**YOUTH & OLD AGE**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Are young people generally more selfish than their parents and grandparents?

2. Should adults try to teach young people lessons, such as the dangers of drinking too

much, taking drugs or contracting the HIV virus, or should they leave them alone to

find out about these things themselves?

3. What do you think is the best age to be? Explain your opinion.

4. Most countries give young people rights as they reach a certain age. For example, British people can legally make love or fight for their country at the age of 16; they can drink, vote and drive a car when they are 18.

Does your country have similar laws? Do you think that any of the age limits need changing?

5. Should young people have to do some form of military or community service by law?

6. Should people of between 60 and 65 be obliged to retire from their jobs in order to

make way for younger workers?

7. Are there many things that the old can teach the young or are they hopelessly out of

touch by the time they reach a certain age?

8. In most countries, compulsory education is targeted at 5 - 16 year olds. Would it

be better to offer it to pensioners who want to learn rather than young people

who prefer not to be in school?

9. In Russia, China and many other countries, there is a tradition of choosing leaders

who are advanced in years. Do you think that older people make better leaders?

10. Many elderly people have disabilities which limit their mobility. Do buses, shops

and public buildings in your country provide easy access for the disabled or are

your towns and cities designed mainly for the young and able-bodied?

11. Should the elderly be expected to pay for residential care out of their own savings or

should appropriate accommodation and nursing be provided by the tax payer?

**WORK**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. What ratio of work to leisure would be your ideal? Answer using percentages.

2. Are the people in your country famous for working hard or for having a good social life?

3. What jobs would you most and least like to do?

4. What jobs have you done in your life and what did you like and dislike about them?

5. Which age-groups are worst affected by unemployment in your country?

Should people who have never worked before be entitled to unemployment benefit?

6. What are the causes of unemployment and how is the problem solved in your country?

7. Do women in your country have equality of job opportunities? Are they paid as well as men?

8. Are there many migrant workers in your country? If so, what kind of jobs do they do? What are their working conditions like?

9. Do people leave your country to find work in other countries? Where do they go?

What sort of jobs do they get? Are they made welcome?

10. Do workers in your country pay a lot of income tax to the government?

Do people with large salaries pay a much higher rate of tax than other workers? Do you think they should?

11. Do you think that every worker should have the right to join a Trade Union?

12. Do you think that every worker, (including doctors, nurses, teachers, the police,

ambulance crews and fire fighters), should have the right to go on strike?

**VIOLENCE**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. "There should be strict censorship of films and news bulletins on television

to prevent children from copying violent incidents." Do you agree?

2. "Children’s cartoons such as .... and ..... teach children the wrong lessons." Do you agree?

3. "Television cameras should not record crowd disturbances during sporting events

such as football matches." What do you think?

4. "Combat sports such as boxing where the aim is to injure your opponent should be

banned and should certainly not be part of the Olympic Games." Do you agree?

5. "Products such as pornographic videos and rap music which give expression to

violence against women should be withdrawn from sale." Do you agree?

6. "In most countries, military training which prepares people for violence against an

enemy, should be replaced by schemes to serve the community." Do you agree?

7. "Nobody should be permitted to own a hand gun for a hobby." What do you think?

8. "Combat knives should be made illegal." Do you agree?

9. "Parents should not buy toy guns or war toys for their children." Do you agree?

10. "Corporal punishment should not be used either at school or in the home." Do you agree?

**TRANSPORT**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Which is your favourite means of private transport?

2. Do you drive a car? When did you learn to drive? What make of car do you drive?

3. What skills do you need to practise to pass the driving test in your country?

Did you pass your test first time? What do you find most difficult about driving?

4. Which is your favourite kind of public transport -

* buses or trains?
* ships or planes?

5. How do you usually travel to work, school or college in your country?

6. How did you get from your home in your country to your host mother’s house?

7. Are you in favour of more road building to create more space for the private motorist

in your country?

8. Do you think that more cycle lanes are needed in your own town or city? What would

be some of the problems in providing more facilities for cyclists?

9. Do you think that more freight should be sent by rail? Why are companies

reluctant to send their goods this way? What needs to be done to change their minds?

10. What transport do you think we’ll be using in 50 years time?

\_**TRAVEL**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. How many countries have you visited and which is your favourite country apart from your own? Explain why?

2. Would you like to live permanently in another country? Why or why not?

3. Which is the longest journey you have ever made? How did you travel? What events do you remember on the way?

4. Which is your favourite journey for beautiful scenery? Describe what there is to see.

5. Which capital city is your favourite? How do you like to spend your time there?

6. Do you enjoy touring - travelling from place to place? Describe one of your itineraries?

7. Do you suffer from travel sickness or anxiety in cars boats or planes?

If so, what do you do to overcome these problems?

