Theme C: Crime and punishment

Christian and Buddhist views

LOB:

• complete 3 revision questions on crime and punishment

Starter:
List as many good and bad points you can think of about eating meat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>crime:</strong></th>
<th>an offence which is punishable by law, for example stealing, murder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>evil:</strong></td>
<td>the opposite of good; a force or the personification of a negative power that is seen in many traditions as destructive against God</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty:</strong></td>
<td>Being without money, food or other basic needs of life (being poor)</td>
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<td><strong>Mental illness:</strong></td>
<td>A medical condition that affects a person’s feelings, emotions or moods, and perhaps their ability to relate to others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>punishment:</strong></td>
<td>Something legally done to somebody as a result of being found guilty of breaking the law</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Addiction:</strong></td>
<td>Physical or mental dependency on a substance or activity which is very difficult to overcome.</td>
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<td><strong>Greed:</strong></td>
<td>Wanting to possess wealth, goods or items of value which are not needed.</td>
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<td><strong>Retribution:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deterrence:</strong></td>
<td>an aim of punishment- to put people off committing crimes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reformation-</strong></td>
<td>An aim of punishment- to change someone’s behaviour for the better</td>
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<td><strong>Free will:</strong></td>
<td>The ability of people to make decisions for themselves without constraint</td>
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</table>
Prison: a secure building where offenders are kept for a period of time set by a judge

Corporal punishment: Punishment of an offender by causing them physical pain - now illegal in the UK

Community service: A way of punishing offenders by making them do unpaid work in the community

Forgiveness: showing mercy and pardoning someone for what they have done.

Death penalty: Capital punishment; a form of punishment in which a prisoner is put to death for crimes committed

Sanctity of life: All life is holy as it is created and loved by God; Christians believe human life should not be misused or abused.
Why people commit crime

- Poverty
- Opposition to an unjust law
- Hate
- Upbringing
- Mental illness
- Addiction
- Greed
Some crimes according to Buddhists, may arise from a skilful motive, such as defying a law that causes harm. Crime, however, usually involves a lack of kindness and awareness to others. Condemn the crime but not the criminal.
Poverty
Stealing breaks the second moral precept- to abstain from taking what has not been freely given.

Mental illness
Everyone sees reality in a distorted way, which leads people to inflict suffering on others and themselves.

Acting out of greed is unskilful and leads to suffering.

Addiction
Buddhists should abstain from taking drugs as this causes people to lose awareness. Less sensitive to others and more likely to cause harm.

Hatred is one of the three poisons and one of the main causes of suffering.

Buddhist teaching

Upbringing
In order to live an ethical life, people need supportive conditions that encourage sensitivity to others.

In order to live an ethical life, people need supportive conditions that encourage sensitivity to others.
Christian attitudes to law breakers

In general, laws protect citizens and should be respected.

Presume offenders to be innocent until proven guilty.

Some think the punishment should be as severe as the crime committed.

Others believe people should be helped in order not to reoffend (rehabilitation).

Christians believe that inhumane treatment of prisoners is wrong.

Hate the crime but not the person who committed it.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:34-36) Jesus says ‘I was in prison and you visited me.’
• Buddhism seeks to relieve suffering rather than increase it.
• People will receive consequences for themselves due to bad kamma. Also people who act in unskilful ways will have few friends.

• According to Buddhists everyone can change. There is always the possibility of rehabilitation.

• Buddhists avoid feeling hatred towards criminals

• It is important to confess what you have done and make amends.

• Anguilimala, killed many people and took a finger from each of them, which he hung around his neck. The Buddha did not punish him for his crimes but encouraged him to live a better life.
• He renounced violence and followed the Buddha.
The Aims of Punishment in Buddhism:

**Retribution:**
- An aim of punishment - to get your own back; ‘an eye for an eye’

  Committing violence against another offender does not wipe away the suffering caused by crime. Creates bitterness and breeds further violence and crime.

**Deterrence:**
- An aim of punishment - to put people off committing crimes

  Traditionally being reborn in a realm of suffering was a deterrence for Buddhists. If in the grip of greed, hatred and delusion it is difficult to remember this. May agree with prison to protect society but not for Retribution or Deterrence.

**Reformation:**
- An aim of punishment - to change someone’s behaviour for the better

  Encourage people to recognise the suffering caused and apologise to the victims, perhaps face to face. Could be important to do some corrective action. Rehabilitate the criminal in their eyes and societies.
Reformation: an aim of punishment-to change someone’s behaviour for the better.

