

**SKIES  
AND SEAS  
WERE PASTED  
TOGETHER**

Collected here are interviews with children and their grandparents living in Iran. They were conducted in the fall of 2015.

**Children**

**Grandparents**



**Ali, 13 years old**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest thing is getting by with acne! I hate it! The best part is that everyone trusts me because I'm a kid.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**My rule would be that anyone who throws garbage on the street would be fined for every single piece of garbage he or she threw out.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**They get angry so quickly, and it takes them so long to calm down.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**Politics!**

*What do you mean?*

**I don't know, but everyone says I would make a good politician.**

*Is that because you're so mature for a 13 year old?*

**Yes, that's it. For example, my friends consult me when they get in trouble. When they do as I tell them, the result is always good.**

*What is the sweetest dream you've ever had?*

**Fatemeh, 81 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It wouldn't be so different.**

*Why is that?*

**Because animals are already talking to us, just in a different language.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandma?*

**The hard part is that I don't have enough time left to enjoy watching my grandchildren grow up.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would obligate each rich person to buy food for at least five poor people every day.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**Sometimes they ask difficult questions.**

*What questions?*

**The other day, Ali, my grandson, came to me and asked, "Grandma, why do we have two eyes and only one nose?"**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would learn sewing. It's a kind of art, and I never had time to learn it.**

I had a dream the other night where my friends and I were hanging out in a park. Then we had this idea that if we talked about anything, it would just appear—out of the blue! So, of course, we started to mention things that we always wanted to have. That was fun, and I wish it was true!

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

In most of my nightmares, a ghost is following me. Basically all my nightmares are the same.

*What do you think of Americans?*

Americans are so smart because they have really good technology, but I guess they want everything to themselves, which is not good.

*Is there life on other planets? If so, what is it like?*

Yes, sure. People on other planets are just like us. They look like us, but their planet is not anything like Earth.

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

I think they overcame a lot of difficulties, and that's why they're rich.

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

I saw a tree on TV that was so huge.

*What's so weird about a big tree?*

It was a special tree. It was astonishingly huge!

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*  
I can make good pickles. Everyone loves my pickles.

*What is your greatest wish?*

My greatest wish is to see my grandson's wedding day. I don't think that will come true.

*What is your greatest concern?*

My concern is becoming a burden for my sons and their wives. I want to stay alive until the day I can't do things on my own.

*What do you think of Americans?*

I think they are hardworking people. Before the 1979 revolution, our relationship was so good. Now, I have no idea. People change over time.

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

I saw a four-month-old newborn who talked. I was so young, but I remember it so clearly.

*What would you do if you were president?*

I would defend women's rights.

*What are you afraid of?*

Death.

*What would you ask an American your age?*

I can't talk to them—I don't know English!

Ali

*What is the most important thing ever invented?*

**Electricity.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I wouldn't fight with the USA.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Satan. The devil.**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**I would ask if he is happy with his country. Does he want to stay there for the rest of his life?**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I'll be a soccer player.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**There was a comet that knocked into the sun, causing a big explosion. The Earth was made out of that explosion.**

Fatemeh

*Imagine that there would be a translator.*

**Then I would ask her what kind of food she likes, and I'd make that food for her.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I won't be alive then!**

*What if you were?*

**Then it would be a miracle. If that happens, I'd go all around the world telling people that life is beautiful, and it's a waste of their valuable time to be hateful and revengeful.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Tahchin (rice cake).**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**I'd say to always listen to the sound of your heart—it doesn't make mistakes.**



**Amir Hossein, 12 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**People could live longer because animals would help them by telling them things that they don't know.**

*Things like what?*

**I don't know. Things like when there is a thief coming or if there is an earthquake or storm coming.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**Adults make me ride a bicycle. I can't say no because I'm a kid—I have to obey! And the best thing is that there are no major responsibilities for me now.**

*Responsibilities? Like what?*

**Like making money or shopping or cleaning the house.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would get rid of executions. We should sentence killers to life in prison, not to execution. Killing the murderer doesn't bring the victim back to life.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**Sometimes my dad doesn't believe me, even when I'm telling the truth.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**Kobra, 58 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**What? I don't know, I always try to be realistic. I have no idea.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandma? The best?*