8. Do you buy travel insurance before going to visit other countries?

What worries would make you take out insurance?

9. Imagine you are an explorer and have the opportunity to make a big journey.

Which continent would you visit? Where would you go? What would you hope to see?

10. Is organised travel the best way of learning about the world?

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**SPORT**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Which is more important in sport - winning or taking part? Are you a good loser?

2. Should we always try to keep politics out of sport?

3. What are the most important events in the sporting calendar in your country?

Which of these events do you enjoy most? Why?

4. Is it easy to take part in sport in your country? Which sports do you do and how

often do you take part?

5. Who are your sporting heroes and heroines? Why do you admire them?

6. Should the Olympic Games be held only in Greece or should they change between

different countries? Where would you like to see them held next time?

7. Do you think that boxing is a true sport? Should it be included in the Olympic Games?

Should it be made illegal?

8. Which is your favourite sport to watch and what do you think are the qualities of

a good team or a true champion in that sport?

9. Do people in your country do enough sport or do they prefer to watch TV and play

computer games? How could you encourage lazy people to do more sport?

\_**SOCIETY**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Should governments use the welfare system to encourage people to live within two

parent families?

2. At what age should a son or daughter be permitted to leave home?

3. Should young people be allowed to buy contraceptives as soon as they reach puberty?

4. Should the age of consent be the same for both gays and heterosexuals?

5. Should gays and heterosexuals have the same right to join the armed forces?

6. Should abortion be available to women on demand?

7. Should euthanasia be available to people in great pain who want to die?

8. Is it possible to pass effective laws against racism?

9. Do you believe in a high tax economy (e.g. Sweden) which distributes money to

education and health or a low tax economy (e.g. the U.S.A.) where people make

private provision for good services?

10. Do you have a vision of a better society? What changes would you make?

11. Do you think genetic engineering should be used to create good citizens?

12. What do you think are the characteristics of a good member of society?

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. "Scientific measures should be standardized throughout the world. We should all use the metric system all of the time."

2. "Science is more important than religion in today’s world."

3. What do you think are the main dangers of scientific advances? What laws do you

think we need to protect societies from these dangers?

4. Have computers changed society for the better or for the worse?

5. Are you computer literate? Which software applications do you know?

6. Did you have lessons in Science and Technology at school? Were they well taught?

7. Would you prefer your child to study Arts or Science subjects?

8. Do you think Science will (a) end the world (b) save the world or (c) do neither?

9. Are most scientists in your country working on defence assignments or on non-military projects?

10. Which invention would you most like to have invented?

11. Are there more men scientists than women scientists in your country? If so, why?

**RICH & POOR**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. What kind of aid should the governments of rich countries give to poor countries?

2. "Population control is more important in rich countries than in poor countries since

rich babies consume much more of the world’s resources than poor ones."

3. "Economic Unions made up of rich countries are a form of protectionism which

prevents fair trade with Third World countries."

4. "Economic colonialism where multinational companies provide most of the work

opportunities is just as bad as colonialism where poor countries belong to rich ones."

5. "It is right for rich countries to have strict immigration controls to stop people from

poorer countries entering them and sharing in their better standard of living."

6. "Immigration should not be limited to people of similar race and culture. We should

welcome the opportunity of a truly multi-racial society."

7. "Everybody should be encouraged to do Voluntary Service Overseas (i.e. to live and

work in the Third World) so that we can understand the problems of poorer

countries and make a contribution to help them."

8. Would you like to be an overseas volunteer in a Third World country? If so,

which one and how could you contribute to that country’s development?

9. Are *the poor* poor because they are poor or because they are lazy?

**THE MEDIA**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. In some countries (like Britain), tabloid newspapers, which contain mostly gossip and pin-ups of good-looking women and men, sell many more copies than serious newspapers. Do readers in your country have the same interests?

2. Do reporters and photographers respect the private lives of famous people

in your country? How much freedom should the press be allowed by law?

3. Is the media in your country mainly owned by a few large monopolies?

Should the law allow ownership of several newspapers or TV channels?

4. Is there a bias towards any particular political party or interest group in

your country’s media?

5. Which would you prefer (a) TV channels without advertising

paid for by a licence fee (b) Free TV channels paid for by advertising

or (c) Pay-as-you-view TV where you only pay for what you watch?

6. In Britain, there are restrictions on what can be screened on TV before

9 p.m. Do you think that TV programme content should be censored?

7. Should governments act to control the Internet or should it be uncensored?

8. What do you use the Internet MOST for?

**MARRIAGE**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Are you for or against trial marriages i.e. living together outside marriage to test your compatibility?