Therapy sessions
Individual counselling
Meeting victims

Christianity
Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the lord. On the contrary:’ If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink… do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good’
Romans 12:19-21
## Two mothers on forgiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gee Walker</th>
<th>Sally Dowler</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 2005 Anthony Walker was murdered while he waited for the bus in a racially motivated attack. Following the attack, his family publically forgave his murderers. His mother Gee stated: &quot;I have to forgive them. I can't feel anger and hatred, because that is what killed my son&quot;</td>
<td>In 2002 Milly Dowler was abducted and murdered by Levi Bellfield, a man who would eventually be found to be a serial killer. After a difficult trial, he was found guilty in 2011. After the trial, she stated “I hope whilst he is in prison he is treated with the same brutality he dealt out to his victims and that his life is a living hell”</td>
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Which view do you agree with and why?
"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (The Lord’s Prayer)

"Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27)

"Lord how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times’" (Matthew 18:21-22)

"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Jesus' last few words while he was being crucified)
Buddhist views on forgiveness

- For Buddhists it is important to forgive when they are holding on to a sense of being wronged, which leads them to feel angry or resentful.
- Letting go of those feelings and the desire to see the other person suffer.
- A willingness to move on and recognise the other person can change

"He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me.’ Of those who wrap themselves in it hatred is not quenched.”

_The Buddha in the Dhammapada, verse 3_

- Forgive for the sake of your own health and welfare
- People should face consequences, however, Buddhism teaches they will suffer whether punished or not.

Anh-Huong Nguyen on forgiveness
Zen Buddhist who spent ten months in a refugee camp in Malaysia before going to the USA. Met many girls and women who had been raped by pirates who boarded their boats in the waters near Malaysia. She began being very angry, but through meditation came to understand the pirates themselves were victims of their upbringing and local environments. She realised if she had been born a male into a family were piracy was expected and accepted, she might well have become a pirate herself. She recognises suffering makes it hard to forgive, but thinks understanding and compassion can lead to forgiveness. ‘How can I better understand myself and the other person?’

Ann-Huong learnt to forgive them.

Elie Wiesel Holocaust survivor
‘I asked God not to forgive.’
**Prison**
Primary purpose for Buddhists is to protect society from them.

**Corporal punishment**
Expresses violence, likely to encourage resentment rather than reformation.

**Treatment of criminals**

Buddhists approve of **community service** that helps to rehabilitate the criminal.
Death penalty: capital punishment; a form of punishment in which a prisoner is put to death for crimes committed.

Sanctity of life: all life is holy as it is created and loved by God; Christians believe human life should not be misused or abused.
### Death Penalty – For/Against

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<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deterrent of serious crime</td>
<td>Countries such as the UK that do not have the death penalty, do not all have higher murder rates than those that do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gets rid of most dangerous criminals</td>
<td>Executed terrorists may be seen as martyrs and inspiration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ultimate compensation for taking life of another</td>
<td>Human life should never be taken away. Execution is a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</td>
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<td>Retribution for victim’s family</td>
<td>The death penalty is discriminatory and is often used disproportionately against people from poor backgrounds or of particular races, or those with mental health problems.</td>
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<td>Public opinion wants executions.</td>
<td>The state carrying out the death penalty makes us all into killers. If we support the death penalty for murder, we end up supporting murder, which makes us guilty of hypocrisy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saves money (i.e. offender is not in prison)</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is more humane to put someone to death than to keep them locked up for years.</td>
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### Ethical arguments

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<th>Utility: an action is right if it produces the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people affected by it.</th>
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<td>Therefore the death penalty should be allowed if it is to protect the wider society and is not simply used for retribution.</td>
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<td>Sanctity of life: see earlier key word. God gave life and only he has the right to take it away. Some Christians would argue it should be left up to God to take life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Christians would argue God approves of taking away the lives of those who have already murdered.</td>
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Christian and Buddhism quotes for and against the death penalty

‘Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed’. Genesis 9:6 (NIV)

Jesus talked about the importance of forgiveness and not to judge others to harshly.
‘father forgive them, for they know not what they do’. ‘Turn the other cheek’ ‘Put your sword away’.

‘I am convinced that this way is the best, since every life is sacred, every human being is endowed with an inalienable right to dignity, and society can only benefit from the rehabilitation of those convicted of crimes’ Pope Francis

Most Buddhists against the death penalty.

Breaks the first moral precept and does not allow the possibility of rehabilitation. It makes revenge part of the system, which is unskilful.

Most Buddhists disagree with the principle of utility. Believing it is not possible to create happiness by making others suffer. Encourages vengeance, hatred (one of the three poisons) and cruelty.

‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn away from their ways and live.’ Ezekiel 33:11

Thailand legally allows capital punishment for more than 30 crimes, including drug trafficking.Shows Buddhists ethics don’t necessarily impact government policy.

‘Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth’ Exodus 21:23-24

“We should not seek revenge on those who have committed crimes against us, or reply to their crimes with other crimes. We should reflect that by the law of kamma, they are in danger of lowly and miserable lives to come, and that our duty to them, as to every human being, is to help them rise towards Nirvana, rather than let them sink to lower levels of rebirth.” Dalai Lama
Explain two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about whether the death penalty should exist in the UK. In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and one or more other religious traditions.

Explain two religious beliefs about reformation as an aim of punishment. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

‘It is right to forgive all offenders whoever they are and whatever they have done.’
Evaluate this statement.

‘Capital punishment can never be justified’
Evaluate this statement.