

The Question: Why do you like Priya?

Introduction

A few weeks ago, I (Ratna) told you (Priya) that you were my favorite. You asked me to tell you why. So for your birthday, I planned to write a long and convolutedly formal essay about why I think you're so great. But instead, I decided to reach out to some "Priya-philes," or lovers of Priya, to ask them why they think you're wonderful. Their responses are listed in this document, in the order I received them. I think they pretty much cover everything, but I will be sure to make some notes of my own at the end of this report. Please peruse it and contact me with any comments, criticisms, or concerns you may have.

Sathya Auntie

Here is why I like Priya:

Because she is original, modest, athletic, intelligent, and loving...what better attributes can the little one miss...

Neeta Bhua

You can just see the love on her face. I remember she came to our house a few years ago and was sitting across the room from me. She got up, walked over to me, sat down, and said "Bhua, I love you." I can't forget that. I felt so good. Another time there were a lot of people in the park and she spotted me from far away, ran over to me, and gave me a hug. I felt so special that she saw me from so far and came over to me. She is so affectionate.

Carolyn Manion

Why do I love Priya? Because she's smart and serious, yet unaffected. Because she's glad to be friendly and open to someone whom she doesn't know very well (me). Because she's one of those people I can always count on to hug me and sincerely be glad to see me when we run into each other at a Certamen. Because I see in her another Latin Loving girl who likes people and has fun doing what she loves (like me).

In other words, what's not to love about Priya?

Daniel Kim

Priya, I wish we could be better friends. I admire you for your curiosity, humor, and care for others. Thank you for asking me questions (they make me feel smart!), thank you for all your funny messages at the mall with your sister, and thank you for taking time out to wish me a happy birthday. Hope you have a great one!

Howard Chang

I like Priya because she's not afraid to be her own person and, at the same time, pursue some of the activities that also interested her sister. Sometimes, younger siblings shy away from anything their older siblings enjoyed. For Priya, this is not the case. She likes what she likes, so she does what she does. For that, I give her my respect.

Woojin Kim

Priya, I love my sister. Whether or not I show it as often as a sibling should, it really is the truth. And just as I do, I know Ratna completely adores you too. Just know that Ratna's occasional scolding, shouting, high-pitched screeching, garbling, gargling, growling, howling, yodeling, nonsense-ing (yes, I just verbified (haha) that), and whining are all crucial parts of her display of her love for you (either that or she's just a weird and messed up person, a possibility that we cannot yet completely rule out! Kidding! Maybe? Haha!). Keep up the good work, fight the good fight, and eat a lot of good food. May many joyous years be bestowed unto you. Happy birthday!

Kathy Smerke

Oh man, this is so tough!

I think the simplest way to put it is: I love Priya because she's one of those special people who possesses a genuinely kind spirit.

Hannah Tufts

I wish my sister loved me the way you love your sister. Well, I barely knew Priya but when you pointed her out to me, Allison and I fell in love with her! She's so sweet and the thing that really made me love her is how you spoke of her. I have so much respect for you and Ratna, how could I not love someone that you speak so highly about! "Like branches on a tree we grow in different directions yet our roots remain as one. Each of our lives will always be a special part of the other." This quote goes for my relationship with my sister but for you and Priya, your branches are intertwined.

Ruby Chachu

i dont like Priya !!!

i love her!!!

reasons are irrelevant , yet , i 'll try to find

first , i like her straight forwardness , she never beats around the bush ... she expresses what she feels ; she never shies from asking something if she is in doubt ; she believes she is what she is - she does not try to be someone else , and she is proud of being herself which in simple words means that she is a very confident person!!

second , shes a person of few words ...no wasting time and energy on unnecessarys and that is , to me , a quality of a 'deep' personality , if you know what i mean!!!

third , she derives her pleasures from little things in life ... a new pen , or a new dress , a scooter drive , - will be enough to make her day ;

yet she has her eyes on starsshe has a 'model' blueprint of a hotel business already in her mind , which , she says , she is going to own one dayand when i say blueprint , i mean she the has the 'financial economics' of the hotel's practical feasibility already worked outand that is something!!!

