby” Robinson | Rachel McAdams, Brian d’Arcy James and Mark Ruffalo | Rachel McAdams played Sacha Pfeiffer.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

BY BRADLEY WILSON, MJE

Before watching “Spotlight,” review the following journalistic concepts with students. It might also be useful to have students visit the website of the Society of Professional Journalists (spj.org) and to review the SPJ Code of Ethics.

Investigative journalism: Investigative journalists go beyond the surface of a story. They deeply investigate a single topic. An investigative journalist may spend months or years researching and reporting. On a single story, an investigative reporter may make use of one or more, among others, of these tools:

- Legal documents, including court documents, tax records, government reports, regulatory reports and corporate financial filings.
- Databases of public records.
- Public records pertaining to technical issues, including scrutiny of government and business practices.
- Academic research into social and legal issues.
- Interviews with on-the-record sources as well as, in some instances, interviews with anonymous sources (for example, whistleblowers).
- Documents obtained by using the federal Federal Freedom of Information Act or state FOIA laws to obtain documents and data from government agencies.
- Awareness of the following protections.

First Amendment: It was adopted on Dec. 15, 1791, as one of the 10 amendments that constitute the Bill of Rights. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Deep background: According to the Associated Press, “The information can be used but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity. In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record.”

Off the record: Again according to the Associated Press, “The information cannot be used for publication.” As the Society for Professional Journalists says, “Journalists should never take information off the record without the approval of a supervisor and an understanding of the news outlet’s policy.”

DISCUSS

Actor Mark Ruffalo, who plays Mike Rezendes in the “Spotlight” film, says, “Journalism is an integral part of a free and healthy society.” What does that mean?



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING REVEALNEWS.ORG

The mission of The Center for Investigative Reporting is to engage and empower the public through investigative journalism and groundbreaking storytelling to spark action, improve lives and protect our democracy.

Reveal — the organization’s website, public radio program, podcast and social media platform — is where reporters working for the organization publish their multiplatform work.

Journalists working for the CIR reveal government fraud and waste of taxpayer funds, human rights violations, environmental degradation and threats to public safety. As the organization’s website says, “We consistently shine a bright light on injustice and protect the most vulnerable in our society.”

KEY SPOTLIGHT

- 1. What is 'Spotlight'?** A four-person investigative team that, since 1970, reports to the assistant managing editor and keeps its work confidential. **"They do the hard work."** What does that mean? They may take a couple months to find a project and can spend a year or more investigating.
- 2. What was the new editor, Marty Baron, brought in to do?** Make helpful cuts, make the paper essential to its readers at a time when the internet is cutting into the classified revenue and readership is down. Her comment: "We're going to take a hard look at things."
- 3. What role did the column that Eileen McNamara wrote play in the formation of the investigation?** It was one of many pieces of the puzzle, a short piece with no follow-up.
- 4. One challenge the reports faced was that the documents were under seal. What does that mean?** They were not available for anyone to see.
- 5. Most victims of child molestation do not come forward. Why?** They come from tough neighborhoods. Guilt. Shame. Charitable immunity statute caps damages at \$20,000. Your best shot is to try these cases in the press. Most of the victims do not want to have anything to do with TV.
- 6. What is SNAP?** Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
- 7. Who do reporters Sacha and Mike interview? What challenges did they face?** Mike interviews Patrick McSorely with his attorney Garabedian. McSorely has a 1-year-old and does not want his child to know. Sacha interviews Joe Crowley, now openly gay but he was not at the time he was a victim of the church. Both talk about how much they and their families revered the church. When a priest came over, "It was like God showing up." "I was just a little kid." "This was the first time in my life someone told me it was OK to be gay. And it was a priest." "It really messed me up."
- 8. What does Richard Sipe classify as a recognizable psychiatric phenomenon?** Priests molesting children. Later, Sipe says that to understand the crisis, you need to start with the celibacy requirement. Why?
- 9. "The victims simply want some acknowledgement." How does the church handle it?** There are no court records. It's all between the church and the victim. They get a little money, and the victims have to sign a confidentiality agreement. The church sweeps it under the rug. It all but guarantees the abuse stays under wraps.
- 10. What did the reporters use to find out what priests had been moved to a different parish?** They created a database from church directory information.
- 11. "Mark my words, Mr. Rezendes," Mitchell Garabedian tells *Globe* Reporter Mike Rezendes. "If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to abuse one." What did he mean? What village?** A lot of people knew about this scandal from people in the church to others. One interpretation of the village is the city of Boston in which 53 percent of the residents are Catholic. Another interpretation is that the village is the Catholic Church that protected people involved.
- 12. How many priests did the team discover had been moved for sexual abuse?** 87
- 13. Marty Baron, the new editor, says, "We need to focus on the institution, not the individual priests. ... We're going after the system." Why was this important?** It made it a bigger story and not just about one individual but demonstrated systematic abuse and cover-up.
- 14. There was a lot of pressure to keep quiet. From whom?** The church. The parishioners. From friends.
- 15. What was the argument to make the documents public?** First Amendment.
- 16. The first story ran Jan. 6, 2002. What was the reaction?** Phones were ringing all morning. Almost all calls were from victims. No picketers. No complaints to the paper.

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