

**Roper v. Simmons:
Redefining Justice for Juveniles in the U.S.**

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1. How did you choose your topic and how does it relate to the annual theme?

When discussing rights and responsibilities, one word comes to mind: law. Laws are unique because they preserve rights and responsibilities simultaneously. However, rights and responsibilities often contradict each other. Juvenile justice examines the paradox of rights and responsibilities when punishing defendants. Under the premise that juveniles are minors, the court must impose an appropriate punishment. Unfortunately, the Korean court is continuously calling for lenient punishments while the U.S. courts impose relatively harsh penalties on juvenile defendants. Our topic, the case *Roper v. Simmons* and its idea of a prohibition of execution for juvenile defendants, discusses the adequate rights and responsibilities for their sins.

2. How did you conduct your research?

The first step of our research was formulating our research question: “To what extent did the case of *Roper v. Simmons* impact the juvenile justice system of the United States, and how did this change the balance between rights and responsibilities?” Beginning the actual research, we focused on *Roper v. Simmons* as it was the central idea of our study. From there, we identified key areas to investigate: the case summary, court decisions, timeline of events, and its broader impact on the juvenile justice system (e.g. judgments before and after the *Roper v. Simmons* case). Furthermore, to ensure accuracy and credibility, we relied on reputable sources such as government websites, news outlets, academic books, and journals.

3. How did you create your project?

After completing our research, we began developing our actual project (website). Since we were unfamiliar with the NHD WebCentral program, we first planned the website’s structure and design to ensure a clear and organized presentation. To visualize our ideas, we created a prototype that helped us experiment with formats, layouts, and color schemes before transferring our work to NHD WebCentral. Once the prototype was finalized, the process of building the website on the platform went much smoother. Throughout the process, we continued to refine our design and add any additional information.

4. What is your historical argument?

Our historical argument, the *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) decision shifted the juvenile justice system by prohibiting the death penalty for offenders under 18. It recognizes that juveniles lack maturity. It not only expanded constitutional protections such as the Eighth Amendment but also emphasized rehabilitation, reshaping the balance of juveniles' rights with their responsibilities.

5. In what ways is your topic significant in history?

Our topic is significant in history, as juvenile justice is not just vital in the U.S. but internationally. Globally, the law reform from the early 2000s prefers rehabilitation rather than execution. The issue is ongoing in the present and will likely continue to remain a problem in the future. By acknowledging adolescents' capacity for change, *Roper v. Simmons* set a precedent for

more humane sentencing which influences subsequent cases and reforms the rights and responsibility of the juvenile defendants. This matters because juvenile justice is the event that will shape future policies and reflect upon society.