

PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE



Marcel Proust 1871-1922 (Valentin Louis Georges Eugène Marcel Proust) was a French novelist, critic, and essayist best known for his monumental *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*; earlier translated as *Remembrance of Things Past*). At the end of the nineteenth century, when Proust was still in his teens, he answered a questionnaire in an English-language “confession album” belonging to his friend Antoinette, daughter of future French President Félix Faure, entitled *An Album to Record Thoughts, Feelings, etc.* At the time, it was popular among English families to answer such a list of questions revealing tastes and aspirations. French television personality Bernard Pivot hosted a show called *Apostrophes*. The show featured various authors and seeing an opportunity for a writer to reveal aspects of their work and personality, Pivot traditionally submitted his guests to the “Proust Questionnaire” at the end of the broadcast. James Lipton an American television host of the program *Inside the Actors Studio*, inspired by Bernard Pivot, gives an adapted version of the “Proust Questionnaire” to his guests. A similar questionnaire is regularly seen on the back page of *Vanity Fair* magazine, answered by celebrities. In October 2009, *Vanity Fair* launched an interactive version of the “Proust Questionnaire,” comparing readers’ answers to various luminaries.

1. What is your favorite word?
2. What is your least favorite word?
3. Where in the world would you most want to visit?
4. In the whole world, where do you want to live?
5. What inspires you creatively, spiritually, emotionally?
6. What discourages you creatively, spiritually, emotionally?
7. What has been your greatest achievement?
8. What is your greatest aspiration?
9. Which talent would you most like to have?
10. What historical figure do you most admire?
11. What living person do you most admire?
12. What do you value most in your friends?
13. What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?
14. What is the trait you most deplore in others?
15. If there was one thing you could change about yourself what would it be?
16. What is your greatest fear?

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

“Know yourself.”

Socrates (469-399 BC)

“To thine own self be true.”

Polonius, Act 1, Scene 3, *Hamlet* (1603), William Shakespeare (1564-1616)