**Romanian’s Medieval Marital Prison**

Biertan is a Transylvanian village that feels frozen in time. Horse-drawn carts are still a part of daily life, and local residents gather to trade their wares in a cobbled village square. At the heart of the village, next to a 15th- century fortified church that stands on a hill, there is a small building with a very small room. For 300 years, couples whose marriages were on the rocks would find themselves here, locked away for up to six weeks by the local bishop in hope that they would iron out their problems and avert a divorce.

It may sound like a nightmare, but records show that this form of marriage counselling in Transylvania was rather effective. “Thanks to this blessed building, in the 300 years that Biertan had the bishop’s seat, we only had one divorce,” said Biertan’s current priest. Today, the small, dark prison is a museum. The room has low ceilings and thick walls, and is equipped with a table and chair, a storage chest and a bed that looks small enough to belong to a child. As couples attempted to repair their marriages inside this tiny space, everything had to be shared, from a single pillow and blanket to the lone table setting.

Lutheranism was the religion that governed most aspects of Biertan’s life. Although divorce was allowed under certain circumstances, such as adultery, it was preferred that couples attempt to save their union. So, a couple seeking divorce would voluntarily visit the bishop, who would send them to the marital prison to see if their differences could be reconciled before they parted ways. The prison was then an instrument to keep society in the old Christian order. It also protected women and children, who were dependent on the family unit to survive.

**1.- Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Underline the evidence from the text. No marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE.**

a) Biertan’s marital prison was situated far away from Biertan.  
b) Despite the Bishop’s policy, several couples in Biertan couldn’t save their marriage

**2.- In your own words and based on the ideas in the text, answer the following questions. Do not copy from the text.**

a) What was this marital prison like?

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b) Why did the Bishop, with his marital prison, try to avoid divorces?

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**3.- Find the words in the text that mean:**  
a) meet (paragraph 1)  
b) in trouble (paragraph 1)  
c) fix (paragraph 2)  
d) try (paragraph

**4.- Write about 150 to 200 words on the following topic.**  
Single life vs. married life. What would be best for you? Explain your choice