

Document 7

General Understanding

a/ Characters :

- Steven Hayes (rapist, murderer, convict)
- Dr Goldsmith (psychiatrist)
- Jennifer Hawke-Petit (and her two daughters) : victims
- Dr Cunningham (psychologist)
- Mention of Steven's parents and brother
- Prosecutors – in particular Gary Nicholson

b/ Family background :

Steven grew up in a dysfunctional family ; his father was a violent man, his mother was alcoholic.

c/ Conviction :

Steven was convicted of rape and murder on October 5th, 2007.

d/ Sentence : death

Vocab (done in class)

Detailed Understanding :

1. Psychiatrist's testimony

Mr Hayes comes from a dysfunctional family ; he suffered from attention deficit disorder as a child, having been sexually abused, beaten up by his violent father who also used to force him to fistfight against his brother ; his alcoholic mother didn't help.

2. Psychologist's testimony

Mr Hayes is full of remorse **and feels for** the remaining members of his victims' family. He is totally **disheartened**, and feels suicidal as he is convinced he is unable to do anything right, describing his crime as an irreversible mistake.

3. Comparison

Both tend to develop people's compassion towards the convict. While the psychiatrist highlights the conditions that may have shaped Hayes' personality and reasoning, the psychologist focuses on Hayes' all negative emotions that generate a feeling of doom.

4. Use of those testimonies by the defense

They try to **alleviate** his guilt (and mens rea) making him sound sick, being a victim too ; this is an attempt at **pleading diminished responsibility** to avoid the death sentence.

5. Prosecutors' reaction

They ridicule the specialists' assertions, exposing Hayes' suicidal attempts as faked, and questioning Cunningham's **professional stance** by revealing the psychologist has been requested by the defense

to testify in many cases, all over the US. In Hayes' case, the prosecutors underline the fact that Cunningham has had little information about the murder itself, reinforcing the impression that Cunningham naturally tends to side with the culprit, testifying of an emotional state that could give way to extenuating circumstances.