i could go on and on

but i must mention her keen sense of observation , before closing -she 'observes' minutely - a quality developed much ahead of her young adolescent chronological age!!!!

like i said , i could go on and on

thats our priya

Nora Okoth

I wish there were more people like Priya Gill on this planet. Her bright smile is contagious and always brings happiness to those around her. However, her outer beauty cannot compare to her magnificent inner beauty, delicate spirit, and brilliant mind. Priya possesses incredible intelligence, but what I truly admire is that, with each accomplishment, she remains humble. When I asked my younger brother what he admired about Priya, he replied, "She's so smart, but she never brags about it. I think it's because she's sure of herself; she just knows who she is, and I really respect that." Few people, especially middle schoolers, possess Priya's calm confidence. She just shines. I'm getting ready to graduate in June, and I can leave the Classics department free of worry because I know that Priya will be there. :) I know this message does not even begin to describe all of the reasons why Priya is special, but I hope it helps her see why we all love and respect her. I am lucky to know her!

Tai Young

Why I like Priya-

She is just plain fantastical. :)

Not only is she one of the hardest workers I know...but she truly cares, about all things: schoolwork, environmental issues, but mostly people. She has a genuinely altruistic heart, and is not afraid to speak up for the "little people." She is wise beyond her years, yet stays playful and child-like. If only there were more Priyas in the world...but I'm glad she is one-of-a-kind!

I hope it's the happiest of birthdays.

Dave Cosby

I think Priya is wonderful because she has such a kind and humble spirit. For someone with such great talent and abilities, she is always sweet, kind, and graceful. I also appreciate the fact that Priya takes time to just say "hello" or to share something interesting that is going on with her. For an 8th grader Priya is very mature, and seems very wise beyond her years. Obviously, I think it is wonderful that Priya is passionate about music. She has come so far as a flautist since the first time I heard her play in 6th Grade. I am amazingly proud of her for that.

Most of all I think Priya is wonderful because she is a kind and compassionate citizen of the world.

Dadi

I like the way Priya expresses love. She has a different style. She sits close to me when no one else is around, and discusses her intimate thoughts with me, talking non-stop.

Allison Xu

Everything about Priya is simply beautiful. The glow of sincerity that radiates from within. The beaming smile she always wears. The astounding mass of knowledge that I wish I could steal from her. The way she's treats everyone not as a friend, but as a brother or sister. Her heart is of gold, I'm convinced, and I wish her a happy birthday. <3

Jannah Trisha Babasa

First and foremost: Happy birthday!!

You're awesome.

Honestly, I've known this fact way before I even met you. And actually meeting you was super exciting for me!

You are SUCH a beast!! You're pretty (and tall), you play volleyball, you're brilliant at Certamen and academics, you've been dog sledding, you're incredibly creative (I especially love your maps), and you've written a book! Wow.

I'm in such awe of you, and so thankful to know you and get the chance to express how much I like you.

You're a gem.

I hope that you have a wonderful birthday filled with smiles and blessings.

Tracy Peterson

I love Priya because she gets it. She sees through the nonsense and spends her time focusing (not worrying) on the things that matter. She is protective of her friends, and kind to everyone. She is mature and curious and interested. She is smart and dignified, and she truly cares about the world around her—her place in it, of course, but also how her actions affect others.

