**GCSE English Language J351/02  
Practice Questions: “Capital Punishment”**

Section A

Questions 1 and 2 are about the extract from ‘A Hanging’ by George Orwell.

1. Look again at paragraph 2: “It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized…”

a. Identify the ‘moment’ in paragraph 1 which started Orwell thinking this. [1 mark]

b. Write a sentence explaining George Orwell’s thoughts on the prisoner. [1 mark]

c. Give two more quotations from paragraph 2 which show this same idea. [2 marks]

2. Look again at paragraph 3: “The gallows stood in a small yard…”

How does George Orwell make this scene appear so grim?

You should use relevant subject terminology in your answer.

[6 marks]

Question 3 is about the extract from ‘Death Penalty Issues’ by California Innocence Project.

3. Look again at paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 only.

Explore how the writer argues against the use of capital punishment.

Support your ideas by referring to the language and structure of this section, using relevant subject terminology.

[12 marks]

Question 4 is about the extracts from ‘A Hanging’ by George Orwell and ‘Death Penalty Issues’ (paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 8 only) by California Innocence Project.

4. ‘In these texts, though they are very different in content, there are similar views on the idea of capital punishment.’

How far do you agree with this statement?

In your answer you should:

* + - discuss your impressions gained of capital punishment in these texts
    - explain what you find interesting about the writers’ ideas
    - compare the ways the writers present their ideas on capital punishment

Support your response with quotations from both texts.

[18 marks]

**Section B**

**Writing for audience, impact and purpose**

Choose **one** of the following writing tasks.

You are advised to spend **one** hour on this section.

In this section you will be assessed on the quality of your extended response. You are advised to plan and check your work carefully.

**EITHER**

**5** Write a speech to your class in which you give your views on the possible reintroduction of capital punishment in The United Kingdom. (Abolished 1965 – last hanging 1964)

In your speech you should:

• explain why other forms of punishment are better/worse solutions

• give some examples to support your argument

• convince your audience of your opinion of state execution.

**[40]\***

**OR**

**6** Write an article for a teenage magazine which gives advice to young people on the importance of empathy (seeing things from other people’s points of view) in society. You are not required to include any visual or presentational features.

In your article you should:

• identify some examples of empathy

• suggest why this might be the correct moral position

• explain some of the ways in which more understanding would benefit society.

**[40]\***

**‘A Hanging’** by George Orwell

It was about forty yards to the gallows. I watched the bare brown back of the prisoner marching in front of me. He walked clumsily with his bound arms, but quite steadily, with that bobbing gait of the Indian who never straightens his knees. At each step his muscles slid neatly into place, the lock of hair on his scalp danced up and down, his feet printed themselves on the wet gravel. And once, in spite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path.

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working — bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming — all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned — reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone — one mind less, one world less.

The gallows stood in a small yard, separate from the main grounds of the prison, and overgrown with tall prickly weeds. It was a brick erection like three sides of a shed, with planking on top, and above that two beams and a crossbar with the rope dangling. The hangman, a grey-haired convict in the white uniform of the prison, was waiting beside his machine. He greeted us with a servile crouch as we entered. At a word from Francis the two warders, gripping the prisoner more closely than ever, half led, half pushed him to the gallows and helped him clumsily up the ladder. Then the hangman climbed up and fixed the rope round the prisoner's neck.

We stood waiting, five yards away. The warders had formed in a rough circle round the gallows. And then, when the noose was fixed, the prisoner began crying out on his god. It was a high, reiterated cry of ‘Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!’, not urgent and fearful like a prayer or a cry for help, but steady, rhythmical, almost like the tolling of a bell…

The hangman climbed down and stood ready, holding the lever. Minutes seemed to pass. The steady, muffled crying from the prisoner went on and on, ‘Ram! Ram! Ram!’ never faltering for an instant. The superintendent, his head on his chest, was slowly poking the ground with his stick; perhaps he was counting the cries, allowing the prisoner a fixed number — fifty, perhaps, or a hundred. Everyone had changed colour. The Indians had gone grey like bad coffee, and one or two of the bayonets were wavering…

Suddenly the superintendent made up his mind. Throwing up his head he made a swift motion with his stick. ‘Chalo!’ he shouted almost fiercely.

