

'Not Dead Yet, Lily?'

After Reading

A. 1 Below are 9 examples of texts about older people drawn from a variety of sources. Match the suggested headlines or descriptions with each text and discuss where the texts might have come from.



- Third Age View • Responsibilities of the Image Makers • How we can help
- The Younger Generation Speaks Out • The View from the Top • The Culture of Youth
- Angry Blogger • On-line Services

1.

The media are crucially important both in reflecting society's attitudes and, almost certainly, in shaping those attitudes. In their portrayal of older people (as indeed of practically all subsets of people), journalists, broadcasters and advertisers frequently use shorthand imagery or stereotypes.

For example, sitcoms often portray older people as comically enfeebled or irritatingly cantankerous. Similarly 'pensioner' or 'granny' shrieking from a newspaper headline can be intended to evoke a demeaning response in the reader. Even sympathetic journalists and broadcasters sometimes condescendingly 'pat an older person on the back' or express surprise at a mundane achievement.

Even if communicators do not create negative attitudes towards ageing and older people, they have immense ability to clarify and spread new ideas.



2.

Never has there been an era more conscious of chronological age than this one. People will go to extraordinary lengths to maintain a youthful appearance, from elaborate beauty preparations, to plastic surgery, vitamin cocktails and much more besides. Retirement is often seen as a withdrawal from usefulness and active participation in communities.

3.

In some cultures (like the Hunza and Vicabamba), there seems to be no concept of retirement; people remain active in farming, teaching and walking long distances all their lives. In other cultures, especially where oral traditions are strong, older people have played an important role in society by passing on knowledge to younger generations.

This suggests that in contexts, such as modern western culture, where the status of older people is low, it is because attitudes determine that it will be low, not because it is a natural consequence of the ageing process.

4.

According to some older respondents, the problem was less one of attitude and more to do with **invisibility**.

"They (the community at large, but particularly the younger generation) don't even see us, it's like we are invisible."

They put this down to the fact that older people are not so relevant to the younger generation and they don't have much to offer, certainly not as much as their peers.

5.

They walk far too slow and block city centres.....Every time a grandparent visits, he/she comments on how much you've grown.....They think all teenagers are 'yobs'.....They are never willing to listen to what you have to say if they have an opinion on something - what they say is always right.....If you're on a bus, they expect you to get up and move so they can sit down. If you don't, they get angry at you and tell the bus driver who is also old, and he throws you off.....They collect really boring things such as stamps and insist you sit through them explaining them all in detail. They start again if you interrupt.....They try to talk to you if you're standing in a long queue as though they know you.....Every item of clothing they own is green, brown, or a really crap colour.....All the music you listen to is loud and annoying to them.....When talking to other people about you, they always dig up something from when you were really young to embarrass you.....They insist on hugging and kissing you. Even if you they don't know you.....Because they grew up differently than kids today, they like to bitch about how horrible everything is and how it's all gone downhill. Sure, it's gone downhill, but because of old people like you who won't allow for change!.....They just won't die.



6.

can't take it anymore-I just heard ANOTHER story today of a 89 year old woman driving who slammed into a doctor's lobby. She nearly killed 3 people as well as herself!! Who lets these people drive, if Grandma can't walk why do you think she can drive a f***** car!

7.

"The image of the character sitting by the fire with a blanket on his or her knees is completely gone," says Mike Hayward, direct marketing manager of UK insurance company, Cornhill Direct. "These people have a reasonable amount of money, they are out all the time, having maybe two to four holidays a year. You have to try to use imagery that shows maturity but also an active lifestyle. In a lot of adverts you'll see a happy older couple on a cruise ship for example. But many are actually single, either through death or divorce these days. It's not easy to get the right balance."

8.

Most of our work is carried out locally. Throughout the country, in cities, towns and villages, we provide direct help to over a million older people each year - allowing them to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. Local services can include: information, advice and advocacy services day centres and lunch clubs home help and 'handyperson' schemes IT and other training. Because we are local, we can react to local issues quickly. And our unique structure means that we are the only local organisation for older people which can also provide regional and national perspectives on ageing issues. Volunteers are crucial to much of our local work.

9

Silver Surfer Week
Getting in touch with your world

Silver Surfer Week is a week-long campaign to help older people get in touch with the world through computer technology. Throughout the week, taster sessions were held by local community organisations throughout the UK and attended by thousands of older people - many having their first encounter with a computer.

Although Silver Surfer Week organisers delivered many sessions in 2007, you can find more about the event.

Holding an event
Share best practice and discuss top tips.
More about the event.

Learning to surf the web
Find your local training sessions, practical guides and more.
More about the course.

10

I know it isn't the same as it was these days and youngsters think they know it all. It seems a pity to me that more of them don't recognise the fact that having lived a lot longer we are likely to know more. It's a bit arrogant of youth to think that what we know isn't relevant to them, but then arrogance is the privilege of youth, I suppose.

A.2 Which texts above are being described by the comments below:

1. Older people can participate via Information Technology.
2. Gossip and rumour suggest some old people are dangerous.
3. A variety of support services are made available at a local level.
4. Elderly people are often depicted in a patronising way.
5. Older people often do embarrassing things; the writer is contemptuous.
6. Elderly people are seen as separate from an active, participative society.
7. Not all societies treat older people with disrespect.
8. Older people often feel they are being ignored or taken for granted.
9. Finding an acceptable representation of elderly people can be problematical.

Source websites:

<http://www.olderinireland.ie>

<http://www.healthconnect.gov.au>

<http://www.silversurfer.org.uk/>

<http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/>

B Which of the three following ‘warning’ signs about the presence of elderly or old people do you think is the most appropriate? Can you design a better one?



UK



Namibia



Japan

C Now test yourself on facts about older people by trying this quiz!

Each statement below is about older people. An older person is someone who is 65 years of age or older. After reading each statement, circle whether you Strongly Disagree with the statement, Disagree with it, Agree with it, or Strongly Agree with it. Circle only one.

1. Most older people cannot think very well.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
2. Most older people have trouble seeing things without glasses.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
3. Most older people aren't interested in romance.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
4. Breathing becomes more difficult in old age.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
5. Most older people say they are happy most of the time.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
6. As people get older, their strength decreases.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
7. Most older people are living in nursing homes, mental hospitals, or homes for the aged.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
8. Drivers over age 65 have fewer accidents than drivers under age 65.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
9. Most older workers cannot work as well as younger workers.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
10. Most older persons are healthy enough to carry out their normal activities, like housekeeping, cooking, and shopping.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
11. Most older people are set in their ways and unable to change.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
12. Older people tend to take longer to learn something new.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
13. It is almost impossible for most older people to learn new things.
Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
14. Older people take longer to react than younger people.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
15. In general, older people are pretty much alike.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree
16. Most older people say that they are usually bored.
▶ Strongly Disagree ▶ Disagree ▶ Agree ▶ Strongly Agree

17. Most older people say they are lonely.
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*
18. Older workers have fewer accidents than younger workers.
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*
19. Most older people are poor.
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*
20. Most older people say they would like to have some kind of work to do (including volunteer work).
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*
21. Older people tend to become more religious as they age.
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*
22. Most older people say they are usually irritated or angry.
▶ *Strongly Disagree* ▶ *Disagree* ▶ *Agree* ▶ *Strongly Agree*