Adam Williams

In trying to formulate some felicitations as well as a way to express my profound admiration and respect for your many talents, your outstanding character, and your one-of-a-kind persona, I struck upon a famous idea in western philosophy that seemed particularly apt. This idea is expressed aphoristically in English, so I naturally turned to my good friend Google for some more information; and of course he/she/it directed me to his/her/its best pal Wikipedia! (You know, that website I won't let you cite ;)) Much to my surprise and delight, the entry immediately reminded me what the highlight of my experience teaching you has been, for when I discovered that this idea was originally expressed by Bernard of Chartres (and not, as is commonly believed – by me as well – by Isaac Newton (though he did in fact quote it) as “*Nanī gigantum humerīs insidentēs.*”

In case you can't visit that link right away, the saying is “dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants” (“dwarfs” is often omitted, though). In short it is a metaphor for “one who develops future intellectual pursuits by understanding the research and works created by notable thinkers of the past.” So, why did I think of this phrase? Do I think you are a “dwarf”? Well, of course not (it's a metaphor, remember?! Really it was probably my own selfish “I haven't even taught her anything!” thinking that brought this to mind. Not that I entirely believe that, but it is definitely true that you have learned an incredible amount from your “big” sister – and not just about Latin, I would imagine. Thus she is the “giant” upon whose shoulders you have stood as your passion for the Latin language has grown and as you have benefitted from understanding her experiences.

I was ruminating on all of this when I received another facebook invitation from your mom (the third one! I think it's an automated thing though...). A couple of clicks later I was looking at one of your dad's public profile pictures that featured two much younger Gill siblings. In this particular picture, however, one soror was about half the height of the other! It was then that I realized how the metaphor of the dwarf and the giants (which, as for everyone, really, includes your parents too) was indeed not far from the actual truth for at least some part of your life.

The point of the metaphor is that the dwarf can see farther than the giants because of their support. One of the traits I, and I imagine many of those who know you, admire is your incredible maturity, as both a student and a young woman. Many people have “giants” upon whose shoulders they could sit if they wished, but it takes belief in and loyalty to those around you to actually do so. It is clear that you recognize and value the importance of your family.

Just as you have now literally outgrown the “giants” in your life, you have also become one in a figurative sense in the Latin classroom. Obviously, I am proud of your accomplishments so far, but what amazes me every day is how much your classmates can (and sometimes do) learn from you. Many students your age who have so far outstripped the rest of the class – and many who

only think they have – would prefer to trample the Lilliputians scurrying about their feet. You, on the other hand, have always been *discipula humillima*, always willing to help your classmates, to offer them a boost for a more clearer view.

For whatever reason, it appears not to be the usual way of the world for people to want to sit atop a giant. Rather, it seems they do two things: first, they recognize it as something so far beyond themselves that they don't have to worry about trying to compete against it; simultaneously, however, they constantly seek a way to topple the giant. In other words, the majority of people would rather compete against the giant and reduce it to their size rather than cooperate with it so that they can grow. It is your completely opposite approach, your desire to cooperate for the benefit of all, that really stands out to me as truly special.

There are many other reasons I am glad I have had the opportunity to know you, Priya, but since I have already gone on at length (sorry!), I will just briefly mention what is probably the most important: I am constantly learning from you! Sometimes it may be indirectly, as in all of the fascinating things I learned in looking up the Wikipedia article above. Many times, however, it is simply because with your inquisitive nature and your ceaseless desire to understand things thoroughly and figure out how everything fits together you are constantly challenging me to do the same. *Docendo discitur*, right? I have understood those two words on a deeper level ever since I began teaching, and yet they have never resonated more profoundly than when I find myself in the crosshairs of one of your curiosity. That is an extraordinarily awesome thing, Priya, and something I will truly miss when you have moved on.

Tibi fēlicissimum hoc annum fore quam omnēs peractōs spērō!

Patrick Sanguineti

"You're very wise for your age (well, actually wise for any age): you realize that you can in fact put time and energy into more than one interest, you know what you are in fact interested in, and you understand that there is little that rivals the importance of (good) music. You're also very tall; I like that. You see, you're different from the others - you are polite (at least to me) but not reserved - you are cultured but not constricted - you are athletic yet smart - you understand that being a Gill doesn't require loud outbursts and ditzy comments. You are you. And that is that.

