

I'll bring back Alcatraz, says Trump

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Isolation: Alcatraz prison was closed because it was nearly three times more expensive to operate than any other federal penitentiary, largely because of its island location.

Does prison really work? Once known for holding America's most notorious gangsters and criminals, nobody ever expected that Alcatraz might become a prison once again — until now.

What's happening?

Alcatraz was once America's most feared prison. Closed in 1963, it has since become a popular tourist attraction.

America's fascination with "The Rock" extends to President Donald Trump, who last week declared that his administration would reopen Alcatraz. But does prison actually *work*?

Polls suggest that 60% of US adults want the government to reduce crime rates, but could reopening Alcatraz be a solution?

Find out more

Donald Trump has argued that reopening this notorious facility would deter "vicious, violent, and repeat criminal offenders".

But **Democrats** disagree. California congresswoman Nancy Pelosi said that the "proposal is not a serious one", and opponents point out that the US already has

two million people behind bars.

The core question is this: should prisons provide punishment or **rehabilitation**? Norway's criminal justice policy might provide an answer. It moved away from a harsh approach to prisoners 20 years ago, instead providing daily education. Just 20% of released prisoners in Norway commit another crime, half that of the United States.

Does prison really work?

Some say

Yes! While people are in prison, they cannot cause any more harm, and it is important that offenders pay for their crimes.

Others think

No! Many **inmates** go on to reoffend after their release because they do not receive education, therapy or training. Prisons are also costly to run.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

1. Connect

“A society that builds more prisons than schools is a society that needs to rethink its priorities.”

Barack Obama (1961 –), 44th president of the United States

What do you think?

How do you feel about this story? - If a crime happened to you, would you be willing to forgive the person who did it? Do people deserve a second chance?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Are there any other countries following Norway's approach to prisons? How much would it cost to reopen Alcatraz?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - If you were the leader of your country for a day, what would you do? Would you prioritise punishing criminals or forgiving them? What makes your approach the best one?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Ask your classmates what approach they would take. Do others take a different position? Try to convince each other that your argument is the strongest.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a report on what you think will happen next with Alcatraz. Do you think President Trump will succeed in reopening the prison? Or will it remain a tourist attraction in the years to come?

Glossary

Democrats - Members of the Democratic party, the left-leaning US political party. Joe Biden and Barack Obama are both Democrats.

Rehabilitation - Literally, 'to make fit again'.

Inmates - People who live in a place where they are not free to come and go as they please, like a prison or a hospital.