



## Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics- An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students

*By Eric H. Roth, Toni Aberson*

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This innovative English as a second language textbook helps advanced English language learners develop conversation skills and improve fluency by sharing experiences, reflecting on their lives, and discussing proverbs and quotations. The ESL book includes 45 thematic chapters, over 1400 questions, 500 vocabulary words, 250 proverbs and American idioms, and 500 quotations. Designed for both adult education and intensive English language students, the conversations deepen critical thinking skills and speaking skills essential to success in community college and university programs. Compelling Conversations has been used in classrooms in over 50 countries, recommended by English Teaching Professional magazine, and enjoyed by thousands of English students.

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- Sales Rank: #32785 in Books
- Brand: Brand: BookSurge Publishing
- Published on: 2007-03-02
- Released on: 2007-03-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.50" h x .41" w x 8.25" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 164 pages

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **Review**

"In my own teaching, I have found questions and quotations to be highly effective in promoting student discussion. Questions are useful in that they require a response from the listener. Asking them also helps students master the tricky rules of the interrogative. Quotations are brilliant flashes of wit expressed in the shortest space possible, often just a sentence or two. The authors have compiled a formidable collection of quotations by famous people from Napoleon and Aristotle to Tom Cruise and Sylvester Stallone. Some will have the students roaring with laughter "My movies were the kind they show in prisons and airplanes because nobody can leave." - Burt Reynolds), while others require careful introspection ("Love is not just looking at each other; it's looking in the same direction." - Antoine de Saint Exupery). The authors also add some wise proverbs here and there. My two favourites were "Recite 'patience' three times and it will spare you a murder" and "When money talks, truth keeps silent", which are from Korea and Russia. In sum, *Compelling Conversations* is a recommended resource for teachers who want to make their conversation classes more learner-centered. It should be especially appealing to those who wish to escape the confines of the Presentation-Practice-Production approach and do without a formal grammatical or functional syllabus. It reflects the authors' considerable professional experience, and would be a notable addition to any English teacher's bookshelf." -- *Hall Houston, English Teaching Professional, January 2009*

"This outstanding resource (*Compelling Conversations*) allows teachers to confidently walk into an advanced ESL classroom with self-contained, engaging conversation lessons. The 45 thematic chapters allow you to both evoke student experience with long lists of practical and savvy questions. The inclusion of global proverbs and classic quotations also provides larger cultural contexts to inspire deeper conversations - or writing assignments. Students should also appreciate the generous amount of authentic language. I wish I would have had that book in my old adult/university classes. A great book for adult education teachers, university instructors, and private tutors!" -- *Eric Busch, director/founder, ESLHQ.com, August 2007*

"Have you been looking for a good ESL manual? If you have, I think this is one (*Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics*) to consider. The topics cover: Your Life, The Civic Life, along with the everyday aspects as dating, enjoying money, handling stress. The editors put it together in an easy to use form. You have conversation starters such as, "How much time do you spend each week in cars? Why?" There is a section in each chapter for vocabulary building. A section on common sayings is included, as well. To increase the conversation we have such questions as this: "Do you prefer to drive in the city or the country? Flat or hills?" Each chapter in the book concludes with quotations. An example is this one by Woody Allen, "I have bad reflexes. I was once run over by a car being pushed by two guys." This manual helps conversation by giving common subjects to talk about. Since English is one of the confusing, difficult and strange languages for a foreigner to grasp and be comfortable conversing in, the compilers pack in 45 chapters over 30 questions, 10 or more targeted vocabulary words, some proverbs, and quotations per chapter. Each chapter focuses on a promising conversation topic. They start with easy questions and continue on to questions a bit more abstract. Each question is there to allow the speaker to share his life experiences along with his insights. This manual will go best with the advanced ESL student or even at coffee shop conversation clubs. It will bring about authentic, not stilted communication, which should be the purpose of an ESL course. It is easier for a person to learn a language through conversation rather than by a given list of vocabulary words. That is what makes this a welcome addition to the material which can be used for the immigrant who must learn English to advance in the world." -- *Dane Robert Swanson, Santa Monica Daily Press, 1/16/2009*

From the Author

Colors fade, temples crumble, empires fall, but wise words endure."

