Friendship: A Single Soul Dwelling in Two Bodies

Friendship is considered one of the central human experiences and for many people it may be as important as love. It is an essential component of many people's daily lives. It is rather difficult to describe the main features of friendship in one phrase. Friendship means devotion, faith, complete trust and unselfishness. A friend is a person who understands and supports you in times of need or crisis, shows kindness and sympathy, has similar tastes, interests and life philosophies.

Your friend is your helper, adviser and supporter. You can always trust him and share your hardships with him. Friends are absolutely disinterested and they help you without being asked to and without the expectation that you will have to repay them. A true friend can always acknowledge his fault if he is wrong and apologize. Besides, a true friend can forgive you if you have hurt his feelings or if you have given him a lot of trouble.

In Greek and Roman times, friendship was thought of as being an essential constituent of both a good society and a good life. It was supposed to nurture wisdom and happiness. Aristotle, a Greek philosopher and scientist, believed that friendship could fall into three categories: it could be based on utility, pleasure or goodness. In its latter state, Aristotle described it as being 'a single soul dwelling in two bodies'. During the time of the Roman Empire, Cicero had his own beliefs on friendship. He thought that in order to have a true friendship with someone there must be all honesty and truth. If there isn't, then this isn't a true friendship.

There are different types of friendship. For example not every friend is called your best or close friend. Your best friend is a person with whom your share strong interpersonal ties. Your soulmate is someone who is considered the ultimate, true, and eternal half of your soul. An acquaintance is a person with whom you don't share emotional ties, for example your coworker. A person with whom you share a 'postal' relationship and communicate through letters is your pen pal. Nowadays it is very popular to make friends online. Friendship that takes place over the Internet is called Internet friendship.

Most people have friends, regardless of gender, age, education, financial position and residency. But they tend to form friendships with representatives of their own social circle and with people of their own age. There is often a gap between people with different educational level, life experience and financial standing. In other words most people understand friendship as a union of the equal. However some of us have friends who are much younger or older than we are, who are poorer or wealthier and whose level of education is much higher or lower than ours.

Some reserved and shy people find making friends rather difficult. Besides, friendship means rendering a service to your friend from time to time, telling the truth and exhibiting loyalty. It takes time and effort, but true friendship is worth of it. It is stressful to live in the world of strangers, that's why people need friends. They give us a sense of being protected, emotional comfort and moral support. Having no friends can be emotionally damaging in some cases. As the proverb says, 'A true friend is the best possession'.

1. Complete each sentence (A-H) with one of the endings (1-8):

A. Friendship is considered
B. Friendship means
C. A friend is a person who understands and supports you
D. Friends are absolutely disinterested and they help you
E. In Greek and Roman times, friendship was thought of as being
F. Most people have friends, regardless of
G. Most people understand friendship as
H. Friends give us

1. without being asked to and without the expectation that you will have to repay them.
2. a union of the equal.
3. an essential constituent of both a good society and a good life.
4. one of the central human experiences.
5. a sense of being protected, emotional comfort and moral support.
6. devotion, faith, complete trust and unselfishness.
7. gender, age, education, financial position and residency.
8. in times of need or crisis.

2. Give the definitions of the following words
• best friend
• soulmate
• acquaintance
• pen pal
• Internet friendship

3. Agree or disagree with the following statements. Explain your point of view
• Friendship means complete trust and openness.
• Friends should have similar views, outlook and hobbies.
• A person can have only one friend.
• Friendship helps a person realize his or her individuality.
• Friendship between a man and a woman is impossible.
• It is easier to find a friend in a small town or village than in a big city.
• Friendship is possible only between people of the same generation and social status.
• When business relations start, friendship ends.

4. Answer the questions
1) Why is friendship an essential component of many people's daily lives?
2) Do you agree with Aristotle's/Cicero's ideas of friendship? Why?
3) Why do people tend to form friendships with representatives of their own social circle and with people of their own age?
4) Can you agree that friendship as a union of the equal? Why?
5) Why can having no friends be emotionally damaging?
6) What would your life be like without friends?
7) What traits of character should a person possess to become your friend?
8) What is your attitude to Internet friendship?

5. Read the following proverbs about friendship and explain their meaning. Try to find their Russian equivalents. Find other proverbs about friendship
• Better an open enemy than a false friend.
• They are rich who have true friends.
• A friend in need is a friend indeed.
• Lend your money and lose your friend.
• A faithful friend is a medicine of life.
• Friendship cannot stand always on one side.
• A friend to all is a friend to none.
• A man is known by the company he keeps.
• Friendship, the older it grows, the stronger it is.
• Short reckonings make long friends.
• Before you make a friend eat a bushel of salt with him.
• Books and friends should be few but good.
• Life without a friend is like death without a witness.
• Be slow in choosing a friend, but slower in changing him.
• The best mirror is an old friend.

6. Read the quotations below. Choose any statement and comment on it
• Friendship... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything. (Muhammad AH)
• Since there is nothing so well worth having as friends, never lose a chance to make them. (Francesco Guicciardini)
• Wishing to befriends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit. (Aristotle)
• The friend is the man who knows all about you, and still likes you. (Elbert Hubbard)
• Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival. (C. S. Lewis)

• The language of friendship is not words but meanings. (Henry David Thoreau)

Points for discussion. Prepare a short speech on one of the following topics.
1. Friendship cannot be compelled.
2. Life without friends isn't worth living.
3. To have a friend, be a friend.
4. A good friend is my nearest relation.
5. A treacherous friend is worse than the most dangerous enemy.

A. The dictionary defines a friend as 'someone who you know and like very much and enjoy spending time with'. Give your own definition of the words 'friend' and 'friendship'.

B. Read the text 'A Single Soul Dwelling in Two Bodies' and say if you agree with this definition of friendship.