**The Case of the 15 year-old Murderer**

William Wayne Thompson was found by an Oklahoma jury to have actively participated at the age of 15 in the brutal murder of his former brother-in-law, Charles Keane. There was evidence that Keane had in the past physically abused Thompson and his sister. Thompson and three others kidnapped Keane, beat him, kicked him, cut his throat and chest, shot him in the head, and dumped his body into the river. Photographs of the body were described by the court as “ghastly.”

It was determined at a hearing that Thompson, who had been arrested previously for a number of serious assaults, had “no reasonable prospects for rehabilitation within the juvenile justice system.” He was then tried as an adult and convicted. The law of Oklahoma did not specify that any minimum age was required before the death penalty could be ordered. The judge, following the jury’s recommendation, ordered the death penalty for Thompson. The sentence was appealed and upheld by the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Thompson’s appeal ended up before the U.S. Supreme Court.

**QUESTIONS**

*\*\*\* Answer in complete sentences\*\*\**

1. Should William Wayne Thompson have been transferred and tried as an adult? Give your reasons.
2. Are you for or against capital punishment as a possible penalty for those under the age of 16 who commit murder? Write down the two strongest reasons in support of your position. What are the two strongest arguments in support of the other position?
3. If you were on the U.S. Supreme Court, would you find imposing the death penalty on William Wayne Thompson to be “cruel and unusual punishment?” Give reasons for your position.
4. If this crime had occurred in a state without the death penalty, what would be an appropriate punishment? Explain.

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