

Getting Old

Topic

Age, growing up

Learning outcomes

- Review vocabulary relating to age
- Making and using notes to scaffold discussions (learner training)
- Practise speaking through discussion and role play
- Listen to and adapt a poem

Age / level

Aged 13-17 and adult; B1+

Time

100 minutes. This plan could be done over two lessons

Materials

- Worksheet
- Role cards (ages filled in or left blank)
- A5 blank paper (if using response cards)

Introduction

In the UK, like in many countries around the globe, life expectancy is increasing, and more and more people reach their 100th birthday. When you are 100 in Britain the King sends you a birthday telegram. In 1952 just 225 people became 100, however in 2024 15,384 people reached their 100th birthday. By 2025 over a third of the population of the UK will be over 55 years old. This lesson explores attitudes to ageing. Learners decide 'how old is old?' and are introduced to vocabulary related to different age groups. Task 4 offers some discussion questions about getting old and Task 5 is a role play where students consider the advantages and disadvantages of different ages. Students are introduced to the well-known poem about getting old, *Warning*, by Jenny Joseph. Learners discuss how we can live longer and explore the idea of living forever, and the extension activity is about the 'Adopt a Grandparent' organization which exists in the UK.

Procedure

Lesson one (60 minutes)	
1. Warmer (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your students the question, 'how old is old?' and listen to their comments. • Don't share your opinion at this point
2. Vocabulary (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give learners the worksheet and ask them to look at the table • Discuss as a whole group which ages you can put next to the following age labels. • Depending on where you are working, this may vary so decide as a group which are the 'correct' answers. • Adapt the table to add in any more age 'labels' that you use.
3. Discussion preparation (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners to draw 7 circles in their notebooks. Tell them the circles should be big enough to make notes in. They don't need to write sentences. • In circle no. 1 they write notes about their first memory as a child. Allow time for learners to make notes at each stage of this activity. • In circle no. 2 they write what they consider to be the best age. • In circle no. 3 they write the advantages of their current age. • In circle 4 they write the disadvantages of their current age. • In circle 5 they write what they think old people remember about being a teenager. • In circle 6 they write the name of the oldest person they know and how that person's life is different from their own. • In circle 7 they write how old people are treated by society.
4. Discussion (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put learners into small groups • They look at their notes and discuss the topics. • Monitor and prompt, or support with language as needed. • Ask groups to summarize the most interesting parts of their discussion. <p>Note: This might be a good time for you to explain how old people are treated in the UK. The idea of 'Care Homes' may be unusual. Definition of a care home by Care UK: Care homes which are also called residential homes, are places where people live in later life to receive extra support with personal care, such as eating, washing, dressing and taking medication. There are different types of care homes, like nursing homes or care homes with specialist dementia teams.</p>

5. Role play (15 minutes)

- Put students into pairs and give each one a role card.
- Either students can choose the ages they want to be or you can write in the ages beforehand. Pairs select the same age. They decide the pros and cons of their selected age group.
- Make groups of 4, 5 or 6 learners, separating pairs.
- There should be a good mix of ages for a good discussion to be generated.
- Students should discuss the pros and cons of their different age groups together.
- Students can develop characters to fit their ages.
- Monitor and support with language.
- Ask one group to demonstrate their discussion at the end.

Lesson two (40 minutes)
6. Poem by Jenny Joseph (20 minutes)

Note: This task is based on the well-known poem, Warning, by Jenny Joseph. For copyright reasons the text can't be reproduced here or on the student worksheet, but it is easy to find on the internet. Remember to always acknowledge the author when using poems or stories in class. You can find the poem here:

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/warning/>.

With lower levels

- Give students the text and read it together. Or show the Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K2janDRbIs>
- Gap words out of the text, read the text and ask students to fill in the missing words.

With higher levels

- Ask them to write their own verse.
- You could use simple substitution: When I am an old man I shall wear , with a which doesn't go and doesn't suit me.
- Alternatively let your students start from scratch.

7. Brainstorming (20+ minutes)

- Ask learners what may help them live a longer life? Get a few ideas and write them on the board.
- Put students into small groups to brainstorm ideas. Encourage them to back up their opinions with a reason.
- Get feedback from groups and add them to the board.

- Tell learners you will share some ideas and they will signal if they agree or disagree. Choose signals that are appropriate for your learners. E.g. Thumbs up/ thumbs down; Stand up, stand down; Response cards (see below).
- Say the following and ask if each one will help them to live longer.
 1. Taking regular exercise (Y)
 2. Sleeping more than 8 hours every night (N)
 3. Not eating meat – being a vegetarian (Y - This can add 6-10 years to your life)
 4. Having lots of fun (Y – Hobbies can help you live longer)
 5. Doing Sudoku puzzles (? - Researchers believe this helps brain health)
 6. Taking vitamins (? – These can help some people)
 7. Smoking (N. Smoking can reduce your life expectancy by 25 years))
 8. Having a job you love (Y)
 9. Not having children (N. Parents live longer)
 10. Spending time in the sun (Y It keeps your vitamin D levels high, which is good for your heart)
- Allow a discussion to develop if learners are curious.
- To finish ask learners:
 1. Do you think that in the future people may be able to live forever? Why (not)?
 2. Would you like to live forever? Why (not)?

Response cards

Give learners two cards. One with Y on it for Yes and one with N for No. They hold up the appropriate card. You could give out blank paper and learners write the letters themselves.

8. Extension (15 minutes)

- Have a look at the Adopt a Grandparent website if the idea is new to you:
<https://adoptagrparent.org.uk/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners to read Activity 2 on their worksheet. Explain the idea to your class. In some cultures this may seem to be a completely alien concept. • Use the discussion questions to talk about the idea of adopting a granny or granddad. • If you want to further extend the task, students could write adverts either from grandparents looking for families or vice versa.
Useful links and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the Aged: https://www.ageuk.org.uk/ • Aging: https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/aging/390638# • CBBC asked viewers what made their grandparents great – you can watch the video here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/29430835 • Listening about ageism: https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5wzb • Video of Jenny Joseph poem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K2janDRbls • Adopt a Grandparent website: https://adoptagrandparent.org.uk/
References for stage 7 (All checked August 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/can-exercise-extend-your-life-2019031316207 • Aging and a vegetarian diet: https://www.sanitarium.com/au/health-nutrition/vegetarian-eating/eating-a-vegetarian-diet-can-help-you-live-longer • Sudoku: https://www.betteraging.com/cognitive-aging/sudoku-brain-aging/ • Sleep: https://www.wsj.com/health/wellness/sleep-science-longevity-0f35a573 • Vitamins: https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/healthy-eating/vitamins-for-older-people/ • Smoking: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/9703#1 • A good job: https://www.ethicaljobs.com.au/blog/doing-a-job-you-love-will-help-you-to-live-longer-heres-why • Being a parent: https://www.mpg.de/14064449/children-influence-parents-life-expectancy • Spending time in the sun: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/oct/01/let-it-shine-the-unexpected-benefits-of-sun-exposure-on-skin#

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