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COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS

Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics

AN ENGAGING ESL TEXTBOOK FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

Written, Compiled, and Edited by
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Compelling Conversations:
Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics
An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students
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Chimayo Press

“Whether our work is art or science or the daily work of society, it is only the form in which we explore our experience which is different.”

Jacob Bronowski
(1908–1974), scientist

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WORK RELATIONSHIPS

SHARING STORIES

Most people have to work to survive. Some people love their work. What are your work experiences? How do others manage? Share your thoughts with your class partner. Remember to help each other.

1. Do you work? Are you retired?
2. Do you have a regular schedule? Which shift do you work?
3. Would you like more hours? Fewer hours? Why?
4. Which department do you work in? Do you have a title?
5. Do you work alone or with other staff members?
6. Can you describe a typical day at work?
7. Do you use a computer at work? What computer software programs do you use?
8. How do you use email or the Internet at work? When? Why?
9. Have computers changed your work habits in any way? How?
10. Do you have a high profile position? Are you visible at your job?
11. Is there a career ladder at your workplace?
12. How do you get along with your co-workers? Are you a team player? Do you enjoy the work atmosphere?
13. Do you socialize with your co-workers outside of work? Where do you go?
14. How does your company/school encourage networking among co-workers?
15. Does your company use interns or college students? How?
16. What qualities does your organization look for in new employees?
17. Have you ever had a mentor? Who? How did this person teach you the ropes at work?
18. Are you a mentor to anyone at work? What do you do to help?

VOCABULARY

Work with your partner to understand the meaning of each of the vocabulary words. Then, circle the ones that you're sure you know.

- shift.....
- title
- retire.....
- co-worker
- profession
- hire.....
- fire
- supervisor.....
- supervise.....
- mentor
- ambition.....
- manager.....

NOTES & QUESTIONS

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PROVERBS

Have you heard any of these before? Circle the ones with which you agree.

- Many hands make light work.—Latin
- Cash in hand is better than credit to a rich customer.—Korean
- Too many pilots are bound to sink the ship.—Chinese
- All work and no play makes Jake a dull boy.—English
- Time is money.—Greek

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

1. Have you ever complained about a co-worker? A boss? How did they upset you?
2. How has a co-worker impressed you? What have you learned from your co-workers?
3. How is your profession shown in movies? Can you give an example?
4. What are some common misperceptions about your field? Example?
5. What qualities should a manager, director, or boss have in your field? Why?
6. What are some things a rude or obnoxious boss might do?
7. Have you ever had to deal with a rude, difficult, or crazy boss?
8. Who is the best manager, director, or boss you've ever had? Why?
9. Have you ever supervised someone? Were you a good manager? Why?
10. How would you describe your management style? Can you give an example?
11. Have you ever hired someone? What did you look for? Why?

12. Have you ever evaluated people at work? Have you had to fire someone? Why?
13. What makes someone a professional in your field? How can people stand out?
14. How do some people neglect their work duties because of family responsibilities?
15. Have you ever known someone to neglect their family because of their work?
16. What is a workaholic?
17. How would you describe your work habits?
18. How do you keep track of your tasks, meetings, and relationships at work?
19. Do you have any time management tips to share?
20. Do you think most Americans work to live or live to work? Why?
21. Have you recently updated your professional skills? How?
22. What are your professional ambitions? Why?

QUOTATIONS

With the help of your partner, read aloud each of the following quotations. Circle the ones with which both of you agree.

1. "Work keeps at bay three great evils: boredom, vice, and need."
—Voltaire (1694–1778), French philosopher
2. "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more of it I have." —Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), U.S. President and the man on the nickel
3. "I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—The chance to find yourself."
—Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), British novelist
4. "Competition brings out the best in products and the worst in people." —David Sarnoff (1881–1971), leader of RCA
5. "I don't meet competition; I crush it."
—Charles Revson (1906–1975), founder of Revlon
6. "Where work is a pleasure, life is a joy! When work is a duty, life is slavery."
—Maxim Gorky (1868–1936), Russian/Soviet novelist
7. "There are an enormous number of managers who have retired on the job."
—Peter Drucker (1909–2005), American business guru
8. "There is no such thing as a free lunch."
—Milton Friedman (1912–2006), economist
9. "Without work all life goes rotten."
—Albert Camus (1913–1960), French writer
10. "I'm lazy. But it's lazy people who invented the wheel and the bicycle because they didn't like walking or carrying things."
—Lech Walesa (1943–), Polish President and Labor leader



ON YOUR OWN

Choose a quote that relates to the job you have now or one you once had. In five sentences, tell the class how this quote relates to your work experience.

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