

Naming and shaming

Discussion

1. Match the following punishments to the definitions below:

1. a fine
 2. a prison sentence
 3. a suspended prison sentence
 4. community service
 5. tagging
 6. the death penalty
 7. corporal punishment
 8. solitary confinement
- a. you go to prison
 - b. you have to pay money as a punishment
 - c. you have to spend some time working for the local community
 - d. you are beaten or punished physically in some way
 - e. you are killed (for example, by hanging, electrocution, or some other way)
 - f. you can live at home, but if you commit another crime, you will be sent to prison
 - g. you are kept in prison on your own – away from other prisoners
 - h. you have an electronic device fitted to your body so that the police always know where you are

2. Discuss these questions in pairs:

1. Which of the above punishments are used in your country?
2. What other punishments are used?
3. What is the reasoning behind each different type of punishment?
4. Which punishment is the most effective? Which is the least effective?

Reading

Read the article below and then answer these questions:

1. What sentences were given for a) shoplifting b) drunk driving?
2. What does one woman think are the benefits of these sentences?

LET THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME!

In a number of courts in the US 'naming and shaming' is working. If you are found guilty of shoplifting, you may expect a fine or a short prison sentence, but you might actually receive a totally different punishment. You could have to spend a couple of weeks walking up and down the street outside the store you stole from, carrying a sign that reads: 'I am a thief. Do not steal! This could be you.'

This somewhat eccentric sentencing policy has an effect. Consider the drunk driver forced to confront the consequences of his actions every week for five years. His sentence was to write a one-dollar cheque every Friday to the man

whose daughter he ran over. At the bottom of each cheque he had to write 'For causing the death of your daughter.'

Shamed offenders often do not like their sentences – and that is the point. 'Shame makes you stop and think,' says a woman with a recent conviction for theft. 'It gave me humility, which helped me. And if other people see the sign, maybe they'll think twice before they commit a crime.'

The only question is: how far will we go down this road? Will each town revive its public stocks? Will we soon be going along to throw tomatoes and rotten eggs at convicted criminals? And is this a step forward or a step back?

Discussion

Look at these statements about the article you read. Decide if you agree or disagree.

1. I don't think humiliation is a good way to punish people. In schools we don't humiliate children any longer when they misbehave. We shouldn't do it to adults either.
2. The punishment for the drunk driver is not enough. It's a clever idea, but this man should also be spending a substantial time in prison.
3. I think the punishment for shoplifting is far too lenient. A few weeks in prison would be much more effective.
4. These types of punishment are a step back towards the middle ages. Surely civilisation has progressed since then. What will these people want next? Public hangings?

Compare your answers in pairs or small groups.

Language

Find these words and expressions in the text above:

sentence

cause the death of ...

prison

an offender

commit a crime

a criminal

conviction

a fine

find someone guilty of ...

Complete the text below using appropriate forms of the words and phrases above:

Darren Jackson, 31, of Oxford Road, Abingdon was (1) yesterday of (2) Abigail Hunt while driving under the influence of drink. Judge Barbara Mowat (3) Mr Jackson to a £1000 (4) and three years in (5) saying: "You have (6) a very serious crime. And what is worse, you have a previous, similar (7). You may think you are unlucky. I think you are a shameless (8). I am giving you a harsh sentence in the hope that it will be a warning to other potential (9)."

Correct the wrong endings to this sentence:

- He should be locked.
 put in bars.
 sent in prison.

Discussion

In an effort to stop petty crime, your government wants to develop a new and radical system of punishments for dealing with minor criminals. Work in pairs and devise suitably imaginative punishments for people who:

1. steal stationery and pens from their employer
2. break the speed limit when driving
3. leave a restaurant without paying the bill
4. pick pockets
5. park illegally
6. steal mobile phones

For example:

People who steal mobile phones should:

- be made to work in a call centre for two years.
- spend one day a week for a year cleaning public phone boxes.
- be fitted with an electronic device that blocks mobile phone signals for a distance of ten metres from the wearer.

Compare your answers with other groups.



"Excuse me, madam,
but I have reason to suspect . . ."