



# The Library That Lets You Borrow People, Not Books

Discussion > Advanced 7



## Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

<b>break down</b>	To destroy a door or other barrier.
[phrasal verb]	<i>Ex: The goal of the campaign is to help <b>break down</b> negative attitudes around mental health.</i>

<b>barrier</b>	A problem, situation, etc. that makes something difficult or impossible.
[noun]	<i>Ex: I found traveling around China stressful at times because of the language <b>barrier</b>.</i>

<b>initiate</b>	To begin something.
[verb]	<i>Ex: We have <b>initiated</b> negotiations to buy their company.</i>



<b>prejudice</b>	An opinion not based on reason or experience; dislike, negative behavior, etc. caused by an unreasonable opinion.
[noun]	<i>Ex: Members of the LGBTQ community still experience discrimination and <b>prejudice</b> on a regular basis.</i>

<b>pose</b>	To present or raise a question or matter for consideration.
[verb]	<i>Ex: The new manager <b>posed</b> some very interesting questions in the meeting.</i>

<b>unchallenged</b>	Not questioned or argued about.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: The study's findings went <b>unchallenged</b> for years before new research questioned their validity.</i>



## Exercise 2 – Reading

*Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.*

### **The Library That Lets You Borrow People, Not Books**

We all have a story to tell, and perhaps if we shared our stories more, we might understand each other better — even break down social barriers.

This is the idea behind the Human Library, which was initiated by Danish human rights activist Ronni Abergel in the year 2000.

He thought — why not arrange events where you can borrow people instead of books?

"I had a theory that it could work because the library is one of the few places in our community where everyone is welcome, whether you're rich or poor, homeless or living in a castle," he told CNN.



Every human "book" in the library is someone who faces a different type of prejudice. It could be because of their skin color, beliefs or a disability — or because of their life choices. The Human Library says it wants to give "readers" a safe space where they can pose difficult questions to people who have lived very different lives from their own.

Today, Human Library events happen online and in places like cafes, schools, museums — and real libraries — all over the world.

One of the most active "books" is 81-year-old Yoka, a Holocaust survivor who grew up in a Jewish family in the Netherlands.

Approximately 6 million European Jews were killed in the Holocaust. As one of the few survivors left, Yoka believes she can help people understand what happens when discrimination goes unchallenged.



Then there's Ehssan, a Syrian refugee living in Poland. As over a million Syrian refugees sought asylum in Europe in 2015, Poland resisted taking any at all. But at the end of one library session, a husband and wife smiled at Ehssan and said, "You are welcome in Poland. We want you here."

"Moments like this give me strength to continue to contribute to the Human Library," Ehssan said.

Altogether, there are over 1,000 human "books," each with a valuable story.

The most important thing is not to judge the human books by their covers — but to first take a look inside.



## Exercise 3 – Discussion

*Discuss the following questions with your tutor.*

1. What are your thoughts on the Human Library?
2. Would you be interested in taking out a "book" from the Human Library?
3. Who's the most inspiring person you've talked to?
4. If you could have a conversation with anyone in the world, who would you choose and why?
5. Do you often get books out from the library?
6. Have you read many biographies or autobiographies? Which would you recommend?
7. What books would you say have had the biggest impact on your life?
8. Have you read any difficult or challenging books?