

Crime & Punishment: Death Penalty

**Essential Question:** Is capital punishment permissible?

**Objectives:** Explore crime and punishment through the lens of a particularly strong form of retribution: capital punishment. Further exploration of punishment is also within the lesson plan, to be used depending on how much time is spent on specifically capital punishment.

**Intro:** *Do they deserve the death penalty?*

Have students stand on different sides of the room depending on whether they agree that the person deserves capital punishment or not, followed by discussion of whether it can ever be okay/just

- Describe different situations
  - 1) Murderer
    - Unplanned, heat of the moment
  - 2) Murderer
    - Premeditated, plan ahead of time
  - 3) Psychopathic Serial Killer
    - Cruel, evil, killed multiple people with no remorse
  - 4) Hitler
- If any students do not say 'yes' to any of these four situations, have them explain why capital punishment is never just/okay

**Activity:** *Middle Ground*

Read each statement aloud, and have students either raise their hand if they agree or keep their hands down if they don't. (if good turn out, maybe pair opposing people together for partner discussion?)

1. Having a death penalty deters people from committing crimes.
2. Anyone can be rehabilitated back into society.
3. Everyone deserves a second chance.
4. If someone genuinely apologizes for a crime, their punishment should be reduced.
5. If my mother were to commit serial murder, I would vouch for capital punishment.
6. I am afraid that there are innocent people on death row.

### **Extra Discussion(Punishment in General):**

- The death penalty is one of the most extreme versions of punishment, but discussions on retributive justice can follow a relatively similar path.
- What is punishment?
  - Bad thing to someone in retaliation for bad deed
  - Intent?
  - Severity?
  - Removal of positive == Presence of negative?
- Is punishment ever justifiable?
  - Operant Conditioning
    - Do bad thing, get bad result => don't do bad thing
    - When is this okay?
      - Utilitarian basis
  - Unavoidable
    - Imprisonment is inherently punishment, but chosen for reasons other than to punish
      - Is this still technically punishment?
    - Harmful self-defense punishment?

Extra question related to crime: If the purge was real, would you partake in it?

- 12 hours: full limits to do any crime