

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 407

SO 013 773

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 TITLE Confrontation: Aging in America.
 INSTITUTION Acton-Boxborough School District, Acton, Mass.
 SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
 PUB DATE 81
 NOTE 28p.; For related documents, see SO 013 771-777.
 AVAILABLE FROM Teaching and Learning about Aging Project,
 McCarthy-Towne School, Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720
 (\$2.50).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Aging (Individuals); *Aging Education; Learning
 Activities; *Older Adults; Secondary Education;
 Social Attitudes; Social Studies; Social Values;
 Stereotypes; Teacher Developed Materials; Teaching
 Guides; Validated Programs; Volunteers
 IDENTIFIERS Intergenerational Programs; Teaching and Learning
 about Aging Project

ABSTRACT

This publication contains two activities on aging for use with secondary students. The activities are designed to challenge the prevailing myths about growing old, to provide students with better information, and to foster more positive attitudes about older people. In the first activity, which will take about five class periods, students clarify their values about aging and analyze the vehicles through which these attitudes are transmitted in society. Students take tests of knowledge and attitudes about aging, analyze ageist cartoons and advertisements, and discuss a film involving a conflict between teenage girls and an elderly shopping bag lady. The second activity, which will take approximately four class periods, involves direct interaction with elderly individuals who, by their own personalities and behavior, challenge many of the perceptions the students are likely to have of older people. Older volunteers are invited to visit the class for small group rap sessions with students. In preparation for the discussions, the students and the older volunteers meet separately to generate questions each group would like to ask the other. The activity ends with a brief evaluation of the experience. The kind of information provided for each activity includes an overview, objectives, a list of materials needed (the activities are self-contained except for the film), a discussion of advance preparation, day-by-day teacher instructions, questions to stimulate classroom discussion (along with possible answers), and student handouts. (Author/RM)

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CONFRONTATION: AGING IN AMERICA

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EQUITY ASSOCIATES

1981

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TEACHING AND
LEARNING
ABOUT AGING

MCCARTHY-TOWNE SCHOOL, ACTON, MA 01720 (617) 263-8773

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INTRODUCTION

We all know something about aging, but all too often what we "know" consists of myths and stereotypes. Myths about aging and the elderly are strongly embedded in our culture and are transmitted by our language, literature, humor and the media. As a result, ours is an ageist society which looks upon aging as a "bad scene" and expects those who are old to behave in stereotypic ways. Several forces are also at work in our society which tend to separate people by age groups, especially the young from the old, in work, recreation, housing, and other areas. The lack of personal contact between young and old perpetuates and strengthens the myths. As a result of the socialization process, most Americans, particularly the young, possess some erroneous information and negative attitudes concerning aging and the elderly.

It would be wrong to allow these attitudes to persist unchallenged in our schools, since we are educating the most longevous generation of Americans so far, most of whom will live well beyond their seventieth birthday. The future is not totally predictable nor is the future plight of millions of persons today necessarily the result of aging. Individuals can affect how they will age, just as society has alternatives in the policies it follows toward its aging members. To let students harbor the perception that it is inevitably bad to grow old is to write off the future, both for individuals and society.

This unit is designed to challenge the prevailing myths about growing old, to provide students with better information, and to foster more positive attitudes about older people. Essentially the unit involves two "confrontations." The students first confront their own attitudes and analyze the ways in which these beliefs have been passed on to them by society. The second confrontation involves direct interaction with elderly individuals who, by their own personalities and behavior, challenge many of the perceptions the students are likely to have of older people. As a result, students begin to recognize older people as individuals who have their own particular ideas, values, and attitudes, many of which parallel those of the students themselves. The result is a breakdown of stereotypes and a recognition that all kinds of people grow old.

ACTIVITY 1: CONFRONTING OUR ATTITUDES ABOUT AGING

Overview: Through a variety of activities students clarify their values about aging and analyze the vehicles through which these attitudes are transmitted in society. Exercises include tests of knowledge and attitudes about aging, analysis of ageist cartoons and advertisements, and discussion of a film involving a conflict between teenage girls and an elderly "shopping bag lady."