**The hardest part is that whenever my daughter wants to go somewhere without her child, I have to babysit him. I don't have energy like the old days. The best part is when my grandson calls me Grandma. I feel so lucky to have him.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**It would be a rule to protect women's rights. And for sure, I'd change most of the rules that we already have because most of them are so patriarchal.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was a trip to Mecca. My husband bought me a round-trip ticket when I turned 50.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**These days children are becoming more and more predictable.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would learn how to make a time machine. I want to go back and see the dinosaurs.**

*Tell me about something funny that has happened to you.*

**I don't remember anything funny; all I have in my life is misery!**

*Seriously? Why is that?*

**I don't know why, but I have bad luck all the time!**

*Give me an example of your bad luck today.*

**Running into you! [laughs]**

*Oh, really? You don't like talking to me?*

**Yeah, I like it; I'm kidding!**

*Tell me about something sad that has happened to you.*

**Yesterday, we were playing at school, and my friend started fighting with other boys. They were beating him up so bad, I was about to cry. So I tried to help him, but we couldn't win the fight. There were four of them and two of us, so we ended up getting hurt.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I saw some news on TV that American soldiers were beating people for no reason. This is not right. If Americans are good people, they should stop their soldiers from doing bad things.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I would learn how to drive. I have never had the courage to learn.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I can teach sewing.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**I want a happy ending for my grandson.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I've never been to the U.S., so I cannot judge. However, I think that their government is taking the American people for granted.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**It depends how wealthy and how old the guy is. I'll tell you one thing: if a billionaire is 25 years old, I'm not so optimistic about him.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**The weirdest thing I've seen was a fake pregnancy. There was a woman on TV who felt like she was going to have a baby. Everything on her exams looked normal, but when she went to deliver her child, there was no baby in her uterus. No baby at all!**

*What's the most important thing ever invented?*

**Penicillin.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

I'm sure there is life on Mars, and they have UFOs and weird-looking creatures.

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

Once I heard a bird that sounded like a dinosaur.

*What is the most important thing ever invented?*

Automobiles that run off of solar energy.

*What would you do if you were president?*

I would stop all pollution-causing factories in the city, and I would destroy every single old car. Instead, I would grow different kinds of trees and plants.

*What are you afraid of?*

I'm so afraid of heights.

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

Do you think that Iranians are bad people?

*Where did our planet come from?*

God made it, and he wanted Earth to look like this.

*What's your favorite food?*

I love fesenjān (chicken, pomegranate and walnut stew) and lasagna.

*What advice would you give your parents?*

Don't do wrong things, Dad.

*Have you seen him doing something wrong?*

Yes, he always drops his cigarette butts on the floor.

If I were president, I would try to make more job opportunities for young people.

*What are you afraid of?*

I'm so afraid of being alone. Sometimes I am worried about dying alone.

*What would you ask an American your age?*

I'd like to know about their history. I would ask her about their golden ages, and then I'd tell her about our golden ages here in Iran.

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

Who knows. I don't have many years left. If I'm still alive, I hope that I'll be healthy and at peace.

*Where did our planet come from?*

The Quran says Earth was made in seven days. I don't know exactly how God made it. No one can ever really know.

*What's your favorite food?*

Zereshk polo (a rice dish with dried barberries).

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

I would tell him, "Listen to you parents because they always want what's best for you."



**Amirali, 7 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**If wild animals could talk, it would be really scary.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest thing is having to study. I don't know. Yes, studying. The best thing is that we can come outside and play with our friends. Kids can play because we have spare time, but when you grow up, you have to study all the time.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make a rule that no one can start a fight or a war.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**They fight again and again.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**Water polo because it's so fun and dynamic.**

*Tell me a good joke.*

**One day, a bird falls down into someone's house through the window. The guy says, "It seems like God is playing Angry Birds!"**

*Tell me about something funny that has happened to you.*

**A'zam, 53 years old**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandma?*

**The hardest part is that I'm always worried about my grandchildren's futures because of the unique situation that we're dealing with here in Iran. Grownups generally have no hope for a bright future here.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**Only one rule? Well you cannot change the world with only one rule!**

*It's not a matter of changing the world. I'd like to know your priorities. So, if you had only one rule to make, what would it be?*

