

The death penalty

Discussion

Work in pairs. Discuss these questions:

- Do you have the death penalty in your country?
If so, for what offences? How is it carried out?
If not, what is the severest punishment that can be given?

Did you know that on average someone is executed every three days in the USA?

Reading

Read the text below and answer these questions:

1. How did the writer feel about the death penalty before the attack?
2. How does the writer feel now?

My sister was walking home from work two years ago when two men stopped her and tried to steal her handbag. She resisted and they stabbed her in the heart. The police caught them. They were found guilty of murder and they're now in prison. That's when I changed my views on the death penalty.

Before that, it was pretty easy to be liberal and to say that I didn't believe in capital punishment. But not now. There was no doubt that the police caught my sister's killers: there were eye witnesses; there was forensic evidence. I thought those guys should die for what they did. They not only took her life, they changed the lives of her family and friends. The lives of her husband and her two little children will never ever be the same.

Some people say that if you execute a murderer you become a murderer yourself, but that's not the way I see it. If you take someone's life, you lose the right to keep your own. If you murder someone, you should be forced to experience the same horror as your victim: pain and suffering, and the anticipation of the end of your life. People think that is cruel. But my sister didn't have the luxury of saying goodbye.

Some people also think that death is the easy way out for a murderer – that life imprisonment means a lifetime of suffering in prison. I don't think so. Life imprisonment is a lifetime of hot meals, reading and television – at the taxpayer's expense. That is not a suitable punishment for a murderer. But death is.

Discussion

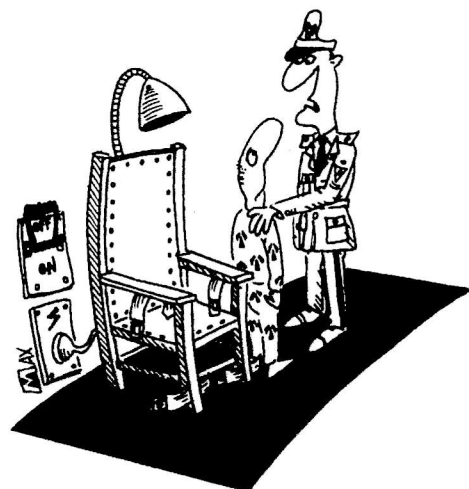
How do you feel about the writer's views:

- surprised?
- shocked?
- sympathetic?
- horrified?

If you were the writer, would you want the death penalty for the killers? Why? Why not?

List the arguments that the writer makes FOR and AGAINST the death penalty. Add other arguments of your own.

Are you basically in favour of or against capital punishment?



"Better sit down, son. I've got a bit of a shock for you."