

**MEDIA EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION  
STUDY GUIDE**

**THE GLOUCESTER 18**  
**The Realities of Teen Pregnancy**

A Film by John Michael Williams  
Study Guide by Jason Young

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## NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This study guide is designed to help you and your students engage and manage the information presented in this video. Given that it can be difficult to teach visual content – and difficult for students to recall detailed information from videos after viewing them – the intention here is to give you a tool to help your students slow down and deepen their thinking about the specific issues this video addresses. With this in mind, we’ve structured the guide to help you stay close to the video’s main line of argument as it unfolds:

**Key Points** provide a concise and comprehensive summary of the video. They are designed to make it easier for you and your students to recall the details of the video during class discussions, and as a reference point for students as they work on assignments.

**Personal Narratives** help you and your students keep track of who’s who in the video. They are organized alphabetically by last name for easy reference.

**Questions for Discussion & Writing** encourage students to reflect critically on the video during class discussions, and guide their written reactions before and after these discussions. These questions can therefore be used in different ways: as guideposts for class discussion, as a framework for smaller group discussion and presentations, or as self-standing, in-class writing assignments (i.e. as prompts for “free-writing” or in-class reaction papers in which students are asked to write spontaneously and informally while the video is fresh in their mind).

**Assignments** encourage students to engage the video in more depth – by conducting research, working on individual and group projects, putting together presentations, and composing formal essays. These assignments are designed to challenge students to show command of the material presented in the video, to think critically and independently about this material from a number of different perspectives, and to develop and defend their own point of view on the issues at stake.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In 2008, eighteen high school girls from Gloucester, Massachusetts, were accused of making a pact to become pregnant. The mainstream media perpetuated and sensationalized the story, with reporters flying in from as far away as Australia, the UK, and Brazil. *The Gloucester 18* looks behind all the headlines and hype to tell the real stories of these girls -- and in the process puts a human face on a startling statistic: that the United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the developed world. The filmmakers draw on interviews with the girls, their families, high school counselors, physicians, and media personalities to unpack the facts and explore the complicated emotional and practical challenges faced by teens on the brink of motherhood.

## KEY POINTS

- In the 2007-2008 school year, officials in Gloucester, Massachusetts counted 18 pregnancies among high school aged girls – four times the norm.
- In the summer of 2008, a *Time* magazine article reported on a secret pregnancy pact, and the girls became known around the world as “The Gloucester 18.”
- Kim Daly, former nurse practitioner at Gloucester High Health Clinic, says the story received international media coverage because “people love scandal.”
- According to the superintendent, all the girls were 16 or younger. Most of the fathers weren’t in high school, and at least one of them was a 24-year-old man.
- The girls’ families were flooded with interview requests and answering machine messages from news networks and television shows like *Dr. Phil* and *Tyra Banks*.
- Dr. Brian Orr, former director of the Gloucester High Health Clinic, says that when he spoke of teen pregnancy as a complex issue, the press did not print it.
- The girls deny any existence of a secret pregnancy pact.
- Local DJ Reese Hopkins once said he couldn’t support Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin because, although she preaches abstinence, her own 17-year-old daughter got pregnant. He received 125 emails in one hour saying that this should not affect his support – that it was “a separate issue.” Yet when the Gloucester story came out, he received email saying that the girls were “sluts” and that the parents were “irresponsible.”
- About a third of the teens had their pregnancies terminated.
- According to Kim Daly, there’s a lot of misinformation amongst the teenage population around sex, birth control, and how you can get pregnant.
- The success rate of teen families is very low. Girls raised by teens are more likely to be teen mothers themselves, and boys raised by teens are more likely to end up in prison.
- One in four teen mothers give birth a second time within two years of their first pregnancy.
- Having administered as many as 150 pregnancy tests, Kim Daly was concerned about the Gloucester High Health Clinic becoming primarily a pregnancy-testing clinic.
- Since people believed there was indeed a pregnancy pact, they also believed that more sex education or handing out contraception would have done nothing.
- In May 2008, after a prolonged conflict with the hospital about a confidential contraception plan for students, Dr. Brian Orr and Kim Daly resigned from the health clinic.
- Kim Daly said her resignation had less to do with whether she could prescribe birth control than with the process by which the decision was taken away from her and Dr. Orr.

- The risk of death following pregnancy in girls age 15-19 is twice as high as for women 20-24.
- In a lot of families, the grandparents step in to take care of the babies. Sometimes, the mothers drop out of the picture.
- The number of teen pregnancies at Gloucester High School is lower than several cities across Massachusetts as well as those across the U.S. There are cities in Massachusetts that average 70 teen pregnancies per year.
- 750,000 teens in the U.S. become pregnant each year.
- The U.S. has the highest teen pregnancy rate of any developed country in the world.