**I would try to strengthen rules that bring justice.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was my wedding ring. My husband gave it to me the day before our wedding. It was his grandma's.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**When they insist on being stubborn.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would choose to learn English. I've always wanted to but couldn't.**

**My friend was trying to slap me in the face, just as a joke. He wasn't actually going to do it. But I thought he would actually do it, so I slapped him first! Then I apologized.**

*Tell me about something sad that has happened to you.*

**The first day of school my leg was broken really badly.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I guess they are snobby and too proud.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**There is for sure life on Mars. If the sun radiates on Mars for just a few minutes, all the ice there will melt soon.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**I saw on TV that whales can talk through a device.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would remove financial inflation.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**I'm scared of death and souls.**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**Is your country beautiful like mine?**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**Skies and seas were pasted together and made a big circle that scientists named Earth.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I'm famous among my relatives for cooking the best ghormeh sabzi (herb and kidney bean stew, sometimes served with meat). Young girls in my family always ask me to teach them how to cook it.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**Health for everyone, especially for my grandson.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**I'm so worried about getting older and older. Deep inside I have this feeling that I won't be able to see my grandchildren getting married.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I guess every country has good and bad people. America is the same: it has people with both believers and nonbelievers.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**Do you remember that kid who was five years old, and he memorized the whole Quran? He could have even read it backward from the end to the beginning.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would focus on young people. I would try to get rid of addiction in society.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**I'm so scared of illness. Especially Alzheimer's.**

## Amirali

*What's your favorite food?*

**Cheeseburgers and roast beef.**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**I don't have anything for my parents, but I'd tell my sister to leave me alone and to not rack my nerves!**

## A'zam

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**I would ask her/him about relationships between people, between parents and their children and between siblings.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I'm not sure. I think I would enjoy watching Amirali go to university.**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**I would say to obey the Holy Quran to find the path of success.**



**Kimia, 11 years old**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest part is that kids are not allowed to be at some places, like certain ceremonies. Or when parents are having conversations about us! The best part is that parents care about their kids a lot, and when you are a kid, they get you anything you wish.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I guess I would make anyone who hurt animals go to jail.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**A pair of rollerskates. My mom gave them to me as a birthday present. I love skating, so I take good care of them.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**I've seen them lying. Three times!**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would learn about medicine because that's how I can truly serve my people and heal them.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I know how to make origami. I could teach it right now. Give me a piece of paper!**

**Fatollah, 61 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**Animals can't talk!**

*Imagine they can.*

**Well that's impossible, but if someday, some technology helps them talk, then we would be able to understand and interact with them more.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandpa? The best?*

**The hard part is getting old and not having the strength and energy to take care of your beloved the way you want. My grandchildren are the loves of my life and it's a pity that I'm not able to be with them all the time and take care of them.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I'd renew all the rules we have now.**

*What if you could only make one rule?*

**Then it would be equality for everyone.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**Well, they are noisy most of the time. I need to rest a bit at noon, but they're so noisy that I can't rest.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

*Tell me a good joke.*

**One day this guy goes to a party. It's getting late at night and dinner still hasn't been served, so he's starving and finally asks the host's son, "When do you usually have dinner?" and the boy replies, "My mom said whenever you go home."**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I don't know. I think they're not good people because they occupied our country years ago. Or maybe not... I'm not sure if it was the U.S. or Britain.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I guess so, I think there is life on Saturn.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**Once on TV, I saw a horse pooping while he was shaking his tail! It was so strange and funny.**

*What is the most important thing ever invented?*

**Of course electricity.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would give poor people more money.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Corpses, jinn (genies) and owls!**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**Are black people aggressive? They look angry.**

**I've always wanted to be a pilot. I'm afraid I'm too old for that!**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**My driving is really good. I taught all my children how to drive.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**My greatest wish is a happy ending for my family, those I love and all the people in the world.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**That my wife or myself will get sick.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I don't know, I've never been there. But one thing I do know is there is no place in the world with bad people. Like the Persian proverb says: "Politics is dirty." It's the politics that messes with everything.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I know NASA is looking for life on other planets. Another proverb: "If you look for it, you'll find it"**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**Two things bring money: first, hard work; second, connections. Rich people have one of these two.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**On TV I saw a baby born with one eye in the middle of her forehead. Poor baby. I hope she survived.**

