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# **COMPELLING CONVERSATIONS**

Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics

AN ENGAGING ESL TEXTBOOK FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS

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Compelling Conversations:  
Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics  
An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students  
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**“Nothing is constant except change.”**

Heraclitus (ca. 513 B.C.E.),  
Greek philosopher

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## CHANGE

### SHARING NOTES

All of us have to deal with change. Sometimes it’s fun; sometimes it’s hard. Share some of your experiences with your class partner.

1. How has your neighborhood changed in the last five years?
2. How have clothing fashions changed during your lifetime?
3. Do you dress differently than you did five years ago? How?
4. How have your looks changed in the last ten years?
5. What’s your reaction to a woman changing her looks with make-up? Hair dye? Plastic surgery?
6. What about men? Is it okay if men use make-up? Hair dye? Plastic surgery?
7. If you could have a free makeover, what physical changes would you seek? Why?
8. Can you name three changes important technological changes in your life?
9. What type of technology has helped the most people? Why?
10. Do you try and keep up with technological changes? What skills have you added in the last five years?
11. What social changes have happened in your native country in your lifetime?
12. What political changes have happened in your native country in your lifetime?
13. What is a custom or tradition that you would like to change in your native country? Why?
14. What social changes you would like to see in America?
15. What three political changes would you like to happen in the world?
16. Has nature changed in the last 100 years? How?
17. Has human nature changed in the last 100 years? If so, how?

## VOCABULARY

Circle three words. Does your class partner know their meanings?

fashion.....  
makeover.....  
inevitable.....  
adjust.....  
resist .....

resistance.....  
rehabilitation.....  
optimistic .....

pessimistic .....

resilient.....

## PROVERBS

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

Don't change horses in midstream.  
A leopard can't change its spots.  
Change is in the air.  
It's time for a change.  
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.  
The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.  
Old habits die hard.  
Change for change's sake.  
You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.  
Out with the old and in with the new.  
You can't teach an old dog new tricks.  
It's a woman's prerogative to change her mind.

## THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES...

1. Can you name anything which is the same as it was 100 years ago? What?
2. What personal changes would you welcome?
3. Are there personal changes that you fear? What?
4. If you could stop time and keep everything the same, would you? Why?
5. What change in your life did you easily adjust to?
6. What change did you resist? Did it work? Was resistance helpful?
7. Have any of your basic ideas changed in the last five years? What?
8. Do you believe that rehabilitation is possible for violent criminals?
9. What changes do you think will happen in the next five years? Why?
10. What changes do you hope for in the next decade? 100 years?

## REMEMBER...

**Be encouraging**

**Be honest**

**Be kind**

**“Indecision may or may not be my problem.”**

—Jimmy Buffett (1946–), singer/  
songwriter

- 11. Have your ideas about family changed as you have grown older? How?
- 12. Have your ideas about God changed as you have grown older? How?
- 13. Have your ideas about happiness changed as you have grown older? How?
- 14. Are you more optimistic or more pessimistic than you used to be? Why? Can you give an example?
- 15. Can you share some tips for becoming more resilient amidst change?

**QUOTATIONS**

Which quotation is your favorite? Do you disagree with any quotation?

- 1. “The universe is change.”  
—Marcus Aurelius (121–180), Roman Emperor
- 2. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”  
—Margaret Mead (1907–1978), anthropologist
- 3. “Change your thoughts and you change the world.”  
—Norman Vincent Peale (1898–1993), clergyman
- 4. “There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”  
—Nelson Mandela (1918–), African Leader
- 5. “Things do not change; we change.”  
—Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), essayist
- 6. “Time may change me, but I can’t change time.”  
—David Bowie (1947–), English musician/actor
- 7. “We did not change as we grew older; we just became more clearly ourselves.”  
—Lynn Hall (1937–), prolific author of children’s books
- 8. “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.”  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), writer
- 9. “To modernize is to adopt and to adapt, but it is also to re-create.”  
—Octavio Paz (1914–1998), Mexican writer and diplomat
- 10. “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”  
—Charles Darwin (1809–1882), naturalist
- 11. “Make change your friend.”  
—Bill Clinton (1946–), 42nd U.S. President
- 12. “A man needs a little madness, or else he never dares cut the rope and be free.”  
—Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957), Greek writer, Nobel Prize winner
- 13. “We must be the change we want to see in the world.”  
—Gandhi (1869–1948), Indian statesman



**ON YOUR OWN**

Before next class, choose a place which is special to you and write a few sentences about how it has changed since you were a child.

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