Objectives: At the conclusion of this activity students will be able to:

1. Describe their own attitudes about aging and older people.
2. Identify ways in which stereotypes and myths about aging are transmitted in society.
3. Explain how negative attitudes about aging can result in prejudice and discrimination toward older people.

Materials needed:

For each student--

- a. Handout #1: "What Do You Think?"
- b. Handout #2: "Analysis of Humor"
- c. Handout #3: "Analysis of Advertising"
- d. Handout #4: "Analysis of Birthday Cards"
- e. Handout #5: "How Long Will You Live?"
- f. Handout #6: "Discussion Guide for Film, 'Shopping Bag Lady,'" (16mm film, 21 minutes, color, 1975. Available for purchase or rental from Learning Corporation of America, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.)

For the teacher--

- a. Newsprint (optional)
- b. 16mm. projector and screen
- c. Film, "Shopping Bag Lady"

Advance preparation:

Duplicate sufficient copies of handouts for distribution to the class.

For day three, assemble a collection of cartoons, comic strips, jokes, advertisements, and humorous birthday cards that show age bias in the representation of aging and older people. Ageist cartoons, comic strips, jokes and advertisements can be found by scanning newspapers and magazines. (Magazines targeted to female audiences contain advertising of beauty aids, cosmetics, and household products that emphasize the importance of looking young or disguising one's age.) Ageist birthday cards can easily be found in almost any store that carries a wide selection of greeting cards.

For day five, buy or rent the film, "Shopping Bag Lady."
Set up 16mm. projector and screen.

Estimated teaching time: Five class periods

Guidelines, Days 1 and 2:

1. Distribute copies of Handout #1, "What Do You Think?"
(A pretest of attitudes and knowledge about aging).
2. Ask each student to complete the pretest individually
without discussion.
3. Collect the pretests and discuss each section of the
test. The following information may help in discussion.

Part I: True-False. All answers are false.

1. Elderly people are pretty much alike.

The elderly exhibit as varied behaviors (life-style, dress, etc.) and circumstances (wealth, education, culture, etc.) as any other age segment. There are also physical differences, since the biological aging process differs from individual to individual. All kinds of people grow old.

2. Old age begins at sixty-five.

Age sixty-five has been the mark historically chosen for retirement systems, such as Social Security. However, there is no universal definition of "old." Each individual matures and ages in a different way, and there is no fixed chronological age at which people become old.

3. Elderly people are set in their ways and not able to learn.

In general, the time required to learn new tasks or skills increases with age. However, there are many important differences from one person to another, and all people are capable of learning regardless of age. Older people constantly demonstrate their ability to learn new things, as shown by the great number of older people in recent years who have successfully returned to formal education.

4. Most elderly people live in institutions, such as nursing homes or homes for the aged.

Only about four to five per cent actually live in institutions. A variety of alternative housing forms

are currently being developed, such as home care or congregate living. An estimated 25 per cent of the elderly will spend some time in a nursing home before dying.

5. Most elderly people prefer to live with their children.

Older people generally take pride in their independence and prefer to live in their own homes, but close enough to their families to see them frequently.

6. Most older people are isolated from their families.

Frequent contact is more the rule for those who have relatives (most often a son or daughter). Most older people with children report contact with one child at least once a week.

7. Old age is a second childhood.

Relatives and well-intentioned programs often tend to treat elders as if they were children, but most elderly people are self-sufficient and run their own lives.

8. Retirement brings poor health and an early death.

More often the reverse is true. People often find that health improves in retirement. Free of the daily "rat race," many retirees finally find time for a consistent regimen of exercise, rest and sleep. Personal life expectancy increases with age. At birth life expectancy is seventy-one; at age sixty-five, life expectancy is seventy-eight.

9. Older workers have high accident and absentee rates.

The opposite is true. Young workers are more prone to accidents and absences than older workers. Performance is often similar and sometimes better for older workers.

10. Older people are not interested in sex.

Research findings suggest that about two-thirds of elderly people maintain sexual interest and activity into their seventies, many into their eighties or later.