## Kimia

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I will be a doctor, and I'll be so rich.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**That's obvious: God made different parts and then some workers installed these parts together, and Earth was made.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Ghormeh sabzi, lasagna, tah chin and kotlet (breaded meat patties).**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**Let us be. Don't punish us for every single thing we do.**

## Fatollah

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would try harder to remove narcotics from society.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**I'm not afraid of anything.**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**I'd like to ask him about social and moral norms in their society.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I don't know if I'll be alive!**

*Why not?*

**I really don't know. If I was, I could be near my son and my grandchildren.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**They say in the beginning the Earth was covered with water. Then it happened to get warmer and now here we are.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Chelo mahiche (rice and meat dish).**

*What advice would you give your grandchildren?*

**I'd ask them, like I would a friend, to be honest in every aspect of their lives.**



**Dorsa, 11 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**If animals could talk, we could talk with them and have sympathy with one another in troubled times.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest thing is that our parents follow us everywhere. They won't let us go anywhere alone and I'm so sick of that. The best thing is that they buy us everything we want.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would set a rule that everything must be free for everyone. Houses, cars, appliances... they all should be free.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**My cellphone.**

*Why do you like it so much?*

**Because it's a Galaxy4! I have so many cool applications on it.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**What confuses me is that they don't accept our help. I can help them sometimes, but they don't let me. They say "You're a kid. You can't do this, you can't do that." It doesn't make sense.**

**Manouchehr, 63 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It would be so cool. They could be our loyal friends, especially talking dogs.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandpa? The best?*

**The hardest part? I can't think of anything. But the best part is having these beautiful creatures, my grandchildren, around all the time.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I'd try to remove drug addiction and HIV by making rules. I'd ask everyone to help and cooperate with the government to make it happen.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**I usually don't receive gifts. In fact, I'm the one who always gives them! But the best gift I've ever received was a motorcycle. My dad gave it to me when I was twenty-two.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**They can be so annoying and stubborn sometimes. It's hard to handle the situation at times.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I have a good voice, but I never learned how to sing.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would like to learn how to be a photographer.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I'm a fast swimmer. I win most of the swimming contests at school.**

*What is the best dream you've ever had?*

**I had a great dream the other night. I saw myself in a Tiz'houshan school (an expensive and elite type of school).**

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

**It was last night actually. I saw that my dad was dead! We were all crying and moaning. When I woke up it took me so long to realize it was just a dream.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I think they are so beautiful.**

*Why is that?*

**Well, they have blue eyes, blond hair and they are tall. I wish I had blue eyes.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**Yes, of course. Most people think that kids just have good imaginations, but I know UFOs are real. Believe me.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I can repair cars. Not like a professional mechanic, but I do know things.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**I've always wanted to visit other countries. I hope someday I can do so.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**I'm concerned for my country. The future scares me.**

*Why is that?*

**I'm not a pessimist, but the way that they're running this country will lead us to war. Our neighbors are all in crisis, yet strangely, we have managed to stay out of trouble.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**Americans are timid people in my opinion. Not in a bad way, but they can be easily scared. Their government uses this as a tool all the time, to get whatever they want. Right now, Americans are afraid of Islam and the Middle East, especially Iran, because their government wants them to be, because it has benefits for their government.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**Because they had better circumstances, or they were in the right place at the right time.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**I saw a man on TV who had no arms and no legs, yet he was doing well! He was playing sports and eating and everything. And he seemed happy.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would do more for the people.**

*Like what?*

**Like helping people have houses to live in. My mom says it's a really hard thing to do.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Death. I'm so afraid of Azrael (the angel of death from the Quran).**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**I'd ask what it's like to be an American. Is it hard to live there? I've heard everything is so expensive.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I will be a photographer.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**It existed for a long time, before humans existed. That's why no one really knows.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Lasagna for sure!**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**I would tell them to let kids go out alone sometimes. It's not necessary to look after us the whole time.**

**Nothing. Nothing is weird to me, it's just different.**

*What's the most important thing ever invented?*

**The automobile because transportation is the most vital thing in life today.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I think I would focus on improving our economy by working on our international relationships.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Dying without honor.**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**Why are they so afraid of us? Why don't they try to think outside of the box about us?**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I don't know. Maybe I'll finish writing a book by then.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**I read somewhere that it was formed after a big explosion and then after billions of years, it gradually started to become warmer and warmer until now.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Kebab and koofteh (meatballs).**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**Always try to be the best, but don't compare yourself to others. Instead, bring the best out of yourself.**



