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COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS

Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics

AN ENGAGING ESL TEXTBOOK FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

Written, Compiled, and Edited by
Eric H. Roth and Toni Aberson

Compelling Conversations:
Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics
An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students
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“He who does not prevent a crime
when he can, encourages it.”

Seneca (5 B.C.E.–65 A.D.),
Roman statesman

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

EXCHANGING VIEWS

With a class partner, share your experiences and ideas about the problems of crime. Remember to be patient and encouraging with each other.

1. What do you consider minor crimes?
2. What are some terrible crimes?
3. Can you think of something that was illegal in your native country and is legal here?
4. What is legal in your country of birth that is illegal in the U.S?
5. Why are some cities using hidden cameras at stoplights? What is your reaction?
6. What crimes are commonly punished by a fine? Are these misdemeanors in your state?
7. In the United States, which crimes lead to jail time? Are these all felonies in your state?
8. What is capital punishment? Does your native country also have a death penalty? If so, for which crimes?
9. Do you feel safer where you live now or in your hometown? Why?
10. Where is the safest place you ever lived? What made the area so safe?
11. Have you ever walked in a risky area? What made the area feel dangerous?
12. How can you tell if a neighborhood has a high crime rate? What do you look for?
13. Do you have any friends in law enforcement? What do they do?
14. What are some situations for which you would call the police?
15. Have you ever seen, or witnessed, a crime? What happened?
16. Do you know anybody who has been robbed? Scammed? Burglarized?

VOCABULARY

Circle the words that you know.

- misdemeanor
- felony.....
- crime
- criminal.....
- white collar
- street crime
- victimless.....
- mugged
- scam
- bribe.....

PROVERBS

Explain the meaning of one of the following proverbs to your partner.

Avarice goes before destruction.—Korean

All criminals turn preachers under the gallows.—Italian

If you are poor, don't cheat; if you are rich, don't presume.—Chinese

REMEMBER ...

- Watch your step**
- Keep perspective**
- Be honest**

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

1. Can you think of some situations in which a crime has been committed, but you would not call the police?
2. Are there differences between how the police behave here and in your native country?
3. What are some so-called "victimless" crimes? How can illegal drugs, smuggling, and prostitution be reduced?
4. What are some "white collar" crimes? Are bribery, identity theft, and fraud common?
5. What do you think the punishment for these felonies ought to be?
6. Have you watched the TV show "Law and Order"? "The Sopranos"? "CSI"? "The Wire"? Have you seen any older shows like "NYPD Blue"? "Columbo"? "Perry Mason"?
7. Do you enjoy police or detective shows on TV? Which ones?
8. Do you agree with critics who say TV creates more crime? Why?
9. How did your native country try to maintain public safety? Was it successful?
10. Can you list three ideas for improving public security?
11. Do you have any suggestions for reducing the danger of terrorism?
12. What is the difference between investigating and snooping?
13. Which American law, if any, would you change? Why?
14. Do you think there is more crime and violence today than 50 years ago? Why?

15. Can you share five suggestions for personal safety?
16. Why do you think the U.S. crime rate has dropped in the last decade?

QUOTATIONS

Read all the quotations. Then, re-read 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, and 14. For each of these quotations, write agree or disagree. Share your answers with your partner.

1. “The greater the number of laws and enactments, the more thieves and robbers.”
—Lao-tzu (604–531 B.C.E.), Chinese philosopher
2. “The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.”
—Tacitus (55–130), Roman philosopher
3. “Children are innocent and love justice, while most adults are wicked and prefer mercy.”
—G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936), English novelist and critic
4. “You can get much farther with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone.”
—Al Capone (1899–1947), Chicago gangster
5. “He didn’t know the right people. That’s all a police record means.”
—Raymond Chandler (1888–1959), American detective novelist
6. “Poverty may be the mother of crime, but lack of good sense is the father.”—Jean de la Bruyere (1645–1696), French satiric writer
7. “The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under the bridge, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.”
—Anatole France (1844–1924), French writer and Nobel Prize winner in Literature
8. “Only crime and the criminal confront us with perplexity of radical evil.”—Hannan Arendt (1906–1975), American philosopher
9. “Punishment is not for revenge, but to lessen crime and reform the criminal.”—Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845), prison reformer
10. “There’s a simple way to solve the crime problem: obey the law; punish those who do not.”
—Rush Limbaugh (1951–), American radio show host
11. “We don’t seem to be able to check crime, so why not legalize it and then tax it out of business?”
—Will Rogers (1879–1935), American folk hero
12. “Seeing a murder on television can help work off one’s antagonisms. And if you haven’t any antagonisms, the commercials will give you some.”—Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980), British film director
13. “Prisons don’t rehabilitate, they don’t punish, they don’t protect, so what the hell do they do?”
—Jerry Brown (1938–), California Governor and Attorney General
14. “Too much mercy...often resulted in further crimes which were fatal to innocent victims who need not have been victims if justice had been put first and mercy second.”
—Agatha Christie (1890–1976), English detective writer



ON YOUR OWN

How many English words of three or more letters can you make from the letters in CRIME and PUNISHMENT?

You may use a letter only as often for each word as it appears in these two words combined. Examples: mine, cup.

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