11. Mental illness is to be expected in older people.

Mental illness and senility are not necessary counterparts of old age. Only a small percentage of the elderly

are institutionalized for mental illness and less than 15 per cent become senile. Many elderly people end up in mental hospitals because there is no residential alternative.

12. Old age is a time of peace and tranquility.

Old age is no more so than any other age period. People at every stage must deal with stress. Financial, health and social problems are often a part of old age.

Part II: Multiple Choice.

1. Presently, people over sixty-five make up about _____ per cent of the total U.S. population.

C-11%. In 1980 approximately 11 per cent of the population was sixty-five or over, a total of 24 million people. By the year 2030, it will be approximately 20 per cent, more than 40 million people.

2. What percentage of people who are over sixty-five is over seventy-five?

D-38%. People over seventy-five, sometimes called the "old old," represent the fastest-growing age group in our population, which now includes approximately 17,000 people who have passed their 100th birthday.

3. What percentage of the elderly live in institutions, such as a nursing home or home for the aged?

A-4%. The vast majority of elderly people maintain their own homes and are not institutionalized, although as many as 25 per cent may spend some portion of their lives in a long-term care institution before they die.

4. What percentage of people over sixty-five have completed high school?

B-25%. In earlier times, most young teen-agers were expected to leave school and take a job to help support their families. Relatively few had the opportunity to complete high school, but this percentage will grow in future years as generations with more formal education grow old.

5. The average income of people sixty-five or over is _____ the average income of adults below age sixty-five.

C-less than half. The elderly have the lowest median

annual income of any age group, and about 25 per cent live below the "poverty level" set by the federal government. Many have no income other than Social Security, and some do not even have that. However, most elderly people are not poor and do have adequate financial resources. In addition to income, savings, real estate and other assets must be taken into account when deciding relative wealth or poverty.

6. At about what age does the biological process of aging begin?

B-35. Physical decline begins to appear in most people in their thirties, but progresses differently for each individual thereafter. Many people maintain good physical health and stamina even in advanced old age.

Part III. Fill In.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. senescence | 6. ageism (or agism) |
| 2. gerontology | 7. centenarians |
| 3. geriatrics | 8. gerontophobia |
| 4. octogenarians | 9. gerontocide |
| 5. life span | 10. gerontocracy |

Part IV. Responses to these questions will vary, but time should be taken to discuss each in terms of what the responses reveal about the students' attitudes toward aging, especially in terms of their own futures as aging persons.

1. At what age is a person old?
2. To what age do you expect to live?
3. To what age would you want to live?
4. List three adjectives which come to mind when you hear the term "old person."

-
4. If time permits, mark incorrect answers on the pretests for the class for parts I, II, III. Note the items most frequently missed in order to give special emphasis to this material in follow-up classes. Save these pretests for comparison with results at the end of the unit.

Guidelines, Day 3:

5. Divide the class into three groups and rearrange the furniture so that each group is sitting in a circle.
6. Give the first group the set of ageist cartoons, comic strips and jokes and distribute a copy of Handout #2, "Analysis of Humor," to each student.

7. Give the second group the set of ageist advertisements and distribute a copy of Handout #3, "Analysis of Advertising," to each student.
8. Give the third group the set of ageist birthday cards and distribute a copy of Handout #4, "Analysis of Birthday Cards," to each student.
9. Ask all students to complete the handout worksheets and discuss the results in their groups. Allow approximately 15 minutes for this task.
10. When all groups have had sufficient time to complete their assignments, ask one member of each group to report to the class what the group discovered from their analyses.
11. Mark two columns on the chalk board (or newsprint). Title one column "positive" and one column "negative."
12. Ask the class to think of terms or expressions of speech that are commonly used to describe aging or older people. As the students suggest terms, ask them whether they express positive or negative attitudes and list them accordingly. (The lists may include such expressions as "golden age," "fuddy-duddy," "over the hill," "senior citizen" or "no fool like an old fool.")
13. When an extensive list has been made, discuss what the lists show about our attitudes. (Usually the negative list will be much longer than the positive list.)
14. Devote the rest of the class period to a general discussion of the following questions:

Question 1: Do ageist cartoons, advertisements and expressions of speech create negative attitudes about aging or do they simply reflect negative attitudes that society already has? Students should recognize the vicious cycle that is involved here.

