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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

“I want freedom for the full expression of my personality.”

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948)
Indian political leader and philosopher

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BEING YOURSELF

SHARING PERSPECTIVES

From consulting charts and reading palms to taking personality tests and reading self-help books, people love to describe themselves.

1. Which three adjectives would you use to describe your personality?
2. Are you shy or outgoing? When are you most outgoing?
3. Are you daring or cautious? In what ways?
4. Are you usually patient or impatient? Can you give an example?
5. Are you quiet or talkative? When are you most talkative? Least?
6. Would you call yourself a leader or a follower? Why?
7. Are you generous or selfish? Are you too selfish or over generous?
8. In what ways are you rigid? In what ways are you flexible?
9. In what ways are you traditional? In what ways are you modern?
10. If pessimistic is 1 and optimistic is 10, what would your number be on the scale? Why did you decide on that number?
11. On a scale of 1-10, how assertive are you?
12. Is your personality more like your mother or your father?
In what ways?
13. Which color would you use to describe your personality?
14. Which animal would you use to describe yourself?
Tiger? Mouse? Why?
15. Do you believe in astrology? Which sign are you in the zodiac?
Does the pattern of this sign match your personality?
16. Which animal year are you according to Chinese astrology?
Does this fit?
17. Have you ever taken a personality test from a magazine or online?
Was it helpful? Was it fun? Was it accurate?
18. Which season of the year best describes your personality?
In what ways?

VOCABULARY

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

- character
- patient
- talkative
- generous
- rigid
- flexible
- autumn
- zodiac
- accurate
- optimist
- pessimist
- nurture

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

REMEMBER ...

Be encouraging

Make good mistakes

Be yourself

1. Do you think our personalities are set when we are born?
2. Can we change our personalities? How?
3. How has your personality changed in the last ten years?
4. Which three words would you use to describe the personality of your best friend?
5. How are your personalities similar?
How are your personalities different?
6. Why do you think opposites are sometimes attracted to each other?
7. Some cultures define personality in terms of the elements: Would you say you are primarily air, water, fire, or earth? Why did you choose that element?
8. Which three qualities do you think of as yin (feminine)?
9. Which three qualities do you think of as yang (masculine)?
10. Can you name one yin quality and one yang quality which describe you?
11. How might being raised in poverty influence someone's personality?
12. Do you think being born in extreme wealth would change your personality? How?
13. If you had been born in another country, do you think your personality would be different? How?
14. Can you think of somebody with a good personality and bad character?
15. What is the difference between one's personality and one's character?

16. Are you primarily an extrovert or an introvert?
Why do you say that?
17. Do you think nature (biology) or nurture (our circumstances) are more important in shaping our personalities? Why do you say that?
18. What are your best qualities?

QUOTATIONS

Circle the quotations you like.

1. “Know thyself.”
—Socrates, Greek philosopher (470–399 B.C. E.)
2. “The man of character bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of circumstances.”
—Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), Greek philosopher and scientist
3. “This above all: To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.”
—William Shakespeare, playwright (1564–1616)
4. “Character is much easier kept than recovered.”
—Thomas Paine (1737–1809), writer and revolutionary
5. “It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.”
—Oscar Wilde (1856–1900), English playwright
6. “Some people with great virtues are disagreeable, while others with great vice are delightful.”
—Duc de la Rochefoucauld (1613–1680), French philosopher
7. “The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances; if there is any reaction, both are transformed.”
—Carl Jung (1875–1961), Swiss psychiatrist
8. “The Doc told me that I had a dual personality. Then he lays an \$82 bill on me, so I give him 41 bucks and say, ‘Get the other 41 bucks from the other guy.’ ”
—Jerry Lewis (1926–), American comedian
9. “I am what is mine. Personality is the original personal property.”
—Norman O. Brown (1913–2002), American scholar
10. “Man’s main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality.”
—Erich Fromm (1900–1980), American psychologist
11. “I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward. The example of great and fine personalities is the only thing that can lead us to fine ideas and noble deeds. Can anyone imagine Moses, Jesus, or Gandhi with the money bags of Carnegie?”
—Albert Einstein (1879–1955), Nobel Prize winner in Physics
12. “Generous people are rarely mentally ill people.”
—Karl Menninger (1893–1990) American psychiatrist



ON YOUR OWN

What do you like about yourself?

Write a postcard to a stranger which celebrates yourself and your strongest traits.