Conversation quotations

James Anderson, in *The Never-Open Desert Diner*
When someone says *we need to talk*, what he or she usually means is *you will listen*.
Any conversation that takes place will be accidental.

Paul Auster, in *Moon Palace*
Bit by bit, I found myself relaxing into the conversation. Kitty had a natural talent for
drawing people out of themselves, and it was easy to fall in with her, to feel
comfortable in her presence. As Uncle Victor had once told me long ago, a
conversation is like having a catch with someone. A good partner tosses the ball
directly into your glove, making it almost impossible for you to miss it; when he is on
the receiving end, he catches everything sent his way, even the most errant and
incompetent throws. That's what Kitty did. She kept lobbing the ball straight into the
pocket of my glove, and when I threw the ball back to her, she hauled in everything
that was even remotely in her area: jumping up to spear balls that soared above her
head, diving nimbly to her left or right, charging in to make tumbling, shoestring
catches. More than that, her skill was such that she always made me feel that I had
made those bad throws on purpose, as if my only object had been to make the game
more amusing. She made me seem better than I was, and that strengthened my
confidence, which in turn helped to make my throws less difficult for her to handle. In
other words, I started talking to her rather than to myself, and the pleasure of it was
greater than anything I had experienced in a long time.

Peter S. Beagle, in *A Fine and Private Place*
He knew very well that the great majority of human conversation is meaningless. A
man can get through most of his days on stock answers to stock questions, he thought.
Once he catches onto the game, he can manage with an assortment of grunts. This
would not be so if people listened to each other, but they don't. They know that no
one is going to say anything moving and important to them at that very moment.
Anything important will be announced in the newspapers and reprinted for those who
missed it. No one really wants to know how his neighbor is feeling, but he asks him
anyway, because it is polite, and because he knows that his neighbor certainly will not
tell him how he feels. What this woman and I say to each other is not important. It is
the simple making of sounds that pleases us.

Malcolm Bradbury, in *Rates of Exchange*
Conversation is never easy for the British, who are never keen to express themselves
to strangers or, for that matter, anyone, even themselves.

Lord Byron, in *Letter to Thomas Moore*
Like other parties of the kind, it was first silent, then talky, then argumentative,
then disputatious, then unintelligible, then altogethery, then inarticulate, and then
drunk.

William Cowper, in *Conversation*
Words learn'd by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse.

René Descartes, in *Discourse on Method*

To read good books is like holding a conversation with the most eminent minds of past centuries and, moreover, a studied conversation in which these authors reveal to us only the best of their thoughts.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *Behavior*
The best of life is conversation, and the greatest success is confidence, or perfect understanding between sincere people.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *Society and Solitude*
Put any company of people together with freedom for conversation, and a rapid self-distribution takes place into sets and pairs ... All conversation is a magnetic experiment.

Neil Gaiman, in *The View from the Cheap Seats*
Literature does not occur in a vacuum. It cannot be a monologue. It has to be a conversation, and new people, new readers, need to be brought into the conversation too.

Bangambiki Habyarimana, in *Pearls of Eternity*
A writer is never alone; he is always in conversation with himself.

William Hazlitt, in *The Plain Speaker*
The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*
The whole force of conversation depends on how much you can take for granted.

Leigh Hunt, in *Table-Talk*
If you are ever at a loss to support a flagging conversation, introduce the subject of eating.

Sarah Orne Jewitt, in *The Country of Pointed Firs*
It does seem so pleasant to talk with an old acquaintance that knows what you know. I see so many of these new folks nowadays, that seem to have neither past nor future. Conversation's got to have some root in the past, or else you've got to explain every remark you make, an' it wears a person out.

Samuel Johnson, in *The Idler*
When two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather.

Walter Savage Landor, in *Imaginary Conversations*
What is reading but silent conversation?

Stieg Larsson, in *The Girl who Played with Fire*
She hardly ever began conversations with strangers just to talk. It was not a matter of shyness. For her, a conversation had a straightforward function. How do I get to the pharmacy? or How much does the hotel room cost?

David Lodge, in *Small World*
Conversation is like playing tennis with a ball made of Krazy Putty that
keeps coming back over the net in a different shape.

Gregory Maguire, in *Wicked*
Galinda didn't often stop to consider whether she believed in what she said or not; the
whole point of conversations was flow.

Eugene Mirman, in *The Will to Whatevs: A Guide to Modern Life*
Of course, to avoid getting stuck in that convo with someone you dislike or feel
uncomfortable around, don't be passive, be proactive. Do not let them direct your
interaction on their terms, do it on yours. Ask a Misdirection Question – something
too difficult to answer quickly – e.g., 'What's Congress up to?' or 'You ever learn any
cool science?' When you ask the question, don't make eye contact, keep moving and
get out of there. Do not wait for a response and deny ever asking it. Repeat these
actions until you are never again spoken to by that individual (about four times).

Christopher Morley, in *Syntax for Cynics*
A sentence may be defined as a group of words, uttered in sequence, but without
logical connection, to express an opinion or an emotion. A number of sentences if
emitted without interruption becomes a conversation. A conversation prolonged over
an hour or more becomes a gossip. A gossip, when shared by several persons, is
known as a secret. A secret is anything known by a large and constantly increasing
number of persons.

Haruki Murakami, in *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*
It was as if my whole life revolved around trying to judge the appropriate point in a
conversation to say goodbye.

Jodi Picoult, in *Between the Lines*
'So, let me show you how a conversation works. I say something, and then you say
something back that actually relates to what I was talking about, as if you were even
the least bit interested.'
'Huh?' I say.

Rick Riordan, in The Mark of Athena
Whenever Percy stopped by to see [Annabeth], she was so lost in thought that the
conversation went something like this:
Percy: 'Hey, how's it going?'
Annabeth: 'Uh, no thanks.'
Percy: 'Okay...have you eaten anything today?'
Annabeth: 'I think Leo is on duty. Ask him.'
Percy: 'So, my hair is on fire.'
Annabeth: 'Okay, in a while.'

James Robertson, in *And the Land Lay Still*
There is something hugely civilised about allowing long pauses in a conversation.
Very few people can stand that kind of silence.

Laurence Sterne, in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, II,
Writing, when properly managed, (as you may be sure I think mine is) is but a
different name for conversation.

Dejan Stojanovic, in *The Sun Watches the Sun*
Everybody talks, but there is no conversation.

Evelyn Waugh, in *Brideshead Revisited*
Conversation should be like juggling; up go the balls and plates, up and over, in and
out, good solid objects that glitter in the footlights and fall with a bang if you miss
them.

Oscar Wilde, in Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*
I like hearing myself talk. It is one of my greatest pleasures. I often have long
conversations all by myself, and I am so clever that sometimes I don't
understand a single word of what I am saying.