The age bias of the society is reflected in its literature, language and humor; in turn, these media tend to foster and perpetuate ageism.

Question 2: What are some additional ways in which age bias is transmitted in our society?

There are many additional ways, including children's stories featuring "black old witches" and "fair young maidens," ageist radio and television commercials, movies and television programs that present older characters who act silly or senile.

Question 3: Is ageism harmful?

The danger of ageism is that it is an attitude or state of mind that translates into prejudicial and discriminatory behavior. If society looks upon certain members in terms of stereotypes, it tends to discriminate against those members who fall within the stereotype, in this case, older people.

Question 4: Is ageism similar to bias about race, religion, ethnicity and sex?

The attitudes, the ways in which they are transmitted, and the effects on the objects of bias are very much alike. However, there is one important difference. Barring premature death, all of us are growing old, and thus all of us may ultimately suffer the effects of age prejudice and discrimination.

15. Collect the cartoons, advertisements and birthday cards and post them on a bulletin board so that the whole class may have a chance to examine them.

Guidelines, Day 4:

16. Distribute copies of Handout #4, "How Long Will You Live?"
17. Review the directions and allow about ten minutes for students to complete the quiz.
18. When all students have finished, ask them to score their own quizzes following these directions:

Step 1: Ask students to write the plus or minus number you dictate next to each "yes" answer as you review the answer key. Tell them to ignore all "no" answers, since these do not affect the scoring.

Key

1. -2
2. +3
3. +1
4. -1
5. -1 (and -1 for each extra 10 pounds)
6. -2
7. +1
8. +3
9. +2
10. +2 (men), +4 (women)
11. A -2, B +1, C -3
12. A +2, B -2, C -4, D -8

13. A +3, B -3
14. A -4, B -6
15. A -2, B +1, C +3
16. A -1, B +1
17. A .1, B -1
18. (See step 3 below)

Step 2: Ask students to add up their total score for all "yes" answers. For students who may have trouble with this, demonstrate on the chalk board how to add plus and minus figures, by listing a few plus and minus numbers, adding up the pluses, then the minuses, and subtracting the minuses from the pluses. Note that the total may be either a plus or minus number.

Step 3: Explain that average life expectancy for males is sixty-seven and for females seventy-five. Point out that females live an average of eight years longer than males. Ask each student to add or subtract their total from the quiz to either sixty-seven or seventy-five to find out "How Long Will I Live."

Step 4: Explain that while no one can ever know exactly how long he or she will live, this quiz does demonstrate that many factors of personal life style and environment affect longevity. Review each question on the quiz and use the following notes to explain the rationale for scoring.

Question 1: Are you single? and Question 2: Are you happily married?

Studies show that people beyond the age of thirty-five who remain single have shorter life spans than people who are married, especially if the marriage is a happy one. The reasons for this are not clearly established, but students may want to suggest some possible reasons.

Question 3: Are you a reasoned, practical person? and Question 4: Are you aggressive, intense and competitive?

Reasoned, practical people tend to suffer less stress than people who are aggressive, intense and competitive. Stress is closely related to many illnesses which shorten life.

Question 5: Are you at least ten pounds overweight?

Overweight places a strain on the heart and is related to many illnesses that may shorten life, such as stroke, kidney and liver disease, diabetes, respiratory infections and high blood pressure.

Question 6: Is your family's income over \$50,000 per year?

People in higher income brackets tend to work at jobs that are more stressful.

Question 7: Do you use seat belts regularly and obey speed limits?

Traffic fatalities bring a premature death to thousands of people each year. Most traffic accidents involve speeding. Wearing seat belts greatly reduces the chances of a fatal injury.

Question 8: Do you exercise (as swimming, jogging, tennis) three times per week?

Exercise eases tension, lowers cholesterol levels and blood pressure, toughens the heart muscle and adds years to life. However, exercise must be regularly performed in order to be beneficial.

Question 9: Is your home's thermostat set at no more than 68°?

