

"For the death penalty"

FACTS AND FIGURES

- In 2021, 54 countries retained the death penalty; 27 had not executed anyone in 10 years; 6 had kept it for special cases; 107 had abolished it totally.
- Amnesty International recorded 483 executions in 18 countries in 2020, down 26.5% from the 657 confirmed executions carried out in 20 countries in 2019 while 1,634 people were executed in 25 countries in 2015. Most executions took place in China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA.
- In the USA, the number of yearly death sentences dropped from 279 in 1999 to 49 in 2015 and 17 in 2020. More murders take place in states where capital punishment is allowed.
- Over 75% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims generally are white.
- 55.8% of defendants who were executed were white, 34.4% were black and 8.3% were Hispanic (2016).
- In the USA, capital punishment costs a lot. For example, executing Timothy McVeigh for the Oklahoma City Bombing cost over \$13 million.
- 3/4 of all offenders who are allocated a legal aid lawyer can expect execution, versus 1/4 if the defendant could afford to pay for a lawyer.
- In the USA, 144 people sentenced to death have been found innocent since 1973 and released (=1.6% of all deaths). But the innocence rate is 4.1%

VOCABULARY:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ◦ justice | ◦ Plaintiff: plaignant |
| ◦ Assailant/mugger: agresseur | ◦ Premeditated murder |
| ◦ Capital punishment: peine de mort | ◦ Presumption of innocence |
| ◦ Charge/accusation: inculpation, accusation | ◦ Rape: viol/rapist: violeur |
| ◦ Cold-blooded : de sangfroid | ◦ Release: libération |
| ◦ Convict = inmate = prisoner | ◦ Revenge = retaliation représailles |
| ◦ Culprit (n) : coupable | ◦ Sentence : condamnation |
| ◦ Death row (US) : couloir de la mort | ◦ To be convicted of : être accusé de |
| ◦ Defendant : accusé | ◦ To be sentenced to : être condamné |
| ◦ Deterrent : moyen de dissuasion | ◦ à |
| ◦ Fair: iuste # unfair | ◦ To charge sb with : inculper de |
| ◦ Guilty: coupable (adi) | ◦ To provide closure: permettre de faire son deuil |
| ◦ In self-defence : en légitime défense | ◦ To sue = take sb to court: poursuivre en justice |
| ◦ Lawyer (GB) = attorney (US) : avocat | ◦ Trial: procès |
| ◦ Miscarriage of justice: erreur judiciaire | ◦ Without parole: sans liberté conditionnelle # on parole |
| ◦ Multiple offender : récidiviste | |

Up to you!

Death Penalty – tips for referees

1. Faire, à l'oral ou à l'écrit, une synthèse structure des arguments

PROS

- Useful to prevent re-offending/reduce criminality.
- Deter other criminals from committing crimes and thinking they can be unpunished.
- Provide closure for victims: fair for the victim's family if the murderer is not lying in some prison with three meals a day, clean sheets, cable TV and family visits.
- A proportionate punishment: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth: take the life of someone who took a life.
- Less strain on over-populated prisons.
- Why should taxpayers bear costs of supporting a murderer for a lifetime?

CONS

- Cruel, unethical and inhumane suffering: incompatible with human rights. Majority of people (61%) for another punishment for murder (2010).
- Unfair: depend on whether you can afford a good lawyer.
- Useless: not bring the victim back to life; fail to deter others.
- Double loss = double suffering: victim's and murderer's families.
- Risk of killing innocents; the case of insane people: not conscious of killing, should not be executed unless guilty mind.
- High cost of the death penalty.

2. Questions

- a Is the death penalty morally acceptable in a democracy?
- b If it is dissuasive, why are there still so many murders in the United States?
- c Should the death penalty be systematic in certain cases (child murder, rape...)?
- d Can the death penalty damage the image of a country?
- e Is it fair for taxpayers to pay the price of death penalty cases?

For death penalty

Still present in 54 countries, with 1,634 people executed in 25 countries in 2015, the death penalty remains a highly controversial issue: considered as a deterrent to crime by some, it is condemned as a lack of respect for human rights by others. Thus, to what extent can it still be accepted in the 21st century?

Death penalty aims at sanctioning a criminal proportionately to his crime and at preventing him from being a threat again to society. At the same time, it is considered as a deterrent to other criminals who may think twice before killing someone, knowing they expose themselves to the same fate.

Not only is death penalty supposed to relieve society of a burden, but it should also contribute to bringing closure to victims' families: it seems fair for the victim's relatives to know the murderer is not lying in some prison with three meals a day, clean sheets, cable TV and family visits. By removing criminals from jails, the system also allows putting less strain on over-populated prisons.

Lastly, it might seem unfair for society to bear the cost of supporting a murderer for a lifetime.

Against death penalty

Death penalty is highly criticised nowadays for being cruel, unethical and inhumane suffering; it shows absolute disrespect for human rights. Indeed, prisoners have to wait for their execution for many years, in terrible conditions: they are often isolated and cut off from any human contact and can spend only one hour per day outside their cells.

It is also considered as useless, not only because it does not bring back the victim to life but also because it fails to deter other criminals; in the USA more murders occur in states where capital punishment is allowed. Life in prison might thus be a more appropriate sanction to let the murderer try to analyse his deeds and be rehabilitated.

Besides being useless, it is clearly unfair as a criminal who can afford a good lawyer is more likely to escape the death penalty. Indeed, three fourths of all offenders who are allocated a legal aid lawyer can expect execution. as opposed to one fourth if the defendant could afford to pay for a lawyer.

Not to mention the risk of killing an innocent: 144 people sentenced to death have been found innocent since 1973 and released from the death row but many more have been executed.

Lastly, the death penalty costs a lot, sometimes more than life imprisonment. For example, executing Timothy McVeigh for the Oklahoma City Bombing cost over \$13 million.

To conclude, the death penalty fails to reach its goals of deterrence and closure; on the contrary it emphasises the worst sides of disrespect for human life.

Marking scheme: the referee takes away points out of a count of 15.

- **Each participant needs a catchphrase (2 points)**
- **Each participant needs 3 arguments minimum, illustrated with examples and/or references (6 points)**
- **Each participant needs a powerful conclusion (2 points)**
- **Each participant needs to use at least 6 words from the word bank (2 points), 3 expressions imposed by the referee (2 points) and make one attempt at complex grammar (1 point)**
- **Every time a student asks for help either from you, the teacher or AI; you need to take away a point ;-)**