2. Do you think that marriage should be for life? Should divorce be made easier or more difficult?

3. Why do you think that the divorce rate has become so high in many countries?

4. Is it better to marry someone of the same educational, social, cultural and racial background?

5. Is it better to marry someone of approximately the same age? Should the man be older than the woman?

6. How important is the religious aspect of marriage to you? Which aspects are more important, if any?

7. Should it be legal to marry more than one partner at the same time?

8. Should it be legal to marry someone of the same sex? Should marriages between gay and lesbian partners be recognised by the church?

\_**MALE & FEMALE ROLES**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Belinda Brooks-Gordon, a university psychologist, has done research showing

that men in a top international company categorise women into five groups:

* Babes (young and attractive women with little professional credibility)
* Mums (considered unattractive and ignored by male traders)
* Lesbians (feminists)
* Dragons (women considered old or unattractive, rudely treated)
* One-of-the-boys (women who behave like men - only they progress)

In your country, do women have equal opportunities in the work-place, for example:

the same pay and promotion opportunities as men? Are they categorised?

2. Is it easy for women to continue their careers after taking time off work

to start a family? Do companies provide crèches or nurseries?

3. Do parents and teachers in your country encourage girls and boys to grow up differently?

Do they play with the same toys? Do they receive the same education at school and university?

4. Do you think women and men should perform the same or different roles?

Are men usually the bread-winners and women usually the home-makers in your country?

5. Are there any "women’s or men’s rights" groups in your country?

\_**LANGUAGE LEARNING**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Describe "the good language learner" according to the following criteria:

* woman or man
* old or young
* extrovert or introvert
* other characteristics
* habits
* abilities ( including study skills )
* motivation and interests

2. In what ways are you a good or bad language learner?

3. How many languages can you speak and how well can you speak them?

4. "Fluency in a language is more important than accuracy". Do you agree?

5. Are you satisfied with the way languages are taught in your country?

6. Do tourists often try to speak your language when they visit your country?

7. "Every child should learn to speak a second language." Do you agree?

8. Which should be the official world language - English or?

\_**HOLIDAYS**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Do you prefer to book holidays through travel agents or to make your

own arrangements? Describe your best and worst holidays?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of TWO of the following

forms of holiday accommodation:

(a) five star hotel (b) budget hotel (c) guest house

(d) bed & breakfast (e) self-catering villa (f) farmyard cottage

(g) ocean liner (h) student family (i) youth hostel

(j) caravan (k) tent (l) canal boat ?

3. Which form of accommodation did you have on your last holiday?

Were you satisfied with it?

4. Which form of accommodation would you prefer for your next holiday

and how many people would you like to accompany you?

5. What are your favourite holiday activities?

6. Has your country been spoilt by tourist developments?

7. A friend wants to get to know your country and is planning a tour.

What advice would you give about places to visit, travel, accommodation,

eating out, shopping, sightseeing, things to bring and souvenirs to buy?

**HEALTH**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. "Governments should provide a first class National Health Service for

everybody so that nobody would want to pay for private treatment."

2. "Most nurses are overworked and underpaid." Do you agree?

3. "People who have damaged their health through smoking or drinking

should be at the back of the queue for expensive treatments."

4. Do people have the right to smoke when children in the same house

or colleagues in the same office have to inhale the smoke?

5. "Everybody should be compulsorily tested for HIV to allow the

authorities to monitor and counter the spread of AIDS."

6. "Alternative therapies should be recognised and licenced under the NHS

to include (a) acupuncture (b) homeopathy (c) aromatherapy & massage

(d) meditation (e) yoga (f) hypnosis and (g) faith healing."

7. "Western doctors prescribe drugs and medicines too freely since they

do not have time to treat patients as individuals." Do you agree?

Do you think other systems such as Chinese Medicine are any better?

\_**FOOD**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

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| **FOOD**  | Discussion questions |

1. "The government should make it more expensive for farmers to use

pesticides and more profitable for them to grow organic food."

2. Which age-group in your country eats most fast and convenience food?

What could be done to encourage these people to eat more fresh food?

3. Should the law limit the number of fast food restaurants in our towns?

4. Should suppliers be permitted to irradiate fruit and vegetables to make

them stay greener for longer on the shop shelves?

5. Do you think you can get all the nourishment you need from a vegetarian

diet? Would you be happy to eat a vegetarian diet for a week?

6. The Hay diet encourages you to separate protein from carbohydrate,

while the Chinese "Ying & Yang" diet encourages balanced eating.

Can you describe any special diets which are followed in your country?

7. Should countries try to grow all their own food or is it better to depend

on trade to meet your food needs?

8. Many people eat too much sugar, butter and salt. How healthy

are eating habits (a) generally in your country (b) in your own family?

9. Are you for or against genetically modified food?

\_**FASHION**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Have you ever bought something because it was fashionable? If so, what?