**Elahe, 13 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**Most of the work could be done by animals.**

*Like what?*

**Like washing the dishes, doing the laundry, making food and everything else.**

*So imagine that you are given a sandwich that a horse made. Would you eat it?*

**No! No! [laughs] I wouldn't eat that. OK, so let's say the animals should do everything except cooking.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid?*

**The worst thing is that it seems we always remain children to them. I'm thirteen now but they still behave as if I'm six!**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make funny rules for kids. Like, they can get married whenever they want, even at thirteen.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**My tablet. I'm never without it.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**They won't listen to us because they think we are little kids. Like I said, they will always think we are little kids.**

**Maryam, 62 years old**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandma?  
The best?*

**The hardest part is that I'm supposed to be the sweet grandma, but sometimes it's so hard to not spoil them. The best part is that we are so close. I'm so blessed to have my grandchildren.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I'd make abortion free. So many young girls are losing their lives because abortion is forbidden and they cannot do it in hospitals in suitable conditions, so they abort in small dirty houses down in the city.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**The best gift I've received was a small house in the north. My husband bought me this small villa.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**They are so disobedient. Their parents were nothing like this. This generation is really something.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd want to learn how to cook Turkish dishes. I loved the food when I visited Turkey. It was amazing, so delicious.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd really love to learn Japanese. It's so funny!**  
**[pretends to speak Japanese]**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I'm good at playing volleyball. I play volleyball all the time because I'm tall.**

*What is the sweetest dream you've ever had?*

**My sweetest dream... Oh, once I dreamed of having an airplane. I was the pilot and as I was flying the plane I could watch beautiful scenes under my legs. It was so exciting.**

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

**I had a bad dream in which I was a cockroach. Everyone would run away from me and I couldn't make any friends. It seemed so real, that's why I was so afraid. When I woke up I had to go look at myself in the mirror.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**They are so free. They can wear whatever they want, unlike us. We have to wear a scarf all the time. And they can do whatever they want to do.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**There was a man on TV who could hear things that no one else could hear.**

**I can teach people how to make cakes. I can bake all different kinds of cake.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**War. I'm so afraid of war. I always have been.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**They are kind, generous, happy people. I haven't met an American, but this is how I think of them.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**I can't remember.**

*Nothing?*

**Well, life is full of strange things, but I don't know what kind of weird you mean.**

*Any kind.*

**Once, I went to a gathering and there was a fortuneteller there. I hadn't met her before but she knew everything about me. She even told me things that no one except me knew! It was so shocking.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I'd start using women's special talents to run the country. Women have always been underestimated in politics.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Cockroaches. [laughs]**

## Elahe

*Really? Like what things?*

Things like, for example, he could have heard the sound of ants crawling, or when two people were talking far away from him.

*What is the most important thing ever invented?*

The computer. Most everything else is related to the computer. I can't imagine myself without it.

*What would you do if you were president?*

I would make everything free. Everything.

*What are you afraid of?*

When my mom or dad stares at me because I've done something wrong or bad, it scares me so much.

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

I would ask questions about their culture and traditions.

*What's your favorite food?*

Pizza.

*What advice would you give your parents?*

I'd tell them to let me go out whenever I want to.

## Maryam

*What would you ask an American your age?*

I want to know more about their culture. I'd also ask about how it feels to be an American.

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

Who knows. If I were alive I'd be terribly sick probably. I'd be 82 by then! [laughs]

*Where did our planet come from?*

They say God made it, but everything has a logical explanation, we just haven't found it yet.

*What's your favorite food?*

Loobia Polo (beef and green bean rice).

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

I'd say to always respect old people. No matter what, try to talk to them respectfully.