There was a clanking noise, and then dead silence. The prisoner had vanished, and the rope was twisting on itself. I let go of the dog, and it galloped immediately to the back of the gallows; but when it got there it stopped short, barked, and then retreated into a corner of the yard, where it stood among the weeds, looking timorously out at us. We went round the gallows to inspect the prisoner's body. He was dangling with his toes pointed straight downwards, very slowly revolving, as dead as a stone.

The superintendent reached out with his stick and poked the bare body; it oscillated, slightly. ‘*He*'s all right,’ said the superintendent. He backed out from under the gallows, and blew out a deep breath. The moody look had gone out of his face quite suddenly. He glanced at his wrist-watch. ‘Eight minutes past eight. Well, that's all for this morning, thank God.’

California Innocence Project: Death Penalty IssuesThe history of the death penalty is a long and brutal one. From the stoning and crucifixion killings of the B.C. era to today’s methods of the electric chair and lethal injection, governments of one kind or another have sentenced people to death for thousands of years.

While most of the free world has abolished the death penalty, many of the states within this country continue to use capital punishment in their criminal justice systems. In 1972, the United States Supreme Court suspended the imposition of the penalty, finding it unconstitutional because it was imposed disproportionately on minorities and the poor. The ban was brief. The Court approved new statutes in 1976, and government-sponsored killings resumed.

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, the most common method of execution among states with the death penalty is lethal injection, which is authorized by 35 states, as well as the U.S. Military and the U.S. Government. Smaller numbers of states continue to use methods such as electrocution, gas chambers, hanging, and even firing squads.

The death penalty debate is a heated one in this country today. Many proponents of the death penalty argue that it deters criminals from killing. However, research does not support the idea that the possibility of receiving the death penalty deters criminals from committing murder. In fact, studies by the Death Penalty Information Center show that murder rates tend to be higher in the South (where the imposition of the death penalty is the highest) compared to the Northeast United States (where the death penalty is less commonly applied).

As innocence projects across the country can attest to, the criminal justice system does not always get it right – even for the most heinous of crimes. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, there have been 150 exonerations of death row inmates since 1973. Unfortunately, the system is not perfect, and sometimes people are wrongfully convicted. This means we as a society run the risk of executing an innocent person as long as the death penalty is in place. For example, the state of Texas executed Cameron Todd Willingham in 2004 despite strong evidence of his innocence, including forensic evidence.

The impact of wrongful convictions on a state’s death row law was clearly seen in Illinois. In 2000, Governor George Ryan placed a moratorium on the penalty after 13 men had been exonerated from death row since 1977. In 2011, after the state conducted extensive studies, Governor Pat Quinn signed a law that abolished the penalty.

The cost of the death penalty is extraordinary. California has spent more than $4 billion administering the death penalty since 1978, or more than $300 million per person for each of the 13 people who have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated. Conversely, it costs approximately $200,000 to $300,000 to convict and sentence an individual to life without the possibility of parole. If those sentenced to death received life sentences instead, we accomplish the same deterrent effect of the death penalty: criminals remain off the streets for the rest of their lives. The money saved could be spent on improving the criminal justice system such as increasing public safety or providing resources to help prevent wrongful convictions.

Is it effective? The answer is no. It does not deter crime, and it is extremely expensive to administer. Ultimately, while most of the people who are incarcerated – on death row or otherwise – are guilty, we know there are innocent people in prison. It is not worth the risk of executing an innocent person.

In November of 2016, California voters have the opportunity to end the death penalty through the initiative process. Alternatively, a competing measure seeks to speed up the process.