- Edward Thorndike (1874-1949), American psychologist

The art of conversation, once considered the sign of a civilized individual, seems less common today. Yet I treasure the moments of sharing experiences, collecting news, and exchanging ideas. I make a point of knowing my neighbors, allowing casual greetings to become long conversations, and making time to explore in depth the feelings and perceptions of friends, students, and relatives. These natural conversations provide information, encouragement, and pleasure.

Many people say that they are too busy to have long talks. Other people prefer to watch YouTube, play computer games, chat via email rather than talk to relatives, co-workers, and friends. Many Americans, it seems, have forgotten how to hold good, deep conversations - or even a friendly chat on the phone. I suspect this lack of real communication lessens their daily joy.

English language learners, of course, face many more barriers to have a satisfying conversation in English. First, English remains a confusing, difficult, and strange language. It's very easy to feel uncomfortable when speaking a new language - whether a second or fourth. English students in my advanced speaking skills courses often ask questions like:

- How do start a conversation?
- What questions do I ask?
- How can I keep a real conversation going?
- How do I share agreement - or disagreement - in a polite way?
- How can I share my experiences in clear manner with appropriate vocabulary?
- How I can have better, more engaging conversations?

*Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics* addresses these issues for both native and non-native speakers. The focus remains on learning by doing and making "good mistakes". (Good mistakes, by the way, are natural mistakes that help us learn so we can make different and better "good mistakes" next time.)

Each of the 45 thematic chapters focuses on a promising conversation topic. Every chapter includes 30 or more questions (both direct and indirect), 10 or more targeted academic vocabulary words, a few proverbs to paraphrase, and 10 or more quotations to discuss from a variety of perspectives. Although designed for advanced English language learners, many intermediate ESL and EFL students will find plenty of material to use and can benefit from exposure to authentic questions, common phrases, and new vocabulary words.

As I tell my university English students, "your English may not be perfect yet, but daily practice does lead to significant progress." *Compelling Conversations* gives students, teachers, and tutors the tools and phrases to talk more and listen better to friends, classmates, and strangers in English. I hope you enjoy creating many compelling conversations - in and out - of the English classrooms!

Eric H. Roth

co-author of *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics*

From the Back Cover

... **highly effective**

"In sum, **Compelling Conversations** is a recommended

resource for teachers who want to make their conversation classes more learner-centered. It should be especially appealing to those who wish to escape the confines of the Presentation-Practice-Production approach and do without a formal grammatical or functional syllabus. It reflects the authors' considerable professional experience, and would be a notable addition to any English teacher's bookshelf."

Hall Houston

*English Teaching* Professional magazine

**...hours of conversation practice**

"I wish I had written this book! It will provide students with hours of conversation practice."

Nina Ito

California State University Teacher and Co-author of  
*The Great Big BINGO Book: Bingo Games for ESL Learners*

**...excellent!**

"This book is excellent! Both teachers and students love it."

Marina Goldshteyn, Director  
Community Enhancement Services College

**...wonderful**

"A wonderful source of materials triggering authentic (not stilted) communication."

Dr. Sharon Myers, Lecturer  
American Language Institute  
University of Southern California

**... natural conversations**

"The students I tutor are well-educated adults, rich in culture and experiences. This book allows them to produce natural conversations using what is most intimate to them: their lives and their culture."

Patricia Schulz, ESL Tutor

**...allows students to learn by speaking**

"Immigrants need to feel comfortable speaking

English, but too often students learn everything except conversation in ESL classrooms. Compelling Conversations allows students to learn by speaking."

Zigmund Vays, Founder/President  
Community Enhancement Services College

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Thomas Hayden:**

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each book has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they get because their hobby is definitely reading a book. How about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book if they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you will need this Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics- An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students.

#### **Dwight McBride:**

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#### **Haley Berg:**

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or all their friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book could be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing you will ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the reserve untitled Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics- An Engaging ESL Textbook for Advanced Students can be very good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

**Roberta Lawrence:**

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