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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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Chimayo Press

“Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell ‘em, ‘Certainly, I can!’—and get busy and find out how to do it.”

Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919),
cowboy, police chief, colonel,
and 26th U.S. President

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PRACTICING JOB INTERVIEWS

ANTICIPATING QUESTIONS

Work with your partner and role-play applying for a position in your field. Switch roles every ten questions. Use complete sentences.

1. Have you ever applied for a job with our organization before?
2. Have you ever worked in the United States before? Where?
3. Are you eligible to work in the U.S.? Can you provide documentation?
4. Have you ever worked off-the-books?
5. May we investigate your background? Can we run a credit check?
6. Have you ever been laid off? Have you ever been fired?
7. Have you ever been sued? Have you ever been arrested?
8. Have you ever been caught stealing? Stolen from your employer?
9. Have you ever been investigated for misconduct?
Have you ever had a professional license revoked?
10. Have you ever taken a psychological test before?
11. Have you ever hidden problems from your managers?
12. Have you ever lied on a job application?
Have you lied on your resume?
13. Have you ever taken a lie detector test? A drug test?
A handwriting test? A psychological test?
14. Have you ever quit without giving two weeks notice?
15. Have you ever studied computers? Have you worked with computers before?
16. Have you ever used Microsoft Office?
Other software? Which programs?
17. Have you ever used a cash register? Fax machine? Xerox machine?
18. What skills have you learned in your professional life?

VOCABULARY

Please circle the words that you know. Ask your partner or teacher for the meanings of the other words.

- apply
- applicant
- background.....
- resign.....
- bonus.....
- misconduct.....
- software.....
- revoke.....
- client.....
- promoted

SAYINGS

Read the common sayings and proverbs below. Can you add two more?

- The secret of getting ahead is getting started.
- Short answers save trouble.
- What you don't ask, you don't get.
- Anything worth having is worth working for.
- (Add your own)
- (Add your own)

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

1. What did you learn from your last job? Best manager? Worst boss?
2. Have you ever been certified in a professional field? How did you prepare?
3. Have you ever been evaluated by a supervisor? What did you learn?
4. What suggestions have you made at work to help the company?
5. Were your suggestions adopted? Were the suggestions successful?
6. Have you ever been promoted? What was your new title?
7. Have you ever received a bonus? Have you ever gotten a raise?
8. Have you ever worked on commission? Have you ever worked as a salesperson?
9. Have you ever traveled out of town for work? What did you do?
10. Have you ever volunteered for overtime? Have you ever declined overtime?
11. Have you ever worked on the weekends? Week nights?
12. Have you ever worked 12-hour shifts? What shift is best for you?
13. Have you ever spoken English with customers or clients?
14. Have you ever worked as a mechanic/salesperson/researcher/nurse before?

REMEMBER...

- Be careful**
- Be honest**
- Be active**

15. Have you ever taken care of young children? In America?
16. Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?
17. What items have you sold? Did you sell merchandise in English?
18. Have you ever worked with difficult customers? What was your approach? Did it work?
19. Have you ever hired people? What did you look for in applicants?
20. Have you ever worked as a supervisor? Foreman? Manager?
21. What tips do you have for young people entering your profession?
22. Why should you be hired for this position?

QUOTATIONS

Read the quotations aloud to your partner. Which quotes do both of you agree with? Which quotation is your favorite? Why?

1. “The difference between a job and a career is the difference between 40 and 60 hours a week.”—Robert Frost (1874–1963), poet
2. “You have to have your heart in the business and the business in your heart.”—Thomas J. Watson (1874–1956), founder of IBM
3. “If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.”
—Dr. Laurence J. Peter (1919–1990), educator
4. “In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence.”
—Dr. Laurence J. Peter (1919–1990), educator
5. “You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don’t try.”
—Beverly Sills (1929–2007), opera singer
6. “Luck is not something that you can mention in the presence of self-made men.”
—E.B. White (1899–1985), American writer
7. “In business for yourself, not by yourself.”
—Ray Kroc (1902–1984), McDonald’s founder
8. My father taught me to work; he did not teach me to love it.”
—Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), 16th U.S. President
9. “I want to work for a company that contributes to and is part of a community. I want not just to invest in; I want to believe in.”
—Anita Roddick (1943–2007), Body Shop founder
10. “The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary.”
—Vidal Sassoon (1928–), hair stylist and salon tycoon
11. “If you have to support yourself, you had bloody well better find some way that is going to be interesting. And you don’t do that by sitting around.”
—Katharine Hepburn (1907–2003), movie icon
12. “Success is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration.”
—Thomas A. Edison (1847–1931), American inventor



ON YOUR OWN

You have started a new business. How will you choose your employees? List the first seven steps you will take.

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