

College Guild
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

CAPTIVITIES

Unit 3 of 5

PART 1: GOVERNMENTS

You could say we are captives of the electoral process, but it is also the basis of a free society. Each state has a certain number of electoral votes which go to the Presidential candidate the voters in that state choose. The next President is the one who gets the most electoral votes, (not necessarily the one who gets the most votes overall.)

- 1. What are the best and the worst things about a system that votes to choose its President?**
- 2. What is another form of government? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the way that government selects its leaders?**
- 3. Exactly what is meant by (a) "free society" and (b) "captives of the electoral process"?**

One approach governments may use to "solve" national or international problems is vengeance, that is, punishing the culprit with an action similar to the crime they committed; an example is using capital punishment to prevent murder. Revenge does not have a positive "blindness imagery" like the one for Lady Justice. Instead, the message is:

An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.

- 4. How does this apply to Israel and Palestine?**
- 5. Do you think the current level of violence in the Middle East will ever change?**
- 6. When (if ever) should a country base its foreign policy on vengeance?**
- 7. What happens when a country bases its criminal justice system on vengeance?**
- 8. Does a government's use of vengeance actually change the people who live in that society?**

Vengeance can be both the cause and result of terrorism.

- 9. Are revenge and terrorism the same thing??**

On September 11, 2001, terrorism hit our own country at a level and in a way never before imagined.

- 10. Is there a difference between a terrorist and a criminal? Explain.**
- 11. If/when all of the people responsible for "nine-eleven" are caught, should they receive due process under the law?**

12. List five steps individuals, our President, and/or the international community can take to reduce terrorism.

PART 2 - WAR

In war, captives come in many forms. In World War II, the city of London, England was being bombed regularly by the Germans. That threat was always present as Londoners went about their daily lives. In Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. bombs have fallen and are still falling on civilians. Those people have been killed by soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Some Iraqi people think our country has freed them, others that we are foreign invaders.

13. Are the Iraqi people captives of the United States? Explain your answer.

14. What do you think is going to happen in Iraq and/or the US in the next 5 years as a result of this war?

We've discussed Israel vs. Palestine, Germany vs. England and the U.S. vs. Iraq. War has devastated the world from the time historical records were kept. It has not just been about battling countries, but tribe against tribe, religion against religion, culture against culture, and race against race.

This was sung by American slaves, but they were singing of another captivity from long before, in ancient Egypt:

*Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh,
Let my people go.*

War holds all involved captive -- POWs, draftees, civilians, families of soldiers, and tax-payers to name just a few.

15. Pick one of them and write a story or a poem.

Pilot Ted Withington was one soldier whose plane was shot down during World War II; he was able to bring it down just outside enemy territory. The following is an entry from his journal:

December 3, 1944

We were taken to another military post and questioned for an hour by unfriendly intelligence officers. They even accused us of being spies and threatened to keep us as prisoners unless we told them all we knew. We tried to explain how we got there, but no one of them spoke English and the one crew member we had who spoke a little Polish decided to keep quiet.

16. Write an entry from the journal of a soldier (American or enemy) serving in any war.

17. Describe a day in the life of a child in Afghanistan or Iraq.

A comparison of war and criminal justice is found in the case of Alabama death row inmate Brian Baldwin. Brian was executed in Alabama's electric chair in 1999. He wrote the following essay comparing his own experiences to those of Ted Withington.

The similarities between Ted's story and my prison life is survival at all costs. Witnessing best friends dying. Being right in the middle of battle wondering if this will be your last run, but feeling invincible, losing what all other humans still have, fear.

Fear is not there anymore, only survival and knowing if you do come out alive, you will never let anything in life get the best of you. I can only compare the casualties of World War II to executing prisoners today because of the survivors. The survivors are the ones that carry the memories of friends killed. They're the ones that are left wondering was one death worth it, and is the world really a better place now that their friends are dead.

18. Go back in history and write a letter to a prisoner-of-war.

19. Write a letter to a supporter of capital punishment.

Here is poem by John Yarbrough – it could apply to either war or capital punishment:

Survivor

*Let there be one of us
left when the carnage ends.
A mind filled
with things spilled
from our hearts.
Let there be a survivor
to ring the bell
to tell
the world.*

20. If you were that survivor, what would you tell the world? (Answer in a song, poem, diary entry, speech or letter.)

PART 3: POVERTY

Author Henrik Ibsen (1828 - 1906) wrote:

"There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt."

Money or the lack of it can be a prison -- too many in this world are trapped in poverty.

21. How is a free person without enough money affected?

22. How is a prisoner without enough money affected?

23. What should the state and federal governments be doing to decrease poverty?

24. List 3 government programs you would take money away from and 3 programs that you would transfer it to.

It's ironic, but people can also be trapped by wealth. England's Princess Diana had money, fame, beauty and social status, but it did not give her happiness or long life. Here's another quotation; this one could apply to Princess Diana even though it was written more than 2,000 years ago:

"Thus in the highest position there is the least freedom of action." (Sallust)

25. What did Sallust mean?

26. Give an example of how having too much money can make a person's life miserable or even lead to death. (You can use fiction, non-fiction or poetry.)

The lyrics to an old song claim:

*There's nothing surer,
The rich get richer and the poor get poorer
In the meantime, in between time
Ain't we got fun.*

27. Is it true that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer? Explain.

This is something more fun to think about when it comes to money:

28. If you have \$100 to blow in a supermarket, what would you buy?
In a bookstore?
At Walmart?

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes