



English 100
Final Examination
Spring 2000-2001
Reading Comprehension



Time Allowed: 75 Minutes

The Friendship Bond

by
Mary Brown Parlee

1. More than forty thousand readers told us what they looked for in close friendships, what they expected of friends, what they were willing to give in return, and how satisfied they were with the quality of their friendships. The results give cold comfort to social critics.
2. Friendship appears to be a unique form of human bonding. Unlike marriage or the ties that bind parents and children, it is not defined or regulated by law. Unlike other social roles that we are expected to play—as citizens, employees, members of professional societies and other organizations—it has its own subjective rationale, which is to enhance feelings of warmth, trust, love, and affection between two people.
3. The questionnaire on friendship appeared in the March issue of *Psychology Today*. The findings confirm that issues of trust and betrayal are central to friendship. They also suggest that our readers do not look for friends only among those who are most like them, but find many who differ in race, sexual preference, religion, and ethnic background. Arguably the most important conclusion that emerges from the data, however, is not something that we found—but what we did not.
4. Social critics have pointed to the dislocation and isolation that they think grows out of the high mobility rate among Americans and a loss of community supports. Ever since the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim, they have described the impersonality and anomie of life in modern cities, where increasing numbers of people choose to live alone. They have written a good deal about a trend toward self-indulgence and lack of commitment in our society, which could very well lead to tensions in friendships just as it may be contributing to the divorce rate among married couples.
5. In the questionnaire responses, we looked for signs of dissatisfaction with the quality of people's friendships, but we found few. Do people confide in their friends these days? Do they tend to turn to them in times of emotional crisis? Do



friends become more important as one gets older? Turned around, all of these questions provide clues as to whether people today find deficits in their friendships. Most of the responses to our survey strongly suggest they do not. When asked, for example, whether they felt that many of their friendships are not completely reciprocal, almost 60 percent answered no. At least among our readers and others like them, friendship in America appears to be in sound health.

6. When we asked our readers to tell us what qualities they believe to be important in a friend, they valued, above all, loyalty and the ability to keep confidences. Warmth, affection, and supportiveness were also high on the list, while external characteristics such as age, income, and occupation, were not. Again, in the letters commenting on friendship in general, similar themes recurred: typical words and phrases were "trust," "honesty," "accepts me even when he doesn't totally approve," "supportive," and "understanding."
7. Some insights into what holds friendships together can be gained from looking at what drives them apart. When asked about reasons for a friendship's cooling off or ending, readers gave as the two most important reasons feeling betrayed by a friend, and discovering that a friend had very different views on issues the respondent felt were important. The questionnaire answers thus confirm what many readers said explicitly in their comments: in a satisfying friendship, trust and feeling accepted are two of the most essential components.

Activities of Friendship

8. Given the importance of trust, it is not surprising that "had an intimate talk" is the activity most or second-most frequently mentioned by both men and women as something they have done with friends in the past month. Two other items high on the list of activities also presuppose a certain amount of trust and involvement: helping out a friend and turning to a friend for help.
9. Social psychologists have proposed a link between trust and liking that seems to fit these friendship data. The theory suggests that trust encourages self-disclosure (revealing aspects of yourself that are both precious and vulnerable). If self-disclosure meets with continued acceptance (not necessarily the same as approval of the feelings or actions), liking and affection deepen- as well as trust. In this theory, self-disclosure and trust must be reciprocated in order for the relationship to deepen.

Rules of Friendship

10. In addition to inquiring about actual activities, we asked specific questions about what people would or would not do with friends, both in general and in certain hypothetical situations. We wanted our survey to give us an idea of some of the "rules" that govern, or perhaps define, behavior between friends.

c. List the factors that can destroy friendship. Explain each briefly. (8%)

3. In your own words, explain the following statement(s):

A. "Social critics have pointed to the dislocation and isolation that they think grows out of the high mobility rate among Americans and a loss of community supports." (8%)

B. "If self-disclosure meets with continued acceptance, liking and affection deepen as well as trust." (8%)

4. According to the author, "Friendship has limits". What are these limits? In which situations do they apply? Explain in your own words. (15%)

5. In the concluding statement, the author points out an inconsistency. What is it? How would you explain it? (14%)

6. If this questionnaire were conducted in Lebanon or the Arab world, would you expect the conclusions about friendship to be similar to or different from those in the article? Justify your answer with reference to the article and/or your personal experience. Write a short paragraph of 6-8 sentences. (20%)

11. As both theory and the data suggest, one rule of friendship is that friends confide in each other, sharing intimate aspects of their personal lives and feelings. Perhaps most significantly, bad as well as good news can be shared. Even though in our society, one's success is often equated with success at work, 89 percent of our sample said they would tell a close friend about a failure at work.
12. Furthermore, over two-thirds (68 percent) said that if they had a terminal illness, they would tell a friend. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents say they talk with friends about sexual activities (60 percent discussing activities in general, 27 percent in detail).
13. Our respondents clearly indicated that in some situations, the rules of friendship involve the right to ask for help (presumably the obligation to help a friend is also implicitly acknowledged). When asked who they would turn to first in a crisis, over half (51 percent) said they would turn to friends before family. This was true for all subgroups, even though older people in the sample said they tend to rely more on family and professional counselors in a crisis than do the younger age groups, and a higher proportion of men than women said they go it alone.
14. Yet friendship has limits. Only 10 percent of the sample said they thought a friend should help another commit suicide if the friend wanted to but was too feeble to do it alone (41 percent said no and 36 percent were opposed to suicide.)
15. In short, there are no striking contradictions between people's descriptions of actual friendships, their beliefs about friendship in general, and their perception of the rules that apply to these relationships. This consistency, and the glowing descriptions of friends and friendship we received, suggest that our readers are satisfied with their friendships, even though 67 percent of the respondents also acknowledge feeling lonely "sometimes" or "often."

from Psychology Today Magazine

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Name _____

Section _____

Instructor's Name _____

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1. The author, M. Parlee, explores the concept of friendship. In your own words, present her definition. (15%)

2. The study discusses "rules" that govern behavior between friends.
a. What are these rules? List them and define each briefly. (6%)

- b. Do you believe that friendship should be ruled by codes and principles? Explain (6%)

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Essay Topics

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Directions: Choose one of the following topics and develop it into an essay of four paragraphs.

1. Many young people have friends from both sexes. Do you think the quality of friendship varies according to sex? Write an essay comparing and contrasting the two kinds of friendships.
2. In this part of the world, some teenagers rebel against family traditions and follow western styles instead. Write an essay discussing why they prefer to do that. Illustrate with examples.
3. "The liar's punishment... is that he cannot believe anyone else." – George Bernard Shaw.
What are some of the consequences of lying? Support by giving examples.