Getting Old

Topic

Age, growing up

Aims

- To review vocabulary relating to age
- To practise speaking though discussion and role play
- To listen to and adapt a poem

Age / level

secondary and adult; B1+

Time

60-90 minutes

Materials

1. Getting Old worksheet
2. Internet links:
   Help the Aged: http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb
   What happens when you age? This site would be good to show your students:
   http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/whoami/findoutmore/yourbody/whatisageing/whathappensasyouage.aspx
   CBBC asked viewers what made their grandparents great – you can watch the video here:
   http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/29430835
   Welcome to the ageing future, an article by the BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4012797.stm
   Adopt a Granny website: http://www.adopt-a-grandma.co.uk/

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 Queen sends you a birthday telegram. In 1952 just 225 people became 100, however nowadays more than 3500 people reach their 100th birthday every year. By 2025 over a third of the population of the UK will be over 55 years old. This lesson explores attitudes to ageing. Task 1 asks, 'how old is old?' and introduces vocabulary related to different age groups. Task 2 offers some discussion questions about getting old and Task 3 is a role play where students take the roles of people of diverse ages. Task 4 introduces students to the well-known poem about getting old, Warning, by Jenny Joseph. Task 5 discusses how we can live longer and explores the idea of living forever, and Task 6 is about the 'Adopt a Granny' organization which exists in the UK.

Procedure

Task 1 - How old is old?	Ask your students the question, 'how old is old?' and listen to their comments. Then look at the table and discuss 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.
Task 2 - Let's talk about age	You could either use the discussion questions for a whole group discussion or you could put students into small groups to discuss then have some whole group feedback afterwards. You could personalise the task by adding some questions to raise issues that are particular to the country you are working in. This would also be a good time for you to explain how old people are treated in the UK. For some countries the idea of 'Old People's Homes' may be unusual.
Task 3 - Generation Gap	This is a group role-play. Put students into groups of four, five or six 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. There should be a good mix of ages for a good discussion to be generated. Students should discuss the pros and cons of their ages in groups. Students can develop characters to fit their ages.
Task 4 - Warning by Jenny Joseph	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/ There are many different activities you could do with the poem, depending on the level of your students. With lower levels, give students the text and read it together, or you could gap words out of the text, read the text and ask students to fill in the missing words. With higher levels I would encourage them to write their own verse. You could either 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. One of my adult students recently produced the most amazing poem inspired by this one. One line I remember was 'I shall bury my mobile phone and throw the alarm clock in the bin…'
Task 5 - Live longer, live forever?	This task asks students to discuss how they think they can live longer lives and to think about the possibility of being able to live forever. Put students into small groups to discuss the first question. Encourage them to back up their opinions with a reason.
Task 6 - Adopt a granny or grandad	Have a look at the Adopt a Granny website if the idea is new to you: http://www.adopt-a-grandma.co.uk/ 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 extend the task, you could create role plays of the grannies meeting their new families or students could write adverts either from grannies looking for families or vice versa.

Contributed by

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