

Not Dead Yet Lily?

Key

Pre-reading

The Pre-reading section relies on student's personal responses to sections of the text which they are guided through. There are no 'correct' answers, and students should be encouraged to explain why they reached the conclusions they did.

Ideally questions 1 – 4 should be tackled as in class discussion. If the class is too big for this to be effective, divide into smaller groups but explain that the group does not have to reach a consensus of opinion. As a poor substitute, answers may be written, but we would not encourage this approach unless the students positively react to writing – and unusual occurrence!

Question 5 should be done in groups of 5 or 6. Encourage students to make notes, but NOT to write down the story; it should be primarily a verbal activity.

Number 6 presents the usual questions of which is the best way to read in a class. A quick reader will take about five minutes to read the story, most, however will take ten or more. One way of dealing with this is to prepare some questions to ask at key moments in the story. This allows comprehension to be checked, prediction to be stimulated and allows fast and slower readers to achieve a near parity of speed. (See suggestions below).

Another way of dealing with the situation is to play the recording of the author reading the story, with the students following along in with the text. Of course, reading aloud is another possibility, but the teacher would need to be sure that this would not create other problems for some students due to the fear of reading aloud. Many students will remain unable to follow the text if they think their 'turn' may be coming up next.

Textual intervention suggestions: After line 30, why did saying 'bloody' give Lily so much satisfaction? Why hadn't she grinned to herself – displayed amusement – for a long time? At line 52, students may be asked to speculate why Lily was questioning (almost) the existence of the Macdonald's, and what the significance of 'stuffed figures' might mean in this context.

Context

A1

1. Responsibilities of the Image Makers

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. The Culture of Youth

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. Where older people remain proud

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.

<http://www.olderinireland.ie>

4. Third Age View

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.

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

5. The Younger Generation speaks out

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,

"Not Dead Yet, Lilt?" Ron Butlin
Key



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. Angry Blogger

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 Responsibilities of Advertisers

"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. How we can help

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. On-line Services



10. The View from the Top

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.

Context A2

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

C QUIZ

Scoring:

Items numbered in plain type are “True” and are scored 1-4.

Items numbered in bold type are “False” and are reverse scored 4-1.

Scores for items are summed to yield a composite score. So the higher the score, the more accurate were the answers.

66 – 88 scored: knowledgeable about and probably empathetic to older people

40 – 65 scored: not too bad but you need to revise some of your thinking about older people

Below 40 scored: you really do need to revise your knowledge about old people: you are out of touch!

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

Word Work

1. The section on swearing or taboo words is primarily for information. It has been a deliberate choice not to emphasise or practice use of swear words. The warning is given that unless used in appropriate situations non-native speakers using swear words run the danger of sounding (at best) inappropriate or even amusing and at worst to give offence where none was intended.

2. -ing clauses

1.
 1. Gasping for breath, she stood in the airless room.
 2. Muttering to herself, she pulled on her dressing gown.
 3. Crouching around their patio table, the Macdonald's talked together.
 4. Smelling its perfume, she leaned towards the bush.
 5. Ignoring him, she pretended to be deaf.
2.
 1. (example) Swearing over breakfast had made Lily feel good.

Supplementary Material

Should students have access to the internet, for further exploration of this theme, with a curiously British slant, you may like to point them in this direction:

Hell's Grannies (Monty Python sketch)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CStfT8gCrjM>

Here is the script. Prepare the students for listening/watching by the following activity.

Ask the students who might be making these statements about whom and under what circumstances:

"They shove you off the pavement, like. There's usually four or five of them."

"This used to be a nice neighbourhood before the old ladies started moving in. Nowadays some of us daren't even go down to the shops."

First voice: Well it's something to do isn't it?

Second voice: It's good fun.

Third voice: It's like you know, well, innit, eh?

"Payday's the worst - they go mad. As soon as they get their hands on their money they blow it all."

"The whole problem of these delinquents lies in their complete rejection of the values of contemporary society."

"Now she can't do without it. Twenty a day, sometimes. If she can't get it she gets violent."



The sketch:

(Sketch opens with a pan across Bolton. Voice of reporter.)

Voice Over: This is a frightened city. Over these houses, over these streets hangs a pall of fear. Fear of a new kind of violence which is terrorizing the city. Yes, gangs of old ladies attacking defenceless fit young men.

(Film of old ladies beating up two young men; then several grannies walking aggressively along street, pushing passers-by aside.)

First Young Man: Well they come up to you, like, and push you - shove you off the pavement, like. There's usually four or five of them.

Second Young Man: Yeah, this used to be a nice neighbourhood before the old ladies started moving in. Nowadays some of us daren't even go down to the shops. '

Third Young Man: Well Mr Johnson's son Kevin, he don't go out any more. He comes back from wrestling and locks himself in his room.

(Film of grannies harassing an attractive girl.)

Voice Over: What are they in it for, these old hoodlums, these layabouts in lace?

First Granny: *(voice over)* Well it's something to do isn't it?

Second Granny: *(voice over)* It's good fun.

Third Granny: *(voice over)* It's like you know, well, innit, eh?

Voice Over: Favourite targets for the old ladies are telephone kiosks.

(Film of grannies carrying off a telephone kiosk; then painting slogans on a wall.)

Policeman: *(coming up to them)* Well come on, come on, off with you. Clear out, come on get out of it. *(they clear off, he turns to camera)* We have a lot of trouble with these

oldies. Pension day's the worst - they go mad. As soon as they get their hands on their money they blow it all on milk, bread, tea, tin of meat for the cat.

(Cut to cinema.)

Cinema Manager: Yes, well of course they come here for the two o'clock matinee, all the old bags out in there, especially if it's something like 'The Sound of Music'. We get seats ripped up, hearing aids broken, all that sort of thing.

(A policeman hustles two grannies out of the cinema. Cut to reporter walking along street.)

Reporter: The whole problem of these senile delinquents lies in their complete rejection of the values of contemporary society. They've seen their children grow up and become accountants, stockbrokers and even sociologists, and they begin to wonder if it is all really...*(disappears downwards rapidly)* arggh!

(Shot of two grannies replacing manhole cover. Cut to young couple.)

Fourth Young Man: Oh well we sometimes feel we're to blame in some way for what our gran's become. I mean she used to be happy here until she...she started on the crochet.

Reporter: *(off-screen)* Crochet?

Fourth Young Man: Yeah. Now she can't do without it. Twenty balls of wool a day, sometimes. If she can't get the wool she gets violent. What can we do about it?

(Film of grannies on motorbikes roaring down streets and through a shop. One has 'Hell's Grannies' on her jacket.)