



CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

AQA GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES (8062)

PAPER 2: THEMES

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

ABOUT THE TOPIC

This topic explores how Christians, Muslims and non-religious people think about crime, punishment, forgiveness, the aims of punishment and the death penalty.

It includes:

- The aims of punishment
- Forgiveness and redemption
- The death penalty
- Prison and rehabilitation
- Justice and fairness
- Treatment of criminals



KEY BELIEFS THAT INFLUENCE ATTITUDES



CHRISTIANS

- People have a responsibility to follow God's laws and moral guidance.
- All humans are flawed (sinful) but can repent and be forgiven.
- Justice should be balanced with mercy and the chance of redemption.



MUSLIMS

- Allah is just and fair and will judge everyone on the Day of Judgement.
- People should be held accountable for their actions.
- Forgiveness (tawbah) is always possible from Allah.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Beliefs are based on human rights, equality and justice.
- Crime harms individuals and society and should be prevented.
- Punishment should be fair, proportionate and focused on rehabilitation.

KEY QUOTATIONS



"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."
Matthew 6:12

This shows Christians believe in forgiveness and second chances.



"And whoever does a wrong or injustice to himself but then seeks Allah's forgiveness will find Allah Forgiving and Merciful." Qur'an 4:110

This shows Muslims believe in repentance and Allah's forgiveness.



"Justice is the constant and perpetual will to assign to every man his due."
Ulpian (Roman lawyer)

This reflects the non-religious belief in justice and fairness.

THE AIMS OF PUNISHMENT



CHRISTIANS

- Punishment should protect society and prevent harm.
- It should allow criminals to repent and change.
- Justice should be balanced with forgiveness and mercy.



MUSLIMS

- Punishment must protect society and uphold justice.
- It should deter others from committing crime.
- Islam encourages forgiveness and reform where possible.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Punishment should be to deter crime, protect the public and reform offenders.
- It should be fair and proportionate to the crime.
- Rehabilitation helps reduce re-offending.



FORGIVENESS AND REDEMPTION



CHRISTIANS

- Jesus taught forgiveness (e.g. "forgive 70 x 7").
- People can repent and be forgiven by God.
- Forgiveness brings reconciliation and peace.



MUSLIMS

- Allah is Ar-Rahman (The Most Merciful) and forgives those who repent sincerely.
- Forgiveness can lead to a better life and place in the hereafter.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Some believe forgiveness is important for personal healing and moving on.
- Others believe criminals must earn forgiveness by changing their behaviour.



THE DEATH PENALTY



CHRISTIANS

- Some believe the death penalty is wrong because all life is sacred.
- Others believe it is justified for the most serious crimes.



MUSLIMS

- Islam allows the death penalty for certain serious crimes (e.g. murder).
- It must be applied fairly and with strict conditions.
- Forgiveness from the victim's family is encouraged.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Many oppose the death penalty because it is inhumane and irrevocable.
- Some argue it deters crime, others say it does not.



PRISON AND REHABILITATION



CHRISTIANS

- Prisons should aim to reform and help criminals change.
- Everyone deserves dignity and a chance to turn their life around.



MUSLIMS

- Islam encourages reform and rehabilitation.
- Prisoners should be treated with respect and helped to repent and improve.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Rehabilitation reduces re-offending and helps people contribute to society.
- Education, therapy and support are important.



JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS



CHRISTIANS

- God is just, and humans should also act justly.
- Everyone should be treated equally before the law.
- The Bible teaches to "love your neighbour".



MUSLIMS

- Allah is Al-Adl (The Most Just).
- Justice must be impartial and fair to all.
- Oppression and injustice are strongly condemned.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- Justice means treating everyone equally under the law.
- The legal system should be fair, transparent and free from bias.



TREATMENT OF CRIMINALS



CHRISTIANS

- Criminals should be treated with respect and dignity.
- Christians should show compassion and try to help them change.



MUSLIMS

- Islam teaches kindness and justice.
- Prisoners have rights and should be treated humanely.
- Helping others is a duty.



NON-RELIGIOUS

- All people have human rights including criminals.
- Humane treatment is important for everyone.



THE DEATH PENALTY: KEY ARGUMENTS

✓ ARGUMENTS FOR

- It is a just punishment for the most serious crimes.
- It can deter people from committing serious crimes.
- It protects society from dangerous individuals.



✗ ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- It is wrong to take a human life.
- There is a risk of executing innocent people.
- It does not always deter crime.
- Life in prison can protect the public without killing.

KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- ✓ How do different beliefs understand justice, mercy and forgiveness?
- ✓ Should the aim of punishment be to punish, deter, protect or reform?
- ✓ Can criminals really change?
- ✓ Is the death penalty ever justified?
- ✓ How can society balance justice for victims with compassion for offenders?



SUMMARY: HOW VIEWS MAY DIFFER

ISSUE	✝ CHRISTIANS	☾ MUSLIMS	👤 NON-RELIGIOUS
Aims of Punishment	Balance justice with forgiveness; protect society and encourage repentance.	Uphold justice and protect society; deter crime and allow reform.	Protect society, deter crime and rehabilitate offenders.
Forgiveness and Redemption	Central belief; everyone can be forgiven if they repent.	Repentance (tawbah) is always possible; Allah is merciful.	Important for personal healing; depends on behaviour change.
Death Penalty	Many oppose it; life is sacred; others believe it may be justified.	Allowed for certain serious crimes with strict rules and fairness.	Many oppose; seen as inhumane and not a proven deterrent.
Prison and Rehabilitation	Should aim to reform and help people change their lives.	Encourages reform and good treatment of prisoners.	Rehabilitation reduces re-offending and benefits society.
Justice and Fairness	Treat everyone equally; act justly and love your neighbour.	Allah is just; injustice is strongly forbidden.	Equality before the law; fair, impartial treatment for all.
Treatment of Criminals	Show compassion and respect; everyone has dignity.	Kindness and justice; prisoners have rights.	Human rights for all; humane treatment is essential.

KEY VOCABULARY

Justice – Fairness and equality, giving people what they deserve.

Mercy – Compassion and forgiveness shown towards others.

Forgiveness – Stopping feeling angry and choosing not to punish.

Repentance (Tawbah) – Feeling sorry for wrong actions and turning back to Allah.

Deterrence – Trying to prevent crime by threatening punishment.

Rehabilitation – Helping criminals change and become better people.

Retribution – Punishment that is meant to pay back for the crime.

Proportional – Punishment matches the seriousness of the crime.

Death Penalty – Legal punishment of execution for a crime.

STUDY TIPS



Learn key beliefs and what they teach about crime and punishment.



Compare Christian, Muslim and non-religious views.



Make links between beliefs and attitudes.



Use key vocabulary in your answers.



Practise 4, 6 and 12-mark exam questions.



Think about similarities and differences.