Although the human body is capable of adjusting to a wide range of temperatures, good health is best maintained when temperature does not exceed 68°. Note that the areas of the world reported to have high percentages of long-lived people are located in cooler mountainous regions.

Question 10: Do you have an annual physical examination?

Serious illnesses can be treated and often cured if detected early. Regular physical examinations reduce the likelihood that an illness will become acute before treatment begins.

Question 11: Regarding consumption of alcohol.

Longevity studies seem to indicate that moderate use of alcohol is better for health than total abstinence, but that excessive consumption of alcohol is very damaging to health and seriously reduces longevity.

Question 12: Regarding smoking.

Unlike alcohol, abstinence is the best policy in terms of health and longevity, and the damage increases as consumption increases. People who smoke more than two packs a day are essentially trading off one minute of life for each minute they smoke.

Question 13: Regarding activity in employment.

An active job automatically involves some degree of regular exercise which is beneficial to health and longevity. Farmers, for example, live longer than bank officers.

Question 14: Regarding sleep.

Although it is not known exactly why, studies show greater longevity for people who sleep about seven to eight hours per day than for people who sleep either less or more.

Question 15: Regarding years of education.

There is a positive correlation between level of education and length of life. Possibly people who have more education enjoy greater life satisfaction and have a greater variety of interests. More education may be related to higher income, and thus to the ability to afford a good diet and better medical care. No one really can be sure what the connection is.

Question 16: Regarding environment.

Air pollution, which causes or contributes to major illnesses, is usually much greater in urban environments than in suburban or rural environments. In some urban areas the air quality is so poor that breathing the air regularly is equivalent to heavy cigarette smoking.

Question 17: Regarding life satisfaction.

Studies show that being happy and content with life may be more important to longevity than not smoking. Unhappy people are more likely to suffer from stress and various illnesses related to stress.

19. After reviewing all test questions, discuss the following:

How many of the factors listed on the quiz are a matter of personal choice, and how many are beyond the individual's control? Students should recognize that most of the factors are simply matters of personal lifestyle and habit.

People may not always be able to choose where they live, how much education they have, the type of work they do or how much they earn. Yet for some people, even these may be a matter of choice.

What factors not listed in the quiz might also affect longevity?

Besides factors of personal choice and life style, there are also genetic factors. People who descend from long-lived ancestors tend to have greater longevity, but this is often overrated. For most people, life style and environmental factors are more important than genetic factors.

Who decides how long you will live?

Length of life is determined by a complex relationship between factors of genetics, environment and life style which is different for each individual. However, within the limits of genetic inheritance and environment, people make their own decisions about both the quality and length of their lives.

Guidelines, Day 5:

20. Distribute copies of Handout #6, "Discussion Guide for 'Shopping Bag Lady.'" Ask students to read the questions and think about them as they view the film, "Shopping Bag Lady."
21. Project the film.
22. Discuss the questions on the guide.
 1. Why did Annie, who was once a very successful actress, become a "shopping bag lady"?
 2. Why did Emily and her friends treat Annie the way they did? Would Emily have acted differently if she were alone?
 3. Were there indications in the film that Emily or her friends treated anyone else the way they treated Annie?
 4. After the policeman took Annie into custody, she was put into a hospital. The authorities planned to place her in an old age home. Was Annie better off on her own or would she be better off in the old age home? Were the authorities doing the right thing?
 5. How and why did Emily's perception of Annie change?
 6. How did Emily's perception of herself change as a result of this experience?

7. How did Emily's perception of her grandmother change?
8. What is the main message of this film? Is it a message that applies to us?
23. Relate the film to previous activities, by discussing the following questions:

How might Emily and her friends have developed their negative attitudes and stereotypes of older people?

The influences of ageist language, humor and media, illustrated in earlier activities, provide ample sources for such stereotypes.

Why are stereotypes harmful?

Belief in stereotypes often produces prejudicial or discriminatory behavior, as illustrated in the film.

Can attitudes be changed?

Personal contact often leads to attitude change. Emily's stereotypes of old people broke down when she got to know Annie as an individual, not just an "old lady."

