

Task 1

The lecturer outlines some arguments in favour of and against prisons, as well as suggesting some alternatives. He concludes that a transformation of the prison system may be necessary.

TASK 2

Arguments for

1. Effective way of shaming and punishing them.
2. Offenders out of circulation so cannot commit more crime.
3. Deterrent.
4. Education and training schemes prevent re-offense.

Arguments against

1. Inhumane punishment.
2. Prisoners not forced to take responsibility for their actions.
3. Prisoners become further accustomed to criminal attitudes.
4. Prisoners lose contact with society.
5. Education and training not provided due to overcrowding and lack of resources.
6. Community penalties, or even capital and corporal punishment, may be effective alternatives.

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TAPESCRIPT

In this brief talk I am going to present some of the arguments for and against prisons, which you can then explore further in your seminar groups. Let's start with the arguments in favour. Prison advocates say that depriving criminals of their liberty is an effective way of shaming and punishing them. Furthermore, prisons ensure that offenders are out of circulation and that they cannot commit more crime while they are inside. A further argument is that prison acts as a deterrent to would-be offenders. Critics contend that subjecting a human-being to decades of monotonous hopelessness in a living tomb is an inhumane punishment. Furthermore, prison does not force people to take responsibility for their actions or face up to what they have done. On the contrary, many people who spend a significant time in prison seem to become further accustomed to criminal attitudes and emerge less able to function normally in society. Prisoners experience long-term isolation from the rest of society, and often lose their jobs, homes and family ties. This may make them more likely to reoffend. A counter argument is that there are many education and training schemes in prisons that tackle problems associated with re-offending. However, it would appear that due to overcrowding and lack of resources, most prisons do not effectively provide such services. Speaking & Listening Some people

suggest that community penalties are an effective alternative to prison. These punishments focus on criminals giving back to society and changing their behaviour. This type of punishment may be considered better than prison because it does not take offenders away from their families and homes, and provides continuity so that they may continue to work or study. It should also instil a sense of responsibility in the individuals. Research has shown that well-resourced and wellmanaged community punishments can be very effective in reducing reoffending. A more extreme argument is that capital and corporal punishment may be more effective than prison. Corporal punishment such as flogging doesn't require that large chunks of a person's life be lost, together with their relationships and mental well-being. Execution is seen by some as an appropriate retributive punishment for the worst crimes; especially as such offenders are unlikely to ever be successfully rehabilitated. I'll conclude by sharing my own personal opinion. I believe that there is still a place for prisons in our society, although not in their current state. A complete transformation of prison regimes and a system of support for offenders when they are released from jail are entirely necessary. In other words, we need to create prisons with a purpose.

