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# LESSON 7

# THE DEATH PENALTY

**A lesson using group discussion and debates about the death penalty, informed by facts from around the globe and a recent case study presented through a short film and informative case notes.**

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To critically evaluate the arguments for and against the death penalty
- To express and justify personal viewpoints
- To learn about an international organisation working on human rights

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## STARTER

### 15 MINS

Students are introduced to the death penalty across the world.

- Hand out Worksheet 1: *Death penalty quiz*, either individually or to groups. Give students five minutes to answer the questions.
- Using Resource sheet 1: *Death penalty quiz answers*, run through the correct answers and allow for a short discussion to deal with student responses to this information.
- Show map: *The Death Penalty Worldwide in 2011*. Ask students for their views.

## MAIN

### 20 MINS

Students consider the death penalty in the context of a recent real case, from the USA.

- Introduce the film about Troy Davis, imprisoned and placed on death row in the USA. Stress that the footage is emotive. Students can also read the case notes. Both of these describe Troy's case as it was in 2010.
- Talk through their reactions. Remind students that they can exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and that they can exercise this right whether they feel that the death penalty is right or wrong.

Ask key reflection questions:

- Do you think Amnesty International has presented an unbiased view of the death penalty in the film footage?
- How do you think Troy's family feel/felt?
- What action, if any, do you think should be taken for prisoners on death row?
- Does a person's guilt or innocence affect your view of the death penalty?

After discussion, tell students that since the film and case



## RESOURCES



- Worksheet 1: *Death penalty quiz*
- Resource sheet 1: *Death penalty quiz answers for teacher*
- Resource sheet 2: *For and against the death penalty*
- Film: *Troy Davis* (7 mins)
- Case sheet: *Troy Davis* (optional)
- Map: *The Death Penalty Worldwide in 2011*

notes were produced Troy's case developed.

- Ask students what they think should have happened to Troy.
- After hearing their ideas, inform students that on 21st September 2011, Troy Davis was executed using lethal injection, despite protests across the world.
- You might wish to read out Troy's last words:

'...I'd like to address the MacPhail family. I'd like to let you all know... I am innocent. I did not have a gun that night. I did not shoot your family member. But I am so sorry for your loss. I really am – sincerely. All that I can ask is that each of you look deeper into this case, so that you really will finally see the truth. I ask to my family and friends that you all continue to pray, that you all continue to forgive. Continue to fight this fight. For those about to take my life, may God have mercy on all of your souls. God bless you all.'



## DEVELOPMENT

### 20 MINS

Students consider arguments for and against the death penalty.

- Introduce the activity to the students.
- Students should work in six groups. Three of the groups will be **FOR** the death penalty, while the other three groups will be **AGAINST**.
- Hand out Resource sheet 2: *For and against the death penalty* and invite students to read the section relevant for their group. Encourage students to discuss the key points within their groups. It may be helpful to identify scribes and timekeepers, to ensure that all key information and ideas are captured. Explain to the class that it may be difficult to be in a group where they don't agree with the argument, but that for the purpose of this activity they should try to see things from the point of view they have been given.
- Bring the three **FOR** groups together to make one larger group and the three **AGAINST** groups together into another group. Ask the students to discuss their arguments within their group. Invite each larger group to choose a spokesperson to present their arguments to the whole class.
- Having heard both sides of the argument, ask students for a show of hands vote, according to whether they are **FOR**, **AGAINST** or **UNDECIDED**.
- As an extension or homework, students can do further research on Amnesty International and the issue of the death penalty at [www.amnesty.org.uk/lifeanddeath](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/lifeanddeath)

**FOR**

**AGAINST**

**UNDECIDED**