

SAMPLE CHAPTER\*

COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS

Questions & Quotations  
for Intermediate American English Language Learners

Written, Compiled, and Edited by  
Eric H. Roth and Toni Aberson  
with Hal Bogotch

\*reproducible for classroom use

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## SEEING OUR WORLD WITH PHOTOGRAPHS



### SHARING LASTING MEMORIES

Photography surrounds us in the 21st century: on billboards, on the Internet, in magazines, and in our homes. We see new faces, go to distant lands, and remember special moments with photographs. Explore the role of photography in our lives with your partner.

1. Where are some places we can find photographs?
2. How many photographs do you think you've seen in the last week? Where?
3. Do you keep photographs? What kind? Why?
4. Do you have a favorite childhood picture? Can you describe it?
5. What kind of photos do you like to take? Are they portraits? Action shots?
6. Are you a shutterbug? Do you take lots of photos?
7. Do you have a camera? What kind?
8. How do you store your photos? In an album? On a computer? Why?
9. Do you edit photographs? How do you change the photographs?
10. In your opinion, what makes a good photograph? Why?
11. Why do you think photography is popular?
12. What are three places in our city you would like to photograph? Why?

## EXPANDING VOCABULARY

billboard	blink	click	portrait
shutterbug	store	upload	zoom in

**billboard**, *noun*: a large outdoor printed or electronic sign.

~ *The billboard advertised the new James Bond movie.*

**blink**, *verb*: briefly shut one's eyes.

~ *My father often blinks when I take his photo using a flash.*

**click**, *verb* (used without an object): to depress and release a shutter button rapidly.

~ *Click this button to take the picture.*

**portrait**, *noun*: an artistic representation of a person through a painting or a photograph.

~ *Carlos loved the portrait that the photographer took of his wife at their wedding.*

**shutterbug**, *noun*: an amateur photographer; one who is greatly devoted to photography.

~ *My friend is a shutterbug. He shoots photos every day and takes his camera everywhere.*

**store**, *verb*: the act of writing a data or image file to a hard drive, SD card, CD-R or DVD-R.

~ *I store all my photos on an external hard drive.*

**upload**, *verb*: the process of sending a copy of a file to a device or remote network location.

~ *My sister likes to upload songs from the Internet to her iPhone.*

**zoom in**, *verb*: to view something more closely by using a zoom lens.

~ *I used my long lens to zoom in on the baseball player at Dodger Stadium.*

**“A photograph is usually looked at – seldom looked into.”**

—Ansel Adams (1902–1984), American photographer

## ASKING QUESTIONS

Select five vocabulary words in this chapter, and write a question using each word. Then ask your partner/classmate/teacher the questions you have made.



Example: Do you blink when someone takes a photo of you?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

## PARAPHRASING PROVERBS

A. What do the following proverbs and idioms mean? Discuss them with your partner. Circle your favorite.

- ◆ Out of sight, out of mind. —English
- ◆ Seeing is believing. —English
- ◆ A picture is worth a thousand words. —English
- ◆ Long time, no see. —American
- ◆ Give someone the green light. —American
- ◆ Out like a light. —American slang
- ◆ None are so blind as those who won't see. —unknown source

### REMEMBER...

- Capture beautiful memories
- Explore your possibilities
- Share your special moments with others

B. Can you add two more proverbs related to the topic?

- ◆ .....
- ◆ .....

## PUTTING PHOTOS INTO WORDS

Think of a caption for this photo. Be creative.

.....  
.....  
.....



Pretend this photo is in a magazine. You are the editor and must write a caption. Please write your caption on the lines below. Make up a name, a date, a location, practical information, and a story.



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**THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES ...**

1. Do you have any photos on your cell phone? Can you tell me something about them?
2. When do you use the landscape mode and when do you use portrait mode? Any preference?
3. Do you think it's ok to take someone's photo without their permission? Have you?
4. Do you think paparazzi are a necessary evil? Why? Why not?
5. What are some jobs for which you might want to get a head shot? Why?
6. Have you noticed any camera trends lately? What are they?
7. What feature would you love to see on a futuristic camera?
8. What is the best season of the year to take photos? Why?
9. Do you have any favorite sites for taking pictures? What is your favorite background?
10. If you went to Disneyland, which Disney character would you like to take your photo with?
11. What are your thoughts about disposable cameras?
12. Why do you think it is important to take photos?
13. What do you prefer taking – still photos or videos? Why?
14. Do you consider photography an art form? Have you seen any photo exhibits?
15. How would our world be different if there were no photographs?

**DISCUSSING QUOTATIONS**

Take turns reading these quotations aloud and discuss them with your partner. Mark your answers. Explain your responses.

