

# MARCH FOR OUR LIVES



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## Lesson Summary

In this lesson students will learn about the pro-gun law activism being led by the survivors of the school shooting at Marjorie Stone Douglas High. They will consider what young people involved in the campaign want to achieve, the ways that they are doing this, and how young people can influence politics despite not having the vote. The lesson will end with a creative exercise in which students are encouraged to think about how they can apply some of the ideas of this campaign to issues that they care about.

## Learning Objectives

- To think about the different ways that young people in the Never Again movement have attempted to affect change, in spite of being too young to vote.
- To learn about the ways in which the media can either silence people or make their voice louder, and think about how the media can be used effectively by activists.
- To think about the impact and importance of lobbying politicians.
- To encourage students to think about their own ability to make change, and the ways in which they can do that.

### United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

### Curriculum Links

- Citizenship, KS 3-4

### British Council Core Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Imagination
- Student Leadership
- Collaboration and Communication



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## Activity one: Outline of events

**Requires:** Glossary contained in the worksheet

**Preparation:** Ensure that students have a copy of the glossary and a chance to look through and ask questions about terms they may be unfamiliar with.

- Give students the glossary of key terms and have them look through them. Let them know if they find any of the terms used confusing that they can ask for an explanation.
- Ask students if they have heard about the shooting at Marjorie Stone Douglas High, and what they know about it. Use the following information to fill in any gaps in their knowledge once they have spoken about it / if they are unwilling / unable to talk about the topic.
- On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, an ex-student named Nikolas Cruz entered Marjorie Stone Douglas High, a high school in Parkland, Florida, armed with a semi-automatic gun. He set off a fire alarm and then started shooting at students and teachers as they filled the corridors. He killed 17 and wounded many others.
- A group of students from the school gave interviews to the media, wrote opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines, and started to use Facebook and twitter in the days and weeks after the attack. They demanded greater restrictions on gun purchases- Cruz had bought his gun legally, despite the police being called 45 times by people worried he might become violent. They called their movement 'Never Again MSD', and called for a national walkout from schools on March 14<sup>th</sup>. This walkout took place in over 3000 schools, and involved 1 million students. Protestors walked out for 17 minutes -1 minute for each victim of the shooting. They also organised a national day of demonstrations on March 24<sup>th</sup>, called 'March for our Lives'. The protest was one of the largest in American history- there were 800 protests across the country as well as a national demonstration in Washington DC, and involved up to 2 million people. Since the demonstration, the activists have toured the country giving speeches, and have encouraged tens of thousands of people to register to vote in upcoming elections.
- They have already had an impact- Florida banned the sale of 'bump stocks' and raised the age at which you can buy a gun from 18 to 21. 'Bump stocks' have now been banned across the entire USA.



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## Activity Two: Students' Motivations

**Requires:** Activity two questions from the worksheet, slides 2 and 3

**Preparation:** Ensure that the videos from slides 2 and 3 can be played, print out copies of the questions from the worksheet.

- Hand the students the worksheet, and ask them to look at the questions listed under activity two.
- Show the students the videos linked in slides two and slide three and ask them in pairs to discuss and write down answers to the questions.
- After they have discussed these, bring students back together to compare answers.

## Activity Three: Student Tactics and Use of the Media

**Requires:** Worksheet source 1, slide 4

**Preparation:** Ensure that the worksheet is printed

- Have students read the extracts from The Guardian interview with two of the March For Our Lives organisers (source 1). Then pose the questions on slide 4 to the group.

## Activity Four: Roleplay Exercise

**Requires:** Pens and Paper, white/black/smart board.

**Preparation:** Ensure that each pair of students have the materials to write down their answers, and write down the questions for the group on the board.

- Have students pair off and imagine that they attended Marjorie Stone Douglas High and survived the shooting. Their pair have been asked to speak to the media in the days after the event. They should prepare responses to the following questions, before delivering them in front of the group (have another student act as the journalist or take the role yourself)
  1. What happened?
  2. How do you feel about what happened?
  3. What changes do you want to see to stop this happening again?
  4. How can young people help make this change?
  5. How can older people support them?