2. Does the fashion industry exist mainly to persuade people to spend money on things they do not really need?

3. Is fashion selfish in a world where many people have not got what they need?

4. Do you think fashion models should be used to sell products such as cars?

5. Some fashion models refuse to advertise products involving animal cruelty

such as cosmetics and fur coats. Would you buy such products?

6. Would you like to be a fashion model if you were offered the opportunity?

7. Is your country famous for any fashion products? Which ones? How are they marketed?

8. Which countries have the best and worst fashions in clothes?

\_**EDUCATION**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Would you prefer to send your child to a mixed or single sex school?

2. Is day school always a better alternative to boarding school?

3. Should rich people be permitted to buy educational advantages by

sending their children to private schools or should all schools be

run by the state?

4. Do you prefer a system where children are put in fast and slow streams

or is it better to create mixed ability classes?

5. Should corporal punishment be permitted in schools?

6. Which system do you favour for measuring children’s progress -

final examinations or continuous assessment?

7. Do the "three Rs" (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) make up the most

important part of the school curriculum?

**ECONOMICS**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. "Low tax, Laissez-Faire, economies are better than ones with large

public sectors." Do you agree?

2. "It is better to be within large economic unions like the European

Community rather than outside them." Do you agree?

3. "Governments should legislate to prevent monopolies becoming too

powerful." Do you agree?

4. "Free trade policies are always better than protectionist ones."

5. "Governments should not subsidize enterprises which are unprofitable."

6. "Countries should try to become self-sufficient in food and basic

necessities." Do you agree?

7. "Giving financial incentives to companies which locate themselves in

underdeveloped regions is a waste of public money. It is better to let

them set up where they want to be." Do you agree?

8. "Introducing the minimum wage will encourage foreign investors to

take their enterprises elsewhere."

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. "Cultural differences cause problems. It is better for people to stay in

their own countries rather than to migrate to other ones." Do you agree?

2. Would you prefer to live in a monoculture or a multi-racial society? Why?

3. "It is better to study major international languages like English rather than

to spend time on minority languages for the sake of regional identity."

Do you agree?

4. "Governments should give regions in their countries more autonomy

so that they can protect and enjoy their own cultures rather than serving

the centralized policies of the capital city." Do you agree?

5. Is it better to marry someone of the same cultural background?

6. "Religion as a school subject should include all the major world

religions - not only the majority religion in the country concerned."

Do you agree?

7. How does Canadian culture differ from the culture of your own country?

\_**CRIME & PUNISHMENT**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Should the death penalty exist as a punishment for murder or terrorism?

2. Should the main purpose of prison be punishment or rehabilitation?

3. What is the best way to deal with juvenile crime such as

* joy-riding?
* vandalism?
* graffiti?

4. Is it ever right for political activists to break the law?

5. How strict should the law be with people who drink and drive?

6. Which is the more serious problem in your country - tax evasion or social security fraud?

7. Should the police have the right to stop and search you in the street without a warrant?

8. Should the law respect the rights of homeless people to squat in unoccupied property or shop doorways?

9. Should smoking cannabis be a criminal offence?

\_**THE ARTS**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

1. Do you think that the tax payer should have to support the Arts?

For example, why should a football fan have to pay for opera?

2. Does your country have any well-known artists who are famous for

cinema, theatre, literature, ballet, opera, classical music or painting?

3. What are your "top three" art forms from the above list?

Explain the reasons for your order of preference.

4. In what ways were you encouraged to appreciate the Arts at home and

at school? What jobs in the Arts world would be suitable for you?

5. Give the names of your favourite novel, author, play, dramatist, film,

film director, musical composition, composer, painting and painter.

Why do you like them?

6. Which country would you visit to appreciate the Arts?

What would you plan to see?

7. Do you think there should be greater or less censorship of the Arts

in your country?

\_**ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Discussion questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_ask and answer**

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| **ANIMAL RIGHTS**  | Discussion questions |

1. Many vegetarians believe that factory farming is a cruel and unnecessary

practice and that our diets would be healthier if we ate less meat.

Do you agree?

2. Animal rights protesters argue that the export of live animals for

slaughter is uncivilized and should be prohibited under international

law. Do you agree?

3. "Keeping animals in zoos and circuses to entertain human-beings is

selfish and inhumane." Do you agree?

4. Bullfighting, fox-hunting and whale-hunting are part of some

countries’ traditions. Do you think that Spain, England and Japan

have a right to continue these traditions?

5. "Many people spend far too much money on household pets. They

would do better to have fewer cats and dogs and to use the money to

help poor and hungry people." What do you think?

6. Would you ever wear a fur coat?

7. Is it right to use animals for medical research or to test cosmetics?