1. “ There are no rules for good photographs, there are only good photographs.”  
 —Ansel Adams (1902–1984), American photographer and environmentalist  
 Agree       Disagree  
 Why? .....

2. “There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer.”  
—*Ansel Adams (1902–1984), American photographer and environmentalist*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
3. “Actually, I’m not all that interested in the subject of photography. Once the picture is in the box, I’m not all that interested in what happens next. Hunters, after all, aren’t cooks.”  
—*Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004), French photographer and father of modern photojournalism*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
4. “People say photographs don’t lie; mine do.”  
—*David LaChapelle (1963–), American fashion photographer and director*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
5. “The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.”  
—*Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), American photographer and photojournalist*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
6. “ Photography is my one recreation, and I think it should be done well.”  
— *Lewis Carroll (1832–1898), English novelist and math professor*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
7. “ When I say I want to photograph someone, what it really means is that I’d like to know them. Anyone I know I photograph.”  
—*Annie Leibovitz (1949–), American portrait photographer*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
8. “ I wish more people felt that photography was an adventure the same as life itself and felt that their individual feelings were worth expressing. To me, that makes photography more exciting.”  
—*Harry Callahan (1912–1999), American photographer*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....
  
9. “ Which of my photographs is my favorite? The one I’m going to take tomorrow.”  
—*Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976), American photographer*  
 Agree       Disagree  
Why? .....

**S E A R C H   a n d   S H A R E**  
**Documenting Moments in Time**

Student Name: ..... Date: .....  
Class: ..... Teacher: .....

Documentary photographs capture important moments in time. Visit the Library of Congress collection at [www.loc.gov/pictures](http://www.loc.gov/pictures) to find a special historical photograph that captures your imagination. Print it out and share it with your classmates.

Title: .....  
Photographer: .....  
Historical Context: ..... Date: .....

Describe the photograph. What is going on?

How did the photographer compose his picture? Where are your eyes drawn?

What historical moment does it capture? Does it do it well?

Why do you think the photographer chose to take this picture?

Why did you choose this photograph?

What did you learn from it?

Do you think a photograph like this would still be taken today? Why? Why not?

On a scale of 1–5 with five being the highest, how would you rate the photograph? Why?





PRAISE FOR COMPELLING AMERICAN CONVERSATIONS:  
QUESTIONS AND QUOTATIONS FOR  
INTERMEDIATE AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

“How can so much learning be in just one book? ***Compelling American Conversations*** is all that an ESL teacher or student needs to use in their course. With clear, easy to follow directions, students learn necessary details about American English and culture, practice critical thinking, expand vocabulary and idioms, as they converse in real, natural adult English. Included in the “Search and Share” component are marvelous lessons on using the Internet. An extra bonus is that any of the conversations, quotes, etc. can be used as writing prompts. The book is fun and stimulating and, fortunately, very accessible for the intermediate learner.”

~ Planaria Price

Author, *Life in the USA* and *Realistically Speaking*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great book for students to improve their conversational skills. The exercises also help to improve the "on-the-spot" thinking skills students need to become fluent English speakers. I recommend this book as a study aid for those who wish to improve their IELTS speaking score.”

~ James Hutzell

Lecturer, USC Language Academy

“Conversational English proficiency can only be acquired by engaging in authentic English conversations. The academic approach used all too frequently in conventional ESL classrooms consistently fails at helping English learners become fluent English speakers. ***Compelling American Conversations*** fills the gap left by inadequate curricula by offering engaging topics and prompts that become the starting point for thoughtful and meaningful conversations. I highly recommend it.”

~ Nathan D. Crandall, M.A.

Founder, *The Fluency Coach*  
[www.thefluencycoach.com](http://www.thefluencycoach.com)

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is a great textbook for teaching conversational American English to ESL learners. It teaches the students topic by topic how to start a conversation with small talk leading up to a more serious discussion using relevant vocabulary and global idioms within the context of American culture. It also focuses on teaching the students how to ask questions as well as answering them. This is something that they will all need in the real world. I highly recommend it as either a main textbook or as supplementary material for any ESL instructor to use with intermediate to advanced level students who want to improve their oral skills.”

~ Eva Owen

EFL/ESL Instructor

“Simply a FANTASTIC book! A must-have resource for all English teachers and students alike!”

~ JJ Polk

Author, *English in Global Contexts*

“***Compelling American Conversations*** is an essential English conversation book. The carefully chosen vocabulary words aid students without overwhelming them, and the way the questions integrate with students' background knowledge helps them feel confident in exploring new topics of conversation. I love the use of proverbs and quotations to engage English learners and to get them talking. Whether you're running a school or teaching private lessons, this should be the first book you grab to get your students talking.”

~ Brent G. Warner

Author, *How to Pass the TOEFL iBT Test*