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## GLOSSARY

- **NRA:** National Rifle Association. This is a group which works to try ensure there are as few restrictions on gun sales as possible. They raise money from both their supporters and companies which make guns, and use this money to fund politicians, and publicly campaign against laws which might make it more difficult for people to buy guns.
- **Assault Weapons:** Guns which fire a lot of high-powered bullets in a short amount of time, designed for use by the military.
- **Bump Stocks:** These are modifications which can be added to guns that make them fire much faster.
- **Background Check:** In some parts of the USA, gun shops are legally obliged to check whether customers have any records of violence or mental health problems, as recorded by the police.
- **Gun show loophole:** This is a law which allows people to purchase guns without any background check from a 'gun show'.
- **Lobby:** Meeting with politicians to try and influence their opinions, with the aim of changing the laws around an issue.
- **Tallahassee:** A city in Florida where the local government meets.



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## Activity Two Questions

- What are the student protestors asking for?
- What do you think is motivating these protestors?
- Why do you think they chose to protest during school hours?  
Would a protest after school have been as effective or eye-catching?
- Why do you think the main demonstration was held in Washington, DC  
(America's capital city)?
- What do you think about these protests? Do you think they are important?

## Activity Three Source One

*Extracts from an interview with Delaney Tarr and Jaclyn Corin, two students from Marjorie Stone Douglas High School who helped to organise and lead the March For Our Lives.*

**Delaney Tarr** Everyone involved in March For Our Lives mobilised as a way of processing our grief. It was pretty much the only thing we felt we could do in those moments after the shooting. That same night I was scheduling interviews with other students at the vigil the next day, because as a student journalist it was what I knew I could contribute.

**Jaclyn Corin** I'm more of an organiser. The day after the shooting, I started working on a trip to our state capitol in Tallahassee to lobby politicians... Over the next few days, more students joined and we formed the March For Our Lives movement. We were working furiously, trying to keep up the momentum, because the world was watching us. We knew we needed to take that attention and make it something positive...

**DT** The way the media covers gun violence is not necessarily productive – they're looking for the sobbing victims. Instead, we took our anger and began to channel that. We really strategised about the message that became March For Our Lives...



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## Source 1 Cont.

**JC:** One of the most important things we did was have a rule that every interview had to mention the words “March 24th” [the day of the protest]. We wanted to make sure the world marched with us and March 24th was drilled into the minds of every person on this Earth. That was successful, because we had about 900 marches alongside the one in Washington

DC. More than 2 million people marched with us as a cumulative total: we had marches from London to Mumbai, and in places that we hadn’t even heard of.

***The students’ two-day lobbying trip to Tallahassee took place on 20 and 21 February, just six days after the shooting. One hundred students had more than 70 meetings with state representatives to discuss reforming gun legislation.***

**JC** The Tallahassee trip was kind of my baby... politicians sometimes don’t want to talk to us. They don’t care how we feel. So it’s going to take constant energy from us to make sure that they keep listening. So we went to DC next.

***On 26 and 27 February a group of Parkland students met elected officials in Washington DC to discuss gun reform.***

**DT** In DC we came into every single meeting with the same message, the same policy points. We told them, “We are working against the [NRA](#), we want you to stop being backed by the NRA.” We did not pull back. I don’t think a lot of them were ready for that...

Not all the meetings went well, but we left feeling empowered, not downtrodden. We knew we had to work even harder, we had to do this on our own. We had to rally an army of young people ready and willing to vote out corrupt leaders.

**JC** March For Our Lives continued after that day [*March 24<sup>th</sup>, the day of the national demonstration*]. We spent our entire summer travelling to communities around the country. We’ve met with other gun violence survivors, student organisers and leaders. We went to colleges and registered tens of thousands of voters. In November, we had the highest voter turnout ... in the US in over a century, and gun violence is the number one motivator for young people to get politically active in this country now...

We’re already working on projects for 2019 and building young people as a stronger political force. Until this problem is fixed, we’re not going anywhere.

(Arwa Mahdawi for The Guardian)

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/dec/22/people-of-2018-parkland-shooting-survivors-march-for-our-lives>



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