**Diba, 12 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**That's so exciting! I have a dog, and if he could talk we could be even closer friends. We are so close already and I can totally understand what he wants and what he doesn't want.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest thing is that we have to do all our school assignments on our own, but the easy part is that I don't have to do household stuff like cleaning and washing the dishes.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make a rule that every house would have to be built with chocolate.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**It was a red jacket.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**They don't listen to us. They just do whatever they want and they don't care about what we like.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**Volleyball, I've always wanted to play volleyball.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**Reza, 67 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It would be so nice. Sometimes I feel like cats and dogs are trying to tell me something but I can't understand what it is.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandpa?*

*The best?*

**The hardest thing is that my granddaughter doesn't live with me, so I can only see her once or twice a week. The best part is that when she is with me nothing else matters.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make a restriction for cars. People would be allowed to drive their cars only three days a week. The rest of the week they would have to take public transportation. So many people are dying every year because of air pollution.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was a bicycle when I was a kid.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**They're so energetic which is a good thing, but they expect their grandparents to be like them and play with them all the time.**

**Math. I can teach math to my classmates.**

*What's the sweetest dream you've ever had?*

**A week ago I had a dream I was a princess. I had so many nice dresses. My mother was with me in our castle and every day we would swim together.**

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

**I dreamed I became a plant and everyone was looking for me. I was in the shape of a plant, right there, but no one knew it was me.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I don't like Obama but I like other American people.**

*Is there life on other planets? If so, what is it like?*

**There are only UFOS, not humans like us.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**I think it's because rich people are so stingy. Only stingy people become wealthy because they save their money.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**I saw some dolphins on Kish Island and they were playing with a ball!**

*What is the most important thing ever invented?*

**Computers.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I would love to learn how to ski. I was always so afraid to go and learn.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I'm a good gardener. I know a lot about how to grow plants.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**My greatest wish is to travel all around the world. I mean literally everywhere.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**My greatest concern are earthquakes. You know, Tehran is so likely to have terrible and deadly earthquakes.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I think American people are so honest, besides their politicians of course. Politics is not based on honesty as a general rule.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I don't know. But one thing I do know is that if there was no chance of finding life on other planets, NASA wouldn't spend so much money on such projects.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**Because they have worked day and night to live the life that they want to.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**If I was a president I would fulfill all my promises.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Darkness.**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**“What’s your name?”**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I’ll be a doctor.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**The Earth was a metal globe. After thousands of years it changed to the Earth we live in now.**

*What’s your favorite food?*

**Pizza.**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**I would say to not blame us for every single thing we do.**

*What is the weirdest thing you’ve ever seen?*

**The weirdest thing I’ve seen was the serial killer known as Khofashe Shab (Night Bat). He was a monster, nothing like a human.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I’d remove all motorcycles. They’re not safe and they cause nothing but noise and harm to people.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Illness.**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**I’d ask about their future president, and what they think of Donald Trump. [laughs]**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I don’t think I’ll be alive. I already have diabetes.**

*What’s your favorite food?*

**Eggplant stew.**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**I’d say to always be grateful for everything you have, and try hard to earn the things you don’t have.**



**Shayan, 9 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It would be a better world.**

*Why is that?*

**Because animals could help us know things we don't know. For example, ants could tell us how is it under the soil. On and on.**

*What is the best thing about being a kid?*

**The best part is that everyone trusts me.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make a rule for kids.**

*What rule?*

**Rules like, for example, if kids wanted to wear makeup, they would be allowed to.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**My Xbox.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**Whenever we do something that they don't like, they stare at us in a strange way!**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd want to learn English, but so quickly, like in a day.**

**Shirin, 56 years old**

*What is the best thing about being a grandma?*

**We are so close and I can be with my grandchildren whenever I want..**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I would make a rule to protect workers' rights. Workers are the most important part of society, yet we don't pay attention to them.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was a gift from my husband. A beautiful necklace.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**They don't listen to their parents. This generation is so disobedient.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd love to learn how to cook Turkish food. It's so delicious.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I know how to make different kinds of jam.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**My greatest wish is to visit my son in Germany. I miss him every day.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**Basketball. I play forward position in our school team.**

*Tell me a good joke.*

**A guy calls the operator and asks “Do you have Ali’s number?” The operator says “No.” And the guy goes, “I’ll tell you, write it down!”**

*What’s the sweetest dream you’ve ever had?*

**Last night I dreamed I was on an island all alone. There were a lot of flowers and every day I’d order what flowers should be in my garden.**

