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.

QUESTIONS

1. Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy 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. FALSE “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”
   b) Despite the Bishop’s policy, several couples in Biertan couldn’t save their marriage. FALSE “Thanks to this blessed building, in the 300 years that Biertan had the bishop’s seat, we only had one divorce,”

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)
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? It was a small place with just one room, that way prisoners had to share everything.
   b) Why did the Bishop, with his marital prison, try to avoid divorces? Because he wanted to keep the people in the order and also because women and children were extremely poor and vulnerable after a divorce.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

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

(Puntuación máxima: 1 punto)

4.- Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given.
   a) Last year, the number of divorces was much ___higher____ (high) than ever before, as __shown/it was shown__ (show) by the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics.
   b) I’d prefer to spend six weeks in prison instead of ___getting___ (get) a divorce, which ___meant-would mean___ (mean) I’d have to leave home and children.
   c) I don’t remember the name of that Biertan bishop _____whose__ story is written on that church wall in order __to____ justify his actions.
   d) Complete the following sentence to report what was said. “What shall I do next?” He asked ___what he should do next__

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

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

(Personally I think that this is a very controversial issue and a lot of people have different opinions about it and all of us should be respected.

On the one hand, being single is good for many reasons. From my point of view being single allows you to do a lot of things in your life, specially if you don´t have a couple and you don´t have to plan your plans with anybody else. That way you can do what you want, for instance, making your own plans, going to restaurants, concerts...And if you are single but you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, you can be free to organise your money or if you split up you don’t have to worry about documents or things like that.)
On the other hand, being married is a bond that is beautiful, you make a promise that will last forever. You can be more vulnerable in case of divorce, because sometimes women decide to stay at home and they stop working to be with their children, and they are not economically independent.

In spite of the fact that some people support my opinion, there are other people who have different reasons.

To sum up, it is a difficult decision but I think it is slightly better to be a single.

**OPCIÓN B**

**Clara Barton: American Red Cross Founder**

Clara Barton was born on December 25, 1821 in Massachusetts. As the youngest of five children, young Clara often felt as if she had six parents instead of two. Her older sisters were schoolteachers and they taught her everything they knew since they found the little girl to be an eager pupil.

In April 1860, the Civil War began. She asked the War Department if she could go to the battlefield to distribute medicine and food to the troops. Imagine their shock! No unmarried woman had ever gone to the battlefield before, but Barton was determined to go and she didn’t stop until someone gave her permission. She had found a way to serve her country. Her work of soliciting and distributing supplies, as well as nursing the wounded was gruelling. She often criticized the Army about the lack of food and supplies for the fighting men. When the war was about to finish, she also set up an office to sort out the difficult business of locating and identifying prisoners, missing men, and the dead buried in unmarked graves. But she was ordered to go to Europe by her doctor for a rest cure in 1869.

While abroad, Barton came into contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross. After recovering, she returned to the USA and campaigned to establish an American branch of the Red Cross. In 1882, the US Senate ratified the Geneva Convention, forming the American Association of the Red Cross. Then, Barton became its president. Her subsequent domestic program was impressive. Her energy and commitment to humanitarian causes over a forty-year period made her a household name, a symbol of charitable self-sacrifice. However, her inflexibility forced her to resign in 1904 from the organization she had founded and built. Nevertheless, Barton remained active in relief work until her death in 1912 at the age of ninetyone.
QUESTIONS

1. Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text. No marks are given for only TRUE or FALSE.
   a) Clara Barton couldn’t help soldiers in the battlefield because she wasn’t married. **FALSE** “No unmarried woman had ever gone to the battlefield before, but Barton was determined to go and she didn’t stop until someone gave her permission”
   b) Clara first learned about the Red Cross while she was away from home. **TRUE** “While abroad, Barton came into contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross”

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

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 did Clara do just before the end of the American Civil War? She was very concerned about the war victims and she tried to locate and identify victims and dead people who were in tombs without names in an office that she opened with this aim.
   b) What did she do after coming back from Europe? She created a faction of the Red Cross in the United States.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

3. Find the words in the text that mean:
   a) enthusiastic (paragraph 1) **eager**
   b) established (paragraph 2) **set up**
   c) extraordinary (paragraph 3) **impressive**
   d) dedication (paragraph 3) **commitment**

(Puntuación máxima: 1 punto)

4. Complete the following sentences. Use the appropriate form of the word in brackets when given.
   a) If I ____had known____ (know) that the Red Cross helped in so many countries, I ____would have joined____ (join) as a volunteer years ago.
   b) From a shy little girl ____who____ (talk) in a low voice, Clara Barton ____became____ (become) a teacher, government clerk and battlefield nurse.
   c) After ____resigning____ (resign) from the American Red Cross, she founded the National First Aid Society, ____whose____ mission was to promote local first aid programmes.
d) Complete the following sentence to report what was said.

“When was the Red Cross founded in your country?” he asked Mary.

He asked Mary ___ when the Red Cross had been founded in her country ______________________________________________________________________.

(Puntuación máxima: 2 puntos)

5.- Write about 150 to 200 words on the following topic.

Are humanitarian organisations important today? Give reasons to explain your answer.

(Puntuación máxima: 3 puntos)

I think that they are very important for many many reasons. There are a lot of humanitarian organisations and volunteers but they are still needed. First of all, they are important, because some people in need can’t fight for their own rights, so they need other people’s voices to help them to solve the situation. Secondly, these organisations know the places and their problems so they can be really helpful with these problems. Moreover, when there’s a disaster relief people become vulnerable and all help is welcome. Apart from people, global warming and greenhouse effect are two realities of the pollution caused by humans, they try to save the planet and to make up people’s minds to change the current situation.

To sum up, I think that this kind of organisations are really important.