

Sample Questions from Past Marshall/Rhodes Scholarship Interviews

1. Questions about a student's choice for pursuing a Marshall, their choice of Universities and their degree choices.

Why should the this scholarship expend their limited funds to train someone for an MPhil in Medieval Social and Economic History...when such a specific degree could make you virtually unemployable?

Why do you want to be in the Comparative Social Policy course at Oxford when it seems like you're most interested in working with non-profit organizations?

Why Oxford? Why not London, or Cambridge or some other school?

Why Cambridge and not Oxford? Why not a graduate program in the U.S.?

Why do you want to do postgraduate study now, as opposed to in two or three years?

Is there anyone in the U.K. you are specifically looking forward to working with?

You say you want to study for a Ph.D in X, yet your university does not have a department of X. How are you qualified for this?

You say you want to study for a Ph.D in X, yet the majority of your preparation is in Y. How are you qualified?

2. Questions based on a student's essay, proposed academic program and other areas of the application.

We know the universe is expanding. How do we know that expansion is accelerating?

I see in your application that you're fluent in X, translate this statement and tell me who said it?

Why were you student body president, a position that is often considered a joke?

You wrote in your personal statement that music allows you to be "publicly vulnerable." Convince me that this is a good thing.

3. Questions about recommendations and choice of recommenders.

Your high school principal wrote one of your recommendations. I'm always suspicious of applicant's who need to go all the way back to high school to find someone who can say something good about them-what do you say to that?

Your adviser wrote that you did significant research on Dean Acheson and three Ambassadors to Yugoslavia. After doing this research, do you think people make history? And if so, discuss if history would have been different if Stevenson had defeated Eisenhower in 1956, Nixon had defeated Kennedy in 1960, and Dukakis had defeated Bush in 1988.

One of your advisers has written a lot about health care policy. Do you agree with his ideas, and if so, in one sentence, how should these ideas be implemented?

One of your letter writer uses B.C.E. and C.E. Please define B.C., A.D., B.C.E., and C.E. Which do you prefer and why?

4. Questions about a student's future plans if they receive a Marshall/Mitchell/Rhodes or if they do not.

What would you do if you didn't receive the fellowship?

What do you envision yourself doing in 10 years?

What will you do with your Oxford degree in the long run?

Why will a Marshall/Rhodes Scholarship help you in your career goals?

5. Questions about current events, political and social issues in the world or the student's state or city, and the student's opinion on them or how they relate to a student's area of study.

Do you think that a financially powerful nation could effectively alter the cultural norms of another nation?

What are your thoughts on US interventionism?

You have one minute to tell the Prime Minister of India how to end religious violence, what do you say?

What will the U.S. do about Saddam Hussein?

Do you believe in state sponsored assassinations, and if not, what about in the case of Hitler?

Welfare reform seems like a good thing. Lots of poor people are working now, when they weren't before. What do you think?

Name what you think to be the top five diplomatic achievements in the past decade.

What is the biggest change you would make in government to improve its ethics?

Should stem cell research be legal?

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If a patient with late stage Alzheimer's had written a document requesting that his life no longer be supported, what would you do? Follow up: What level of abuse in the system would be enough to stop euthanasia, 10 in 100, 5 in 100,?

Explain the importance of basic science as if you were talking to a group of lawmakers?

Why should you be one of the 32 people to get a Rhodes Scholarship?

6. Questions about a student's personal life, interests, motivations, desires and morals.

What is a novel that you've read for pleasure recently and liked, and why did you like it?

How would you define life, your position on abortion, what is more important-- someone agreeing with you on these issues or someone figuring out their own stance on these issues?

Top 5 lists: favorite novels, favorite non-fiction books, favorite movies, favorite political leaders (both contemporary and in history).

What would you do if you won a billion dollars in the lottery?

What do you do for fun?

You have a strong desire to give back to the world, where does this desire come from...your family, religion or somewhere else?

As a young woman today, do you feel like you've been held back or disadvantaged by being a woman?

If someone was writing your obituary, what would you want it to say, and what work of literature would it quote?

What is your philosophy on service that keeps you dedicated to it?

- 2 7. Questions about the history of the Marshall or Rhodes, their missions, and the student's opinions and ideas about them.

How would you be a good American Ambassador as a Marshall Scholar?

When I say the United Kingdom, what do you think of? What image do you have of the United Kingdom?

Who was George Marshall and what was the purpose of the Marshall Plan?

Who was Cecil Rhodes?