## PERSONAL NARRATIVES

- **Hallie Allison** became pregnant at 15 and admits to not using birth control to prevent her pregnancy. She has a restraining order against the father because he choked her numerous times and broke her nose. When she was younger, her best friend's father killed his wife and then himself while Hallie slept over. She recently gave birth to her second daughter.
- **Nancy Allison** is Hallie's mother. She was born when Hallie's grandmother was only 15. She was once involved with a man who beat her up and broke two of her ribs in front of Hallie. When she went to his house to break it off with him, he killed himself. Six hours after her interview for this film, she attempted suicide. She recently married her third husband on a beach in Gloucester.
- **Kyla Brown** was 16 when she got pregnant. The thought of abortion never crossed her mind, and she knew she couldn't go through with adoption. Her parents, **Wendy** and **Corey Brown**, support her, and her baby's father wants to be involved. After the birth of her son, she graduated from Gloucester High and is pursuing a career in cosmetology.
- **Gladys Caraballo** and her boyfriend were only 12 when Gladys became pregnant. She's now a sophomore at Putnam High School in Springfield, Massachusetts, and has a four-and-a-half-year-old son.
- **Leslie Carneiro** grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts, and didn't meet her father until she was 11. She started running away at 12 and was pregnant at 15. She didn't expect to get pregnant because ovarian torsion left her with one ovary. Her mother also got pregnant with Leslie's brother at 15. After her interview for this film, Leslie became pregnant again.
- **Omar Colon** wasn't expecting to get his girlfriend, **Yazmarie Vega-Orocho**, pregnant at 17. Both Omar and Yazmarie live in Springfield, Massachusetts, and didn't use birth control because they thought it would negatively impact the sex.
- **Kim Daly** is a former nurse practitioner at the Gloucester High Health Clinic.
- **Tabitha Eldridge** was 16 when she first got pregnant, and her boyfriend, **Jorge Rosada**, was 20. Their baby was due on July 19. When Tabitha's mother was pregnant with Tabitha, she was also 16 and due on July 19. Tabitha and Jorge decided against terminating their second pregnancy because it was expensive, and they didn't have the money at the time. During the making of this film, they lived with Sarah Williams and Pedro Gonzalez, Jorge's biological brother. The couples no longer live together.
- **Alivia Fidler** wasn't on any form of birth control when she became pregnant. She was 16, and her boyfriend was 21. Her son, Xavier, was born three months premature and has continuing health problems. When Alivia was three months old, her grandmother adopted her. She didn't grow up with her mother, and she never met her father. She dropped out of Gloucester High, and both she and Xavier were placed in foster care.
- **Israel Horovitz** is a playwright who lives in Gloucester.

- **Ray Lamont** is the editor of the *Gloucester Daily Times* who edited Gail McCarthy's story on Gloucester's teen pregnancies.
- **Brianne Mackey** had been on birth control for a year and a half when she became pregnant at 16. Her mother, **Kim Mackey**, didn't want her to have the baby, but Brianne decided to keep it. Brianne and her boyfriend, **Michael Mitchell**, now live with Michael's parents, and Michael works seven days a week at the family bait shop.
- **Gail McCarthy** is the reporter for the *Gloucester Daily Times* who wrote the story on Gloucester's teen pregnancies.
- **Dr. Brian Orr** is the former director of the Gloucester High Health Clinic.
- **Alexis Silva** gave birth to Brayden during her first week of senior year. **Alissa Silva**, Alexis' mother, says that when she was at Gloucester High School 20 years ago, there were 14 pregnant girls, yet no one made a big deal about it. Three weeks after Alexis' interview for this film, Brayden died suddenly in his sleep. She scattered his ashes at Disney World.
- **Kaila Simpson** is Alivia Fidler's best friend. Six weeks after her interview for this film, she found out she was pregnant. She dropped out of Gloucester High, and her daughter was born on September 3, 2009.
- **Angie Spears** is the director of the Teen Parenting Program in Lowell, Massachusetts.
- **Sarah Williams** gave birth to her first child at 15 and to her second at 18. She went into foster care at 13 and wanted to start a family that no one could take away from her. During the making of this film, Sarah and her boyfriend, **Pedro Gonzalez**, lived with Tabitha Eldridge and Jorge Rosada, Pedro's biological brother. The couples no longer live together.
- **Elizabeth Wood** is the adjustment counselor at Putnam High School in Springfield, Massachusetts. She works with Gladys Caraballo, Omar Colon, and Yazmarie Vega-Orocho. Elizabeth was brought up in the Springfield area and found out she was pregnant her senior year of high school.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. Why do you think the mainstream media perpetuated and sensationalized the story of a secret pregnancy pact? Can you think of other stories the media has overblown? Compare and contrast those stories' details with those of the "pregnancy pact."
2. How is teen pregnancy a more complex issue than some might assume? Supplement your own thoughts with examples from the film.
3. Sarah Palin, the 2008 Vice Presidential candidate, preaches abstinence before marriage, even though her 17-year-old daughter became pregnant. How does this make you feel? Do you think abstinence-only sex education is the best way to teach teens about sex? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think one in four teen mothers give birth a second time within two years of their first pregnancy?
5. How were you taught about sex? From a parent or guardian? From your school? From both? What did you learn about sex in school? Were contraceptives handed out? Do you think your sex education was effective? How could it have been improved? If you had to educate your child about sex today, how would you do it?
6. How are some of the personal narratives in *The Gloucester 18* similar to each other? How are they different? How about the role of parents in these stories, specifically? What similarities and differences do you see with them?

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate of any developed country in the world. Research other developed and developing countries, and compare their teen pregnancy rates to those of the U.S. Also, how do these countries educate their teens about sex?
2. Watch the Lifetime original movie *Pregnancy Pact*, based on the real-life events of the girls in *The Gloucester 18*. Write a paper comparing the two movies, and feel free to cite other examples and representations of teen pregnancy and teen parenthood in the popular media.

*Pregnancy Pact* is available for download at the following link:

<http://mefwordpress.s3.amazonaws.com/PregnancyPact.zip>

*(This video is encoded for viewing with VLC Media Player, QuickTime Player, and iTunes and has been optimized for iPods. For educational use only.)*

3. Read Gail McCarthy's article, "Did race fuel Gloucester High School pregnancy media frenzy?" available here: [http://www.mediaed.org/Handouts/Race\\_and\\_the\\_Gloucester\\_18.pdf](http://www.mediaed.org/Handouts/Race_and_the_Gloucester_18.pdf)

Write a paper in response to the article. Summarize its main points, then give your own take on what it's saying. Feel free to elaborate on other factors, beyond race, that you believe may have also fueled the media frenzy.