CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Capital punishment seems to be on the decline in many countries. However it is a subject which still produces hot debates and arguments. In Canada, the death penalty was abolished by Parliament. However, a survey has shown the majority of Canadians are in favour of keeping it.

Arguments in Favour

Those in favour of the death penalty, the retentionists, argue in the following way:
— Murderers give up their right to live in society.
— The punishment should fit the crime. This principle goes all the way back to ancient times of "an eye for an eye." For the ultimate crime, murder, we should reserve the ultimate penalty, execution.
— If there is no capital punishment, murderers would have nothing to lose by murdering again. They would have nothing to lose in trying to escape by murdering their captors or guards.
— Society needs protection from murderers. We can never be sure that they will change their ways. Capital punishment will prevent a murderer from ever killing again.
— Putting a person in jail for life is not much more humane. Besides, the cost of keeping one person in jail for fifty years is estimated at over half a million dollars.
— Capital punishment has a **deterrent** effect. It would only be used on murders in the first degree — that is, murder which was deliberate and planned. This will cause potential killers to think twice, for fear of losing their own lives. This deterrent effect also builds up in a society over a long period of time. It creates the attitude that murder, because of the method of punishment, is the most serious of crimes.

Arguments against

Those who argue against capital punishment use a combination of the following arguments:
— The death penalty is not a deterrent. Most murders are not planned beforehand. They come about as a result of arguments and fights. Such people do not stop to think about the death penalty.
— According to statistics, those countries who still use the death penalty do not necessarily have a lower murder rate.
— Capital punishment is brutal. No civilized society should resort to such

methods of punishment. It lowers respect for human life.

— There is the chance that a murderer can be **rehabilitated** and turned into a useful citizen.

— Some juries may be less likely to convict a person if the death penalty is in force, because they may be afraid of making a mistake.

— There is always the possibility of executing an innocent person.

Analyze the arguments in favour of and against capital punishment. Which side do you support?

1. The Parliament of Canada abolished capital punishment in 1976. Present an argument in favour of or against the return of the death penalty for murder. Are there *any* offences which you feel should be punishable by death? Conduct a survey of your friends, family and classmates to find out their position.

2. A number of those convicted of criminal offences are placed in minimum security prisons. These people are not considered dangerous to the public. Do you think these people should be given such freedom and trust?

3. Analyze the routine of a typical day in prison. In your opinion is the routine too harsh or too soft on inmates?

4. Debate this resolution: The function of prisons should be to rehabilitate criminals, not punish them!

Capital Punishment ? For or Against ?

Hamburger Paragraph Rubric

Name:_____   Total: /10 marks

1. Topic Sentence clearly introduces the topic of the paragraph   /1

2. Concluding Sentence summarizes the main idea of the paragraph   /1

3. Body paragraph contains 3 body points   /1

4. Body paragraph contains 3 clearly explained points. The evidence supports the topic sentence

          /5

5. Grammar and Spelling   /2