ACTIVITY 2: CONFRONTING OLDER PEOPLE

Overview: Older volunteers are invited to visit the class for small group "rap sessions" with students. In preparation for the discussions, the students and the older volunteers meet separately to generate questions each group would like to ask the other. The activity ends with a brief evaluation of the experience.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

1. Cite ways in which individual older people do not fit the stereotypes of being old.
2. Describe particular values, ideas or attitudes that are common to young and old alike.
3. Relate more easily to older people.

Materials needed:

For each student--

- a. Handout #7, "Feelings About Youth"
- b. Handout #8, "Feelings About Old Age"

For the teacher--

Newsprint pad, marking pen and masking tape

Advance preparation:

Duplicate sufficient copies of Handout #7 for distribution to older volunteers.

Duplicate sufficient copies of Handout #8 for distribution to the class.

Arrange for a group of older people to visit the class (approximately one visitor for each five students). Try to include older men and women who differ in their backgrounds, personalities and life style.

Arrange a meeting with the older volunteers prior to their meeting with the class. At this meeting explain the students' activities and why the volunteers have been invited to visit the class. Distribute copies of Handout #7 and ask them to complete the handout. Discuss their responses, then ask them to generate a list of questions they would like to ask young people about what it is like to be young today. List the questions on newsprint and save them for Day Seven. Explain that the students will be generating a similar list of questions to ask older people, and that these questions will form the basis for class discussions. Set the times for them to visit class (Days Seven and Eight).

Estimated teaching time: Four class periods

Guidelines, Day 6:

1. Distribute copies of Handout #8, and tell students to complete them individually without discussion.
2. Collect handouts and read the responses to each question to the class.
3. Explain that older volunteers will be visiting the next class for a discussion of what it means to be old or young in today's society.
4. Ask the class to generate a list of questions they would like to ask the visitors about the experience of being an older person today. Suggest that they formulate some questions related to their responses on Handout #8.
5. List the questions on newsprint.

Guidelines, Day 7:

6. Introduce the visitors to the class.
7. Arrange furniture for small group discussions, and seat each visitor with a group of approximately five students.
8. Post the newsprint lists of questions developed by the students and visitors.
9. Ask each group to discuss the questions. Suggest that they alternate from one list to the other in order to give equal time to the concerns of younger and older people.
10. Ask each group to choose one person to be prepared to summarize the discussion for the full group in the next class period.

Guidelines, Day 8:

11. Call on each group's spokesperson to briefly summarize discussion in the previous class.
12. Open the class for general discussion, allowing time for different points of view to be discussed.
13. At the close of the session, ask each person to take a sheet of paper and anonymously complete these two

statements:

I learned that...

I was surprised that...

Invite each person to add any additional comments.

14. Ask the older volunteers to put a check mark in the corner of their paper, so that their responses can be separated from student comments.

15. Thank the older volunteers for participating in the class.

Guidelines, Day 9:

16. Read the completed statements (I learned that...and I was surprised that...) to the class. Read the statements by students first, then the statements by older people.

17. Devote the rest of the period to an open-ended discussion about the experience of meeting with older people to talk about youth and aging. Questions such as the following might help to focus discussion.

Do you feel comfortable talking with older people?
Why or why not?

Did you find the older volunteers candid and responsive to the questions you had?

Did the experience of talking with the older volunteers in any way change your perceptions of what older people are like? How?

Did the older volunteers have any significant misconceptions about young people? What were they?

Did you notice significant differences between the older volunteers as individuals? What were they?

Would you welcome more opportunities to interact with older people?

Guideline, Optional Follow-up:

18. You may wish to use the pretest, Handout #1, "What Do You Think?", or parts of it as a posttest to measure change in students' knowledge and attitudes about aging.

19. The older visitors to class should receive thank you notes from you or the class. You might want to enclose samples of the completed statements made by students and visitors that were summarized in step 13 above.

HANDOUT #1, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Part I: Print a clear "T" or "F" in the space at the left to indicate whether the statement is true or false.

