If we look into history we shall find that laws have been the work of a few; not dictated by a cool examiner of human nature, and had this only end in view, the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

*Justice,* I understand, is nothing more than a bond which is necessary to keep the interest of individuals united. All punishments which exceed the necessity of preserving this bond are unjust.

The end of punishment, therefore, is no other than to prevent the criminal from doing further injury to society, and to prevent others from committing the like offence.

The torture of a criminal during the course of his trial is a cruelty. It is used with an intent either to make him confess his crime or in order to discover other crimes of which he is not accused, but of which he may be guilty.

No man can be judged a criminal until he be found guilty; nor can society take from him the public protection until it have been proved that he has violated the conditions on which it was granted. What right, then, but that of power, can authorize the punishment of a citizen so long as there remains any doubt of his guilt? This dilemma is frequent. Either he is guilty, or not guilty. If guilty, he should only suffer the punishment ordained by the laws, and torture becomes useless, as his confession is unnecessary. If he be not guilty, you torture the innocent; for, in the eye of the law, every man is innocent whose crime has not been proved.

Crimes are more effectually prevented by the *certainty* than the *severity* of punishment.

The punishment of death is destructive to society. Is it not absurd, that the laws, which detest and punish homicide, should, in order to prevent murder, publicly commit murder themselves?

It is better to prevent crimes than to punish them. This is the fundamental principle of good legislation, which is the art of conducting men to the *maximum* of happiness, and to the *minimum* of misery.

1. What is the end goal of punishments according to Beccaria?
2. What is meant by the statement, “crimes are more effectively prevented by the certainty than the severity of punishment”?
3. What is Beccaria’s view on the death penalty? Use a quote to support your answer.
4. Use context clues to define the term “legislation.”
5. Pick a statement from Beccaria that you either agree or disagree with and state why you feel that way.