

Week 1: Introduction

- What is your impression of lethal injection going into this book?
- If you are against the death penalty, does a conversation about *how* prisoners are killed detract from a conversation about *whether* they should be killed?
- If you are for the death penalty, does it matter how the deed is done? If so, why?
- When a government takes life in its citizens' name, are there unspoken conditions that come with its ultimate exercise of power? If so, what are they?
- Why do you think executioners swab a prisoner's arm with alcohol before injecting the drugs that will kill them?
- The author states in a footnote that she will not be discussing the prisoners' crimes and explains why—do you think she was right or wrong in this choice?

Week 2: The Execution of Clayton Lockett (Ch. 1)

- What, if anything, did you know about the execution of Clayton Lockett before reading this chapter?
- What was the most disturbing or surprising thing you read about this execution?
- Do you think what happened during this execution was avoidable? If so, who should have done what differently?
- Did you want to know what Clayton Lockett did to get the death penalty at the beginning of this chapter? If so, did you still want to know at the end?
- What does this execution tell us about the political nature of the death penalty?
- What was your reaction to the official statements about this execution after the fact?
- Is there a takeaway from reading about Clayton Lockett's execution? If so, what is it?
- How (if at all) did Clayton Lockett's execution affect your view of lethal injection and/or the state that executes in our name? Is your view at this point that it was an anomaly or a systemic failing?

Week 3: Faux Science (Ch. 2)

- What was your impression of the science behind lethal injection before reading this chapter? Did you think lethal injection was essentially like euthanizing a pet?
- What was the most striking or surprising thing you learned about lethal injection in this chapter?
- Why do you think states use lethal injection as opposed to other execution methods?
- Is experimentation inevitable when it comes to execution methods?
- Who should bear the burden in execution challenges—should the prisoner have to show that a new execution protocol is torturous, or should the state have to show that it is not?
- Is an execution by nitrogen gas better or worse than an execution by lethal injection?
- Why do you think the drug protocols to euthanize animals are more humane than drug protocols to execute humans?

Week 4: Torturous Drugs (Ch. 3)

- What was the most striking or surprising thing you learned in this chapter?
- Knowing the drugs used in lethal injection, would you choose it if you were sentenced to death? If not, what execution method would you choose instead?
- One doctor describes a drug's effect as a person's worst nightmare. Did reading about any of these drugs play into your own fears or nightmares?
- Which drug's effects bothered you the most?
- Do you think that with the right drugs that lethal injection can be fixed?
- Are these good faith disputes over what the drugs do, or do you think states are aware of their torturous effects?
- If people could see the torturous effects of the drugs on prisoners, what do you think the public reaction would be? Would it cause people to change their mind about the death penalty, or double-down on it?

Week 5: An Exceptionally Delicate, Error-Prone Procedure (Ch. 4)

- What, in your opinion, is the most problematic part of the lethal injection process?
- Given the various problems carrying out a lethal injection, should prisoners be given the option of committing suicide by drinking poison? What moral or ethical issues would this implicate?
- Before reading this chapter, what did you imagine about the physique of the typical prisoner being executed? Does knowing that the people being executed are often frail former drug users change your views about lethal injection in any way?
- At this point in the book, do you think lethal injection is a viable execution method? If not, why do you think states keep using it? If so, how can it be fixed?
- If the public could see a lethal injection being carried out, do you think it would change their mind about the death penalty one way or the other?
- Do you think that when a prisoner survives an attempted execution that the state should be able to try again?
- Was this chapter more emotionally difficult to read than the others? If so, why do you think that is?

Week 6: Inept Executioners (Ch. 5)

- Why are executioners so inept? Is the main problem a personnel issue? A qualifications issue? A training issue? Whatever it is, do you think it can be fixed?
- Should states be required to have doctors perform lethal injection? Why or why not?
- Do you think having a criminal record or drug/alcohol problem has any bearing on whether a person should serve as an executioner?
- What was your reaction to Missouri passing a law prohibiting the disclosure of an executioner's identity after revelations of its malpractice-ridden executioner doctor?
- Who is the villain in the lethal injection story thus far? The people who created the lethal injection process? The people who administer it? The people who understand its defects and refuse to assist to mitigate its harms?

