

1 PETER MOSKOS

## 2 **In defence of flogging**

3 original at

4 <http://chronicle.com/article/In-Defense-of-Flogging/127208/>

5 In 1970, 338,000 Americans were incarcerated. That was before the war  
6 on drugs and the adoption of many laws that increased sentence lengths  
7 and the number of nonviolent offenders in prison. At that time, there was  
8 even hope that prisons would simply fade into the dustbin of history. That  
9 didn't happen.

10 From 1970 to 1990, crime rose while we locked up a million more people.  
11 Since then we've locked up another million and crime has gone down. In  
12 fact there is very little correlation between incarceration and the crime  
13 rate. Is there something so special about that second million behind bars?  
14 Were they the only ones who were "real criminals"? Did we simply get it  
15 wrong with the first 1.3 million we locked up? If so, should we let them  
16 out?

17 I propose we give convicts the choice of the lash at the rate of two lashes  
18 per year of incarceration. One cannot reasonably argue that merely  
19 offering this choice is somehow cruel, especially when the status quo of  
20 incarceration remains an option. Prison means losing a part of your life  
21 and everything you care for. Compared with this, flogging is just a few  
22 very painful strokes on the backside. And it's over in a few minutes.

23 Often, and often very quickly, those who said flogging is too cruel to even  
24 consider suddenly say that flogging isn't cruel enough. My defence of  
25 flogging—whipping, caning, lashing, call it what you will—is meant to be  
26 provocative, but only because something extreme is needed to shatter the  
27 status quo. We are in denial about the brutality of the uniquely American  
28 invention of mass incarceration.

## Questions

- 1) 'Incarcerated' in line 5 (and elsewhere) is just another word for a concept that keeps repeating throughout the article. Find the other words throughout the text referring to the same thing!
- 2) Explain the meaning of the idiom 'fade into the dustbin of history' (line 8).
- 3) What does the pronoun 'we' (line 10) refer to?
- 4) Give a summary of what happened in the 70s and 90s with regard to the number of prisoners in the US.
- 5) Is there a clear-cut correlation between the number of people in prison and the number of crimes committed?
- 6) What are, according to the author, the advantages of flogging people over jailing them? What condition does the author set in order for flogging not to be considered something cruel?
- 7) Do you think that corporeal punishment should be an option for convicts? Do you think that a stay in prison can have a positive impact on a person's character and behaviour?

## Vocabulary

**sentence** (line 6) – a punishment that a judge gives to someone who has been declared guilty of a crime

**lash** (line 17) – a hit with a whip, especially as a punishment

**shatter** (line 26) – to weaken, destroy, or refute (ideas, opinions, etc.)

**(be) in denial** (line 27) – in a situation in which someone does not want to admit that something is true

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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