1. Elderly people are pretty much alike.
2. Old age begins at sixty-five.
3. Elderly people are set in their ways and not able to learn.
4. Most elderly people live in institutions, such as nursing homes or homes for the aged.
5. Most elderly people prefer to live with their children.
6. Most older people are isolated from their families.
7. Old age is a second childhood.
8. Retirement brings poor health and an early death.
9. Older workers have high accident and absentee rates.
10. Older people are not interested in sex.
11. Mental illness is to be expected in older people.
12. Old age is a time of peace and tranquility.

Part II: Multiple Choice

1. Presently people over sixty-five make up about ___ per cent of the total U.S. population.
A. 3 B. 5 C. 11 D. 20
2. What percentage of people who are over sixty-five is over seventy-five?
A. 9% B. 17% C. 29% D. 38%
3. What percentage of the elderly live in institutions, such as a nursing home or home for the aged?
A. 4% B. 12% C. 40% D. 60%



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- _____ 4. What percentage of people over sixty-five have completed high school?
A. 10% B. 25% C. 50% D. 75%
- _____ 5. The average income of people sixty-five or over is _____ the average income of adults below age sixty-five.
A. about one third C. less than half
B. equal to D. higher than
- _____ 6. At about what age does the biological process of aging begin?
A. 20 B. 35 C. 50 D. 65

Part III: Below you will find a list of descriptions or definitions of technical terms relating to aging. Write the term to the left. Omit any you don't know. (Don't worry about spelling.)

1. _____ term for the aging process (equivalent to the term adolescence for the period of becoming an adult)
2. _____ the scientific study of aging
3. _____ the study of the medical aspects of aging
4. _____ people in their eighties
5. _____ length of life
6. _____ age prejudice or discrimination
7. _____ a person over 100 years of age
8. _____ fear of aging
9. _____ killing of the old and infirm
10. _____ type of government which is dominated by the elderly

Part IV: Answer each of the following questions carefully.

- _____ 1. At what age is a person old?
- _____ 2. To what age do you expect to live?
- _____ 3. To what age would you want to live?
- _____ 4. List three adjectives which come to mind when you hear the term "old person." _____

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HANDOUT #2, ANALYSIS OF HUMOR

As a group, examine each of the items (cartoons, comic strips and jokes) you have been given. Discuss the following questions for each item, and be prepared to report back to your class on what you found by analyzing humor about age. Use the spaces between questions to jot down notes for discussion.

1. How does the item imply that "old people" are different from younger people?
2. How is this difference communicated in the item?
(Look for details, as style of dress, behavior or mannerisms, physical appearance, things that are said,)
3. Is the difference one that you think is common to older people in general?
4. Who might find this item amusing?
5. Who might find this item offensive?
6. There is a saying, "There's no harm in a good laugh." Can you think of any way in which this type of humor might be harmful?



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HANDOUT #3, ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISING

As a group, examine the advertisements you have been given. Discuss the following questions and be prepared to report back to your class on what you found by analyzing advertising. Use the spaces between questions to jot down notes for discussion.

1. Which kinds of products and services seem to be advertised by younger people and which by older people? Why?
2. Are there products and services used by people of all ages but primarily by either young or old? Why?
3. Do the advertisements imply that older people are different from younger people?
4. How are the differences communicated? (Look for details, as style of dress, behavior or mannerism, physical appearance, things that are said.)
5. Are the differences ones that you think are common to older people?
6. Might anyone find any of these advertisements offensive? If so, who?



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HANDOUT #4, ANALYSIS OF BIRTHDAY CARDS

As a group, examine each of the birthday cards you have been given. Discuss the following questions for each item, and be prepared to report back to your class on what you found by analyzing the cards. Use the spaces between questions to jot down notes for discussion.

1. What does the birthday card seem to imply about aging? (as physical change, emotional impact, changed behavior)
2. How are these implications communicated in the card? (Look for details, as style of dress, behavior or mannerism, physical appearance, things that are said.)
3. Are the changes implied in the card changes that generally come as people grow older?
4. What type of person (age, sex) might receive this kind of birthday card?
5. Who might be offended by receiving such a card?
6. There is a saying, "There's no harm in a good laugh." Can you think of any way in which this type of humor might be harmful?