Week 7: The Drug Supplier Saga (Ch. 6)

- Before reading this chapter, did you think that the lethal injection drug shortage was all abolitionists' fault? Having read the chapter, what do you think of that claim now?
- What shocked you the most in this chapter?
- What did you know about European abolitionism before reading this chapter? Were you surprised to learn of longstanding opposition to the death penalty abroad?
- Is there a sense of hypocrisy in states breaking the law to enforce the law, or is your sense that states should do whatever they need to do in order to enforce lawful death sentences?
- How does what you learned in this chapter relate to traditional conservative core values more broadly?
- Is there a legal, moral, or ethical difference between state officials smuggling illegal drugs into our country and non-government drug-runners? If so, which way does that cut—which do you view as more offensive?
- What was your reaction to Big Pharma's role in this story? Did it cause you to reconsider any previously held views?

Week 8: The Medical Profession Mandate (Ch. 7)

- The author relies heavily on quotes to make points in this chapter—did you find any to be particularly impactful? If so, what made them so compelling?
- What ethical, moral, and/or professional difference (if any) do you see between doctors participating in lethal injection and doctors participating in physician-assisted suicide?
- Do you think doctors have an obligation to assist the state in this scenario or an obligation not to?
- What is the core of the medical profession's problem in this chapter—is it doctor participation in lethal injection or is it lethal injection itself? Which do you see as posing the greater danger to the profession, and why?
- What do you make of the fact that states adopted a medical means of execution without bothering to get the medical profession on board—and in fact, knowing that it was not? Who should bear the consequences of this decision?
- How do you resolve the tension between the “do no harm” principle and the principle of beneficence to minimize suffering? Is there a way out of the so-called Hippocratic Paradox?
- Should states be able to override the medical profession's regulation of its members on this issue? Why or why not?
- Should the medical profession be able to override an individual doctor's decision to participate in executions by lethal injection if they want to? Why or why not?

Week 9: The Prison Problem (Ch. 8)

- What do you view as the minimum guidance that legislatures owe to the corrections departments that have to carry out executions by lethal injection?
- What, in your view, is the meaning of a “successful” execution?

- Do you agree with current Eighth Amendment doctrine? If not, what should the required showing be to make out a constitutional violation?
- Can prisons do better at implementing lethal injection? If so, how?
- Who is the villain in this chapter? Who is the victim?
- Is the trauma that executioners experience from conducting executions inevitable? What should be done to minimize it?
- How do you feel about the callous indifference by state actors documented in this chapter? Is it defensible or indefensible, or somewhere in between?
- Do you think lethal injection can be fixed? Why or why not?

Week 10: The Secrecy Solution (Ch. 9)

- What was your main reaction while you were reading this chapter? Did you think of a dystopian novel when reading this chapter? If so, which one?
- What role, if any, do you think secrecy plays in maintaining lethal injection?
- Can you think of another example of state action shrouded in secrecy, that when it was uncovered, resulted in change? Do you think that will happen here? Why or why not?
- What challenge does this chapter pose to the democratic defense of the death penalty itself? Do the details matter, or does public support for the death penalty include those?
- Do you think executions should be televised so people can see for themselves what is happening? Or do you think that kind of exposure would debase our society?
- Should states be able to avoid FOIA (freedom of information act) obligations with secrecy statutes? Why or why not?
- Do you think secrecy statutes violate the First Amendment freedom of the press or a prisoner's constitutional rights? Why or why not?
- Is there a tension between not trusting the government to manage things like vehicle registration, healthcare, and taxes, but trusting it to conduct executions? Or are those totally different things?
- Who is the villain in this chapter? What do you think we should do about it?
- Who are the victims in lethal injection's story besides the prisoner being executed? What do you think we should do about them?

Week 11: The Epilogue

- What was your reaction to reading the epilogue? Were you surprised by what you read?
- How has this book affected your views—about lethal injection, about the death penalty, and perhaps even about punishment and/or the carceral state more generally?
- Do you believe that even condemned capital murderers can change? Why or why not?
- Why do you think states care so much about preserving this execution method? Why do you think they have sacrificed so much to maintain lethal injection?
- Have you talked to friends or family about this book? If so, what have you told them? If not, what is one thing you learned from this book that you think they should know?
- What is your takeaway from reading this book?
- Would you recommend it to a friend or family member? Why or why not?