*What is the worst nightmare you’ve ever had?*

**I don’t usually have nightmares. I don’t remember any.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**They are so gorgeous and they wear nice clothes.**

*What is the weirdest thing you’ve ever seen?*

**I saw that people in Japan had built a train that was really fast. Even faster than an airplane!**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would make better healthcare for all people.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Ghosts.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

*What is your greatest concern?*

**War.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I have no idea. In movies they’re all so kind and nice.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I think there would be life on other planets. There are so many galaxies up there.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**Maybe they have rich families. [laughs]**

*What is the weirdest thing you’ve ever seen?*

**I don’t know. Maybe Lale and Ladan, the twins who were attached at their heads, poor girls.**

*What’s the most important thing ever invented?*

**The telephone.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would start making job opportunities for young people.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Cockroaches. [laughs]**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**I would like to know about their rituals and traditions.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I have no idea.**

**Shayan**

**The sun had an explosion and the Earth was formed after that explosion.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Gheymeh (meat and tomato stew).**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**To let kids make their own decisions.**

**Shirin**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**I think I read in an article that it was made through a big explosion.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Gheymeh.**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**Try to be yourself, no matter what happens.**



**Sepehr, 12 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**Animals wouldn't be haunted if they could talk.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest part is that sometimes I can't communicate properly. The best, I don't know.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**My rule would be that there should be no prison and no prisoner.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**My cellphone.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**What makes me confused is that they fight all the time on the street.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I really want to learn some martial arts.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**Mathematics. I can teach math to people who are not good at it.**

*Tell me a good joke.*

**Mehdi, 64 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It would be so different. Maybe technology would advance more quickly because animals could share their vision with us.**

*What is the hardest thing about being a grandpa?*

*The best?*

**The hardest part is when the grandchildren start to fight, I have to be fair and try not to interfere, otherwise they would think I love one of them more than other. The best part? I cannot choose. There are so many fantastic things about them.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**Only one? Can I remove a rule that we already have?**

*Sure.*

**In that case, I'd remove the requirement of the hijab for women. The hijab can be arbitrary. It shouldn't be an obligation.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was a watch, the watch I'm wearing right now. My wife bought it for me last year on my birthday.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**My grandson expects me to buy him some expensive high tech device! I don't have that much money.**

**There was a snake who was so depressed. When he was asked why, he replied, "I was in love with a lady snake for long time, but I was too shy to talk to her. When I finally got the courage to go and talk to her, I realized she was a hose!"**

*What's the sweetest dream you've ever had?*

**I dreamed I had an airplane! It was all mine. And I knew how to fly it. I flew in it every day.**

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

**I once I had an important soccer game, and the night before the game, I dreamed my leg was broken and I couldn't play!**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**American people are good but I heard their government is racist!**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**The world under the sea is really strange. I saw some documentaries on TV and the sea was so amazing.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would not like to be president. Not at all.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**War.**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd learn how to play the piano.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I can teach English. I used to be an English teacher when I was young.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**My greatest wish is to see a day in which no one hurts anyone else and people live in peace.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**My greatest concern right now is ISIS. They are not humans. Their cruelty is just unbelievable.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I've never talked to an American before, but based on what I get from Hollywood and other media, American people are not very educated. Sure, there are many elite and noble people there, but compared to their total population, I'd say they're mostly uneducated. They have no idea what exactly is going on outside their country.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I don't think so. It's taken ages and billions of dollars for NASA to find some suitable planet to replace Earth. If that money was dedicated to poor people, we wouldn't have so much poverty right now.**

**I would ask him about freedom.**

*What do you mean?*

**They say the U.S. is a free country. I want to know what that means and what freedom is like.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**There was a star and it had a big explosion. It knocked our planet and then it became Earth.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Gheymeh and joojeh kabab (grilled saffron chicken).**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**I would tell them to not give us advice every day!**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*  
**They were lucky. [laughs] They were smart and lucky.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**The world under the sea is so beautiful and weird at the same time. I used to go diving. It's really strange down there.**

*What's the most important thing ever invented?*

**The telephone.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I'd make more job opportunities for young people.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**A nuclear bomb.**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**Who will be their president next year.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I won't make it to the next twenty years. I already have heart problems.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**The Earth... I don't know exactly. I'm not a scientist. You should ask them.**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**To not play in the streets and always be careful with strangers.**



