

‘CEO killer’ faces the death penalty

theday.co.uk/ceo-killer-faces-the-death-penalty-46 April 2025



Eye for an eye: According to his friends, Luigi Mangione (above), who could face the death penalty, seemed to have everything going for him when he allegedly shot healthcare company boss Brian Thompson.

Is it wrong for a state to kill? The trial of Luigi Mangione revives the debate on whether justice means murderers should lose their own lives.

What’s happening?

New York City, 6.44am. As he walks down the pavement, Brian Thompson, the CEO of the largest health insurance company in America is shot dead by a masked man.

Five days later a suspect, 26-year-old Luigi Mangione, is arrested.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for Mangione, with Attorney General Pam Bondi, calling the shooting a “premeditated, cold-blooded assassination.”

Find out more

In 18th-century Britain, 222 crimes were punishable by death, including minor offences such as cutting down trees and robbing a rabbit warren!

The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham argued that **capital punishment** was cruel and irrational. After all, once a criminal has been killed, they can no longer repay society for their crime.

Around the world, 55 countries still have the death penalty. Those in favour argue that severe penalties for murder deter other criminals and also prevent re-offending.

Since Mangione’s arrest he has become a folk hero for those who think health insurance companies are exploitative. The suspect’s lawyers argue that the government is “defending the broken, immoral and murderous healthcare industry”.

New York prosecutors might make an example of the CEO’s assassin. But, if it was wrong to murder Brian Thompson, can it be right to murder his killer?

Is it wrong for a state to kill?

Some say

Yes! The death penalty is vengeance rather than justice. If someone is killed after committing a murder, they can never repay society for their crime.

Others think

No! Capital punishment is legal in 55 countries around the world and the majority of the US population support the death penalty. If someone takes a life, they deserve to lose their own.

Some people say

“An evil deed is not redeemed by an evil deed of retaliation.”

Coretta Scott King (1927 – 2006), American author and activist

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you think that Luigi Mangione is a cold-blooded killer, or a brave vigilante, or a confused young man? Would you feel differently about him if he had killed a woman?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: How many people in America are killed via the death penalty each year? Has that number gone up, down or stayed the same over time?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Investigate the murder rate in a country with the death penalty. Now compare this with the murder rate in a nearby country where capital punishment has been abolished. What does this show?

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Imagine that the government proposed a referendum on reintroducing the death penalty. Write an essay arguing whether or not that referendum should take place and giving your reasons why.

5. Express

What do others believe? - In groups, come up with one more argument in favour of the death penalty and one more argument in opposition. Then, as a class, decide which arguments you think are the strongest – both for and against.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine a world where the death penalty is introduced for major and even minor crimes. Write a newspaper article explaining whether or not this has reduced total crime rates.

Glossary

Capital punishment - Punishment by death.