

A

**"Death Penalty"**

**Speaker:** Student from a high school.

**Intended audience:** Students

**Background information:** The audience is interested in hearing the speech. The audience has limited information on the topic.

**Context:** The speech is involved in a debate in a classroom.

B

LOUD

\*PAUSE  
LOUD

(SLOW)

LOUD

\*PAUSE  
\*PAUSE

LOUD

LOUD

LOUD

LOUD

LOUD

EMPHASIZE

\*PAUSE

It may only be a whisper, but to hear these words is enough to send a shiver down your spine and a sharp shock through your body. Can you imagine anything worse than being convicted of a crime you did not commit? As a result you face the inevitable (death penalty). In recent studies by Bedau and Radelet, their findings identified 350 cases, from 1900 to 1986, in which defendants were convicted of capital crimes. Twenty-four of the people who were executed were innocent. "Ladies and gentlemen", should the jury and judges possess the power of God, and decide who lives and who dies?

I think not!!

Is execution of convicted murderers worth the risk of executing an innocent person?

I think not!!

Is it impossible that a killer can change his life through rehabilitation?

I think not!!

And lastly, do the citizens of Canada want to pay more tax money for executions, than it would cost for a man to be given a life sentence?

I think not!!

Ladies and gentlemen. The House of Commons removed capital punishment from the Canadian Criminal Code on July 14, 1976. It was replaced with a mandatory 25 year life sentence for convicted murderers.

This is how it should stay!! People who support the death penalty predicted that the homicide rate would increase in Canada after the death penalty was abolished. In fact the opposite happened. The murder rate went down. Convictions for first degree murder doubled in the ten years after the death penalty was abolished. Maybe Canadian juries are more willing to convict murderers now that they don't have to make life and death decisions. It is clearly evident that the abolished death penalty had a positive outcome.

\*Lets take a few moments to imagine if the death penalty by execution would become a law once again. Many innocent people over the next few years

## HIGH LEVEL 2

C

would die, due to wrongful conviction. Just imagine that you are a jury member. Your decision has the power to cost a man his life. Are you willing to have this on your shoulders? Now the time has come for you to make a decision. You choose guilty, and therefore he is sentenced to death. Many years later you find out that he was wrongfully accused. (How would you feel?) Your decision was wrong, and as a result an innocent man paid the ultimate price.

LOUD(SLOW)  
SHOCKED

Now lets turn this situation around. The death penalty for killers is a minimum 25 years. That innocent man, who is now in prison, has a chance to go free. If the death penalty by execution was in effect, he would not have that chance. Many people who are convicted criminals have come out of prison and have lived normal lives. Some of these past criminals have spent many hours at schools, talking to kids about the mistakes they made. These past criminals can have meaningful lives. A convicted criminal through rehabilitation can change the course of his life. At least give them a chance. The death penalty by execution doesn't give them the slightest chance to undergo rehabilitation. Society and the world today have changed, since the 1900's, when the death penalty by execution was in effect. The world today is all about helping people and giving them a second chance. Anything can happen in the years they are in prison and through the year of rehabilitation. So don't cut their life short. Don't play God and decide who lives and who dies. And lastly, don't take the risk of killing an innocent man. \* Death penalty by execution is the wrong decision to make. Vote for a death penalty of 25 years!

LOUDLOUD  
\*PAUSE  
LOUD

D

Sources:

Capital Punishment: Jennifer C. Honeyman and James R.P Oglloff, Simon Fraser University.

[Http://www.amnesty.ca/deathpenalty/canada.html](http://www.amnesty.ca/deathpenalty/canada.html)

**Teacher's Notes****Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student demonstrates some understanding of the facts surrounding the chosen issue. For example, the student discusses the risk of executing an innocent person and gives specific facts about Canada's abolition of the death penalty and about changes in the homicide and murder-conviction rates after abolition. However, the student does not distinguish between U.S. and Canadian data, so facts presented sometimes appear contradictory (e.g., the student states that twenty-four innocent people were executed between 1900 and 1986 [U.S.] and later tells us that capital punishment was abolished in 1976 [Canada]).

**Thinking/Inquiry**

- The student supports the perspective taken using ideas of some relevance to the purpose and audience. The student asserts that the homicide rate in Canada decreased after the abolition of the death penalty but that the conviction rate for murder doubled. The student reasons from this that juries are more likely to convict if they do not have to “make life and death decisions”. However, other complexities of the issue (e.g., arguments about whether the death penalty is or is not a deterrent to crime, debates about the ability of prisons to rehabilitate criminals) are not fully explored.

**Communication**

- The student organizes information and ideas with considerable appropriateness. The student uses an intriguing introduction (e.g., “to hear these words is enough to send a shiver down your spine ...”) to arouse the audience's curiosity about the as-yet-unidentified topic. The student also uses provocative questions to highlight points in the argument (e.g., “should the jury and judges possess the power of God, and decide who lives and who dies?”; “*How would you feel?*”).
- The student uses language and a voice that are appropriate to a considerable degree. The tone of a student debate comes through clearly in the student's appeal to the audience's imagination (e.g., “Just imagine that you are

a jury member ... he is sentenced to death. Many years later you find out that he was wrongfully accused ...”) and in the closing exhortation: “Vote for ... 25 years”.

**Application**

- The student uses oral presentation techniques with considerable effectiveness. The student uses repetition and emphasis (e.g., “*I think not!!*”), imaginary scenarios (e.g., “Let's take a few moments to imagine ...”), short emphatic sentences (e.g., “*This is how it should stay!!*”), and rhetorical questions (e.g., “Can you imagine anything worse than being convicted of a crime you did not commit?”).
- The student builds in speaker notes with some effectiveness. “Loud” is used many times to indicate emphasis, “Pause” to indicate the pace of delivery, and “Slow, shocked” to indicate tone of voice. However, the student does not include suggestions for gestures or facial expressions.
- The student predicts a somewhat realistic and effective resolution to the issue. As the death penalty is currently abolished, the student makes a convincing case for opposing any attempt to restore it. However, apart from “voting” for the alternative of a life sentence of “25 years”, the student proposes no strategy for opposing restoration.

**Comments**

This work is representative of a high level-2 performance. The student demonstrates some degree of achievement of the expectations in the Knowledge/Understanding and Thinking/Inquiry categories of knowledge and skills, as well as in two criteria in the Application category. However, in the Communication category and in one criterion in Application, the student demonstrates a considerable degree of achievement – i.e., achievement that is more characteristic of level 3.

The result is a reasonably effective speech that focuses on a central aspect of the issue but does not explore its complexities.

**HIGH LEVEL 2**

**Next Steps**

In order to improve his or her performance, the student needs to:

- explore more fully a number of questions connected with the issue, in order to strengthen the argument;
- clearly identify the source and/or the context of the data cited, to avoid confusion;
- provide more detailed and varied speaker notes to assist the speaker;
- proofread work carefully to eliminate errors in spelling and grammar.