Ramon Anria

What can I say about Priya...hmmm, well to start, when you first meet her, it takes less than a second to realize that she is special. She is the kind of person who you immediately become enchanted with and want to find out more about. Priya is kind and has a heart made of pure gold. Thinking about it, I've only seen Priya maybe 3 times in my life and talked to her at any length only once but I feel like we're old friends, and that's because she is pure goodness. Thank you, Priya, for being so wonderful and for considering me your friend. I wish you a very blessed, happy birthday and may all your wishes come true. Sending you all my best wishes and love on your special day. May God bless you always.

Laura Kambourian

You're my favorite.

Because you're a DLONT. Because you have amazing music taste and actually show me new singers and songs UNLIKE SOMEONE. Because you can actually play the piano and still pretend I can as well. Because you're kick-ass at volleyball and I can brag about you to anyone that even mentions the syllables: volley. Because you help me make fun of your sister (because you PUT UP with your sister, major props ;)). Or a bigger accomplishment, because you put up with ME. Because you wrote a book. Because you do what you want and aren't afraid of saying so. Because you can talk to anyone. Because you let me pretend I have a little sister. Because to me, you will always be PRIYAAA, PRIYAAA, PRIYAAAAAAA. Happy birthday monster.

Ratna Gill

Don't you think everyone basically said it all? I guess I'll just add a little more anyway. Here are some reasons why I like you:

You're funny.

Big deal – you have a good sense of humor. Whatever, right? Nope. You're the one person, at least for me, that I can make ANY kind of joke with. I can be downright stupid with you and you'll tease me and make me giggle and shriek like a maniac. On the other hand, I can present you with some sophisticated wordplay or Latin-related pun and you'll get it right away . . . and then judge me, because you could have thought of a better one.

You know that I think “being oneself” is imperatively important. But Priya, I can't be myself with everyone. And you know that, too. You call me out when I'm being a poser or spending too much time dressing up because sometimes I, like everyone, am not comfortable in my own skin. You see right through me, and I, in turn, want to show you even more of myself. But when you give me this type of feedback, why do I even listen? It's because I know . . .

You're right.

You're just right, Priya. You're right SO much of the time. When something is true or someone is good, you can spot it from a mile away. I can ask you, my fourteen-year-old (!) sister, for advice on topics I wouldn't even approach with my friends, because you have an incredible instinct. When I disagree with you on an action to take or a person to trust, there is always this voice in the back of my mind saying, “Ratna, you know whatever Priya thinks is right.” This is because so many times, what you have predicted has been true. I don't know where you get this wisdom, but it's an awesome voice I can always trust, and I plan to rely on for the rest of my life.

Also, you know you're right. We call you out for being “rude to your elders” sometimes, but I think it's because you don't beat around the bush. You're not afraid to say, “you're wrong and I'm right.” And that is an incredible trait in this day and age, when all people want to do is be liked and popular.

You're my sister.

Uh, what a lame reason to like someone. Everyone likes her sister. But is that really true? People are alarmed at how close we are, even though we're siblings. We talk like we're girlfriends. You're actually, truly my best friend.

Yesterday, Ruby Chachu asked me what my last words would be if I had 60 seconds left to live. (He saw some Facebook status asking this question.) While I was thinking, he said "Okay, tell me this -- who would you say it to?" And that was easy. "Priyaaa," I gushed. Because if I had a minute to live, you're the only one I wouldn't have to do any stupid background explaining to. I could just talk, and you would just respond, and you would understand. To me, that's friendship.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this year, I made myself a Happy Box. Because grades had always been something I relied on for my self-confidence, and I knew I wouldn't be receiving any percentage points this year, I had to look elsewhere for my self-assuredness. The box is a collection of messages and notes relating to more than my grades, testaments to my character, the part of me which I consider most important.

I suggest that you use the above collection of words as a Happy Box of your own. Alongside your academic and extra-curricular accolades, it's always great to have a reminder of who you are. I guarantee that you will have plenty of sentiments to add to this in the future, but it's a good start -- to the year and a life of success, happiness, and fulfillment.