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HANDOUT #5, HOW LONG WILL YOU LIVE?

Directions: As you answer the following questions, imagine that you are between thirty-five and forty years old. Base your answers on your own vision of what you will be like then, but take into account the habits and lifestyle you have already begun to set for yourself. Be realistic; there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Place a checkmark in one of the spaces following each question to answer "yes" or "no."

- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Are you single? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Are you happily married? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Are you a reasoned, practical person? | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Are you aggressive, intense and competitive? | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Are you at least ten pounds overweight? | ___ | ___ |
| 6. Is your family's income over \$50,000 per year? | ___ | ___ |
| 7. Do you use seat belts regularly and obey speed limits? | ___ | ___ |
| 8. Do you exercise (as swimming, jogging, tennis) three times per week? | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Is your home's thermostat set at no more than 68°? | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Do you have an annual physical examination? | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Do you abstain from all alcoholic beverages? | ___ | ___ |
| B. Are you a light drinker (two drinks or less per day)? | ___ | ___ |
| C. Are you a heavy drinker (two drinks or more per day)? | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Are you a nonsmoker? | ___ | ___ |
| B. Do you smoke less than a pack of cigarettes daily? | ___ | ___ |
| C. Do you smoke one to two packs of cigarettes daily? | ___ | ___ |
| D. Do you smoke over two packs of cigarettes daily? | ___ | ___ |



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- | | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 13. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Is your job an active one that keeps you moving around? | — | — |
| B. Is your job a sedentary one at which you mostly sit? | — | — |
| 14. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Do you sleep nine hours a day? | — | — |
| B. Do you sleep ten or more hours a day? | — | — |
| 15. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Do you have less than a high school education? | — | — |
| B. Do you have four years of school beyond high school? | — | — |
| C. Do you have five or more years of school beyond high school? | — | — |
| 16. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Have you lived most of your life in an urban environment? | — | — |
| B. Have you lived most of your life in a suburban or rural environment? | — | — |
| 17. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Are you basically happy and content with your life? | — | — |
| B. Are you unhappy (worried, tense, guilty)? | — | — |
| 18. Check yes for only one: | | |
| A. Are you a male? | — | — |
| B. Are you a female? | — | — |

Note: This activity is adapted from a self-administering quiz developed by Richard H. Davis and Diana S. Woodruff, Andrus Gerontology Center, University of Southern California.



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HANDOUT #6, DISOUSSION GUIDE FOR FILM, "SHOPPING BAG LADY"

1. Why did Annie, who was once a very successful actress, become a "shopping bag lady"?
2. Why did Emily and her friends treat Annie the way they did? Would Emily have acted differently if she were alone?
3. Were there indications in the film that Emily or her friends treated anyone else the way they treated Annie?
4. After the policeman took Annie into custody, she was put into a hospital. The authorities planned to place her in an old age home. Was Annie better off on her own or would she be better off in the old age home? Were the authorities doing the right thing?
5. How and why did Emily's perception of Annie change?
6. How did Emily's perception of herself change as a result of this experience?
7. How did Emily's perception of her grandmother change?
8. What is the main message of this film? Is it a message that applies to us?



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HANDOUT #7, FEELINGS ABOUT YOUTH

Write brief answers to the following questions.

1. Name two things that would worry you about being young in today's society.
2. Name two things that you feel would be "neat" about being young today.
3. Name two things that you dislike about young people today.
4. Name two things that you like about young people today.
5. List the three most common places you would find young people in your community.
6. List the three most common things you would find young people doing.

Adapted from an activity in *A Comparative View of Aging* (2nd edition, 1976), Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver.



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HANDOUT #8, FEELINGS ABOUT OLD AGE

Write brief answers to the following questions.

1. Name two things that would worry you about growing old.
2. Name two things that you feel would be "neat" about growing old.
3. Name two things that you dislike about old people.
4. Name two things that you like about old people.
5. List the three most common places you would find old people in your community.
6. List the three most common things you would find old people doing.

Adapted from an activity in *A Comparative View of Aging* (2nd edition, 1976), Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver.



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