**Kamyar, 7 years old**

*How would the world be different if animals could talk?*

**It would be so scary.**

*Why do you think so?*

**Imagine if lions could talk. They'd go, "Hey kid, I'm about to eat you!"**

*What is the hardest thing about being a kid? The best?*

**The hardest thing is that my mom doesn't let me go anywhere I want. The good part is I don't need to be worried about serious things.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**The first rule I'd make is that everyone has to help one another.**

*What is the best gift you have ever received?*

**A tablet.**

*What is something that confuses you about grownups?*

**I don't know why all grownups are always doing something with their phones and laptops.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd ask to learn ten languages.**

*All together?*

**Masoumeh, 54 years old**

*What is the best thing about being a grandma?*

**I wake up every day because I want to hear my grandchildren's voices. They're the reason I live.**

*And the hardest thing?*

**There is nothing hard about being a grandma.**

*If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?*

**I'd remove all borders. There would be no border and no country. All countries would be united according to this rule.**

*What is the best gift that you have ever received?*

**It was a book by Hafiz (a famous Persian poet). My grandma gave it to me when she was dying.**

*What is something that challenges you about children?*

**It doesn't challenge me that much, but when they're not reasonable it makes me feel helpless. Because when they start being stubborn they don't listen to anyone.**

*If you could learn how to do something new next week, what would it be?*

**I'd ask to learn how to climb mountains.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**I know how to swim. I'm a professional swimmer.**

**Yes! All at the same time.**

*What can you do well that you could teach others?*

**English. I can teach English to my friends and kids my age.**

*Tell me a good joke.*

**Do you know what the best neighborhood to live is? It's near a neighbor where there is no WIFI password.**

*What is the sweetest dream you've ever had?*

**I had a dream once where everyone could live in water. We had two lives and we could also speak to dolphins. It was so sweet.**

*What is the worst nightmare you've ever had?*

**I don't know if it was the worst or not, but in one of my dreams I was dead, and everyone was crying but I couldn't talk to them.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**I think they are good people. They have a big country. But I don't like their government.**

*Is there life on other planets?*

**I'm not sure, maybe they can find life on Mars.**

*Why do some people have more money than others?*

**They studied really hard when they were kids.**

*What is your greatest wish?*

**I remember that I wanted to visit every country when I was young. That young girl inside me still wants to visit everywhere.**

*What is your greatest concern?*

**To be alone.**

*What do you think of Americans?*

**They're nice. I think they are so honest which is so valuable.**

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**The weirdest thing I ever saw was a cat! She was taking care of four puppies. She was even breast feeding them milk!**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I don't know, I never think about it. I'd starting caring for poor people I guess.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Humans!**

*What is scary about humans?*

**Our cruelty.**

*What would you ask an American your age?*

**I'd ask what she thinks of Iran.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

*What is the weirdest thing you've ever seen?*

**There was a woman on the news. She was pregnant and the doctors told her that her baby was dead, but she gave birth and the baby was alive.**

*What would you do if you were president?*

**I would strengthen Iran's army.**

*What are you afraid of?*

**Tornados.**

*What would you ask an American kid your age?*

**I'd ask about the weather and their living situation.**

*What will you be doing in twenty years?*

**I want to be a police officer.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**I don't know. It's scary. I don't want to know!**

*Why is it scary?*

**I don't know, I just don't want to know!**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Chicken and french fries.**

*What advice would you give your parents?*

**I would tell them to let me sleep for a while. I have to wake up really early every day and study.**

**I will be watching my grandchildren go to university and get married, if I'm lucky enough.**

*Where did our planet come from?*

**I think it was made through an explosion.**

*What's your favorite food?*

**Kebab and Aash (noodle and bean soup).**

*What advice would you give your grandchild?*

**Always try to avoid being selfish.**

Interviews were conducted in Iran by Mahsa Biglow.

Photographs by Mahsa Biglow.

Design by Brett Yasko.

Conflict Kitchen is a take-out restaurant that serves cuisine from countries with which the United States is in conflict. Each Conflict Kitchen iteration is augmented by events, performances, publications and discussions that seek to expand the engagement the public has with the culture, politics and issues at stake within the focus region. The restaurant